The manuscript has become a ramble. It's grown in bits and pieces added over decades, an agglomeration of arguments. Some sections work as essays; others switch course more than once. Threads are dropped and picked up elsewhere. I started with enthusiasm in 1987 after publishing my first and still only essay in a journal, submitted it a couple of times and put it aside until the mid 90s, then put it aside again until 2009. I worked steadily from there, on and off, until 2023. It may not be done, but I think I am.

S.E. January 2024

Seth Edenbaum

Avant-Garde is Kitsch: An Essay on Modernism and Modernity in Politics and Culture

Ludwig Richter relates in his reminiscences how once, when he was in Tivoli as a young man, he and three friends set out to paint part of the landscape, all four firmly resolved not to deviate from nature by a hair's-breadth; and although the subject was the same, and each quite creditably reproduced what his eyes had seen, the result was four totally different pictures, as different from each other as the personalities of the four painters. Whence the narrator drew the conclusion that there is no such thing as objective vision, and that form and colour are always apprehended differently according to temperament.

For the art historian, there is nothing surprising in this observation. It has long been realised that every painter paints "with his blood". All the distinction between individual masters and their "hand" is ultimately based on the fact that we recognise such types of individual creation. With taste set in the same direction (we should probably find the four Tivoli landscapes rather similar, of a Preraphaelite type), the line will be in one case more angular, in another rounder, its movement here rather halting and slow, there more streaming and urgent. And, just as proportions tend now to the slender, now to the broad, so the modelling of the human body appeals to the one as something rather full and fleshy, while the same curves and hollows will be seen by another with more reticence, with much more economy. It is the same with light and colour. The sincerest intention to observe accurately cannot prevent a colour looking now warmer, now cooler, a shadow now sorter, now harder, a light now more languid, now more vivid and glancing.

Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*

In his charming autobiography the German illustrator Ludwig Richter relates how he and his friends, all young art students in Rome in the 1820's visited the famous beauty spot of Tivoli and sat down to draw. They looked with surprise, but hardly with approval, at a group of French artists who approached the place with enormous baggage, carrying large quantities of paint which they applied to the canvas with big coarse brushes. The Germans perhaps roused by this self-confident artiness were determined on the opposite approach. They selected the hardest, best-pointed pencils, which could render the motif firmly and minutely to its finest detail, and each bent down over his small piece of paper, trying to transcribe what lie saw with the utmost fidelity. "We fell in love with every blade of grass every tiny twig and refused to let anything escape us. Every one tried to the motif as objectively as possible."

Nevertheless, when they then compared the fruits of their efforts in the evening, their transcripts differed to a surprising extent. The mood, the colour, even the outline of the motif had undergone a subtle transformation form in each of them. Richter goes on to describe how these different versions reflected the different dispositions of the four friends, for instance how the melancholy painter had straightened the exuberant contours and emphasized the blue tinges. We might say he gives an illustration of the famous definition by Emile Zola who called a work of art "a corner of nature seen through a temperament."

Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*

It is from this ambivalent conception of humanitas that humanism was born. It is not so much a movement as an attitude which can be defined as the conviction of the dignity of man, based on both the insistence on human values (rationality and freedom) and the acceptance of human limitations (fallibility and frailty); from these two postulates result responsibility and tolerance.

...The humanist, then, rejects authority. But he respects tradition.

Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline"

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

irony which is the glory of slaves.

Czeslaw Milosz, *Not This Way*

Today there is no denying that narrative films are not only "art"—not often good art, to be sure, but this applies to other media as well—but also, besides architecture, cartooning and "commercial design," the only visual art entirely alive. Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures"

Every one knows every one else far too well for business purposes

Rudyard Kipling, "The Broken-Link Handicap"

On April 16th, 2009, *The New York Times* published a review[1] by Roberta Smith, of "Picasso: Mosqueteros", at the Gagosian Gallery in New York. The review begins,

> In the main, Picasso only got better…

When I read those words, I laughed. I thought the argument was absurd, but the laughter was reflex. That was inevitable. We can't re-fight old battles every time a subject comes up; there are limits to the human capacity for recall. Years after spending time and effort to come to a conclusion it's the conclusion not the process that sticks in the mind. But that means that no matter how hard we once fought our response now is based on received opinion, even if received from our younger selves. So it's good occasionally to revisit the past in detail, especially in cases where our relation to the past is the thing under debate.

For me this begins in childhood, in the 1960s, as the witness to arguments over literature and law, high culture and left-wing politics, not among the students but their teachers and advisors. I grew up between the old left and the new, in a world of radicalism and cultural conservatism, of Henry James and political action, both legal and illegal. My parents risked arrest and the loss of their children to the state while being elitists of the first order. I understood how odd that was in the context of the world at large, but not, and this stays with me, in the intellectual world. It took a long time for me to realize that I understood the contradictions more than my parents did, when all I remember for myself is knowing that contradictions were inevitable and that articulated contradiction is the goal of intellectual as opposed to mechanical life.

Propaganda was disdained in our house as art but not as politics. Eisenstein and Brecht made beautiful hybrids. So when I first encountered contemporary intellectual arguments for artistic prescription I thought they were strange, and later reading "Art and Objecthood"[2] Michael Fried's description of what was then the new theatricality in art seemed to me as brilliant as his argument against it was absurd. I was surprised that someone would make such demands, defending in effect a "prescriptive grammar", as late as 1967. But the more I read the more examples I found. Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"[3], from 1975, struck me as similarly perverse. How was it possible to argue for the "destruction of

pleasure"—pleasure she argued that was then defined and definable by male eyes—without risking the prospect of the pleasure of destruction, a pleasure at the heart of capitalism. Reading Walter Benjamin I was surprised that anyone would make a distinction between the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of aesthetics. This was the early 80s. I hadn't been paying attention. In art school I was told for first time that I couldn't be a leftist because I worked with my hands. It was years before I realized the full comic absurdity of that claim, directed against any notion of "mastery". My only reply, kept to myself, was that none of us could be leftists because we were artists, and that the mastery thrown away was the mastery of craft, provisional by definition and thus open to debate, to be replaced by ideas that in the minds of those who held them were beyond question. At the center of all this conceptualized art and politics was a moralizing snobbery, a perverse mixture of Puritanism and Bloomsbury. Activism until the AIDS crisis was minimal. In the late 80s there were protests and lawsuits on all sides over government funding for performance art that the artists themselves said was made to offend bourgeois sensibilities; few people pointed out that perhaps they shouldn't want government funding at all. The waning of the avant-garde has been a long process.

ONE

You can mourn the death of what you love, or dream of a new object of that love, but you can't replace the world with a fantasy without the ideal ending up as parody, as *kitsch*. Growing up I'd thought that was a truism, not something worth arguing. I read Eliot's poetry as desperation made into art and as a sullen teenager loved *Prufrock* the same way I'd loved the drawings of Grosz and the lyrics of Brecht: as decadence against decadence, a moralism acknowledging itself as a symptom of everything it claims to oppose. But when I made an offhand comment to my mother about Eliot and his High Church morality and misery, her startled reply, that the poems were "about language," threw me for a loop. She went on to quote Eliot on Henry James and I'd like to think she remembered the context and was just responding to what she assumed was a vulgar interest in biography, gossip, or "content" but I can't be sure. As I said, we re-fight old arguments in shorthand, and sometimes miss the point.

> James's critical genius comes out most tellingly in his mastery over, his baffling escape from, Ideas; a mastery and an escape which are perhaps the last test of a superior intelligence. *He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it.*... In England, ideas run wild and pasture on the emotions; instead of thinking with our feelings (a very different thing) we corrupt our feelings with ideas; we produce the public, the political, the emotional idea, evading sensation and thought.... Mr. Chesterton's brain swarms with ideas; I see no evidence that it thinks. James in his novels is like the best French critics in maintaining a point of view, a view-point untouched by the parasite idea. He is the most intelligent man of his generation.[4]

My parents didn't give their children credit for much, including anything resembling an understanding of what Eliot called "the objective correlative" or the relation of communicative form to ideas or emotion, but I'm not sure still they themselves even when they were younger acted on anything more than a highly tuned sense of reflex. I've never had a problem seeing

Eliot's work both as brilliantly complex craftsmanship and as a desperate defensive mechanism propelled by fears of political, social, and sexual failure: impotence of every sort. To separate one from the other—form from subject—would be like separating sadness from the blues. But that separation is something Modernism demanded, either in terms of "pure" form, or of subject matter reformulated as "ideas", "content" and reducible to ideology.

> Consider a discipline such as aesthetics. The fact that there are works of art is given for aesthetics. It seeks to find out under what conditions this fact exists, but it does not raise the question whether or not the realm of art is perhaps a realm of diabolical grandeur, a realm of this world, and therefore, in its core, hostile to God and, in its innermost and aristocratic spirit, hostile to the brotherhood of man. Hence, aesthetics does not ask whether there should be works of art.[5]

Aesthetics was an invention of the eighteenth century and the age of reason, a theory of art in the shadow of production, as something to be taken or left, optional, superfluous, "parasitic". But military uniforms are the outward manifestation of a military ethos, and they serve a purpose. The outward signs of regimentation reinforce the fact of it. Max Weber's manners are Germanic and bourgeois. He didn't analyze the way he dressed, walked, talked and parted his hair, but these *aesthetic* choices are documents of his relation to a culture, and his ideal of value-free science is as much the product of an age as he was. The fantasy of objectivity is the fantasy of the universal through the elision of the particular, beginning with the elision of the particular self. All you have to do to undermine Weber's moralizing pedantry is to imagine him mumbling the words to himself while adjusting his tie in the mirror. It's fascinating that although military orders don't always conflate the authoritarian and the universal it's one thing you can count on philosophers to do. And Weber's goal of course was to replace one form of aristocracy with another. His descriptions become justifications; his justifications become descriptions.

Compare Weber with the art historian, Panofsky.

> When an acquaintance greets me on the street by lifting his hat, what I see from a formal point of view is nothing but the change of certain details within a configuration forming part of the general pattern of color, lines and volumes which constitutes my world of vision. When I identify, as I automatically do, this configuration as an object (gentleman), and the change of detail as an event (hatlifting), I have already overstepped the limits of purely formal perception and entered a first sphere of subject matter or meaning. The meaning thus perceived is of an elementary and easily understandable nature. and we shall call it the factual meaning; it is apprehended by simply identifying certain visible forms with certain objects known to me from practical experience and by identifying the change in their relations with certain action or events
>
> Now the objects and events thus identified will naturally produce a certain reaction within myself. From the way my acquaintance performs his action I may be able to sense whether he is in a good or bad humor and whether his feelings towards me are indifferent, friendly or hostile. These psychological nuances will

> invest the gestures of my acquaintance with a further meaning which we shall call expressional. It differs from the factual one in that it is apprehended, not by simple identification, but by "empathy". To understand it, I need a certain sensitivity, but this sensitivity is still part of my practical experience, that is, of my everyday familiarity with objects and events. Therefore both the factual and the expressional meaning may be classified together: they constitute the class of primary or natural meanings.[6]

"…but this sensitivity is still part of my practical experience, that is, of my everyday familiarity with objects and events." Weber simply bypasses this as if it were irrelevant. He imagines an impersonal relation to the world. It's a common trope of the literature of the period, but the impersonal in art and technocracy, though the product of the same events are very different things.

I'm being unfair to Weber. He contradicts himself, as writers do. He's torn between romanticism and positivism. He's perfectly capable of discussing Rembrandt's art[7] or the "plebian" German people[8], and aesthetics as inseparable from ethics, in those other than himself. And then this, from the same lecture quoted above.

> After Nietzsche's devastating criticism of those 'last men' who 'invented happiness,' I may leave aside altogether the naive optimism in which science--that is, the technique of mastering life which rests upon science—has been celebrated as the way to happiness. Who believes in this? –aside from a few big children in university chairs or editorial offices.

Weber's pessimism is founded in irrationalism, an irrationalism he nonetheless champions, defending an inevitably authoritarian bureaucracy in the absence of the justifications of an almighty god. He mourns the death of heroes. So much for disenchantment. Who needs gods when you have ghosts? But for the sociology and political science of the children in university chairs, the source of the argument needed to be forgotten.

Stephen A. Kent in 1983

> Ideas formulated by Nietzsche were major sources of Weber's inspiration for the last, pessimistic section of *The Protestant Ethic* (Mommsen, 1974: 106-, see 79). Those of us who know Weber's work primarily through Parsons' translation fail to realize this because, once again, of deficiencies in Parsons' rendering of a crucial and revealing phrase.[9]

Earlier Kent had discussed the mistranslation of *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, and now it's "last stage" for "last men" Kent quotes Parsons' translation adding the original where needed.

> No one knows who will live in this cage (*Gehäuse*) in the future, or whether at the end of this

> tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of the old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage (*die 'letzten Menschen'*) of this cultural/development it might well be truly said: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.'

> The translation problem is clear: in the original German Weber referred to Nietzsche's "last men" as those who would be "'specialists without Spirit, sensualists without heart.'" He even put *letzten Menschen* in quotation marks, so that his readers would be certain to pick up the Nietzschean allusion to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Parsons' translation of the German phrase as "the last stage," not to mention his omission of the quotations around it, inarguably misrepresents what Weber tried to convey. The "specialists without spirit" quotation that Weber offered was not taken verbatim from Nietzsche. Rather, Weber himself constructed it with the tenor of Zarathustra in mind.[10]

Kent sprinkles the text with sources and I've removed them for simplicity. His source for the last claim is Wolfgang Mommsen, in 1965. Anthony Giddens, in his introduction to the Parsons translation in 1976, refers without reference to it as a quote from Goethe.[11] In 2019, François Chazel showed that it was taken from Gustav Schmoller.[12]

Franz Kafka published "The Metamorphosis" ten years after Weber published *The Protestant Ethic*. In 1905 Kafka was a student of Weber's younger brother; *In the Penal Colony* is now assumed to have lifted images and phrases from Alfred Weber's essay, "Der Beamte," ("The Official" or "The Bureaucrat")[13], so it's safe to say Kafka had read *The Protestant Ethic*. Even with debates over the Parsons' translation, the first reference to Kafka I've found is from 2001, and *stahlhartes Gehäuse* translated simply as "shell as hard as steel"[14].

Stephen Turner

> For Weber, 'logic', which might be taken by him to include calculation and decision-theory, was non-valuative, in contrast to the domain of described facts of the historical sciences, in which a 'valuative' element entered. What is valuative is, for Weber, what is ours: logic is everyone's.[15]

This is the ubiquitous trope: formalisms, abstracted, then returned as representation. And for Weber the preference was explicitly political. The debates he engaged in on academic freedom, as Peter Josephson makes clear[16], ended in a choice between government restrictions on who could be hired, with the accepted candidates permitted freedom of debate over both facts and values, politics and science, subjective and objective, or Weber's model of value neutrality, allowing professorships being granted to men with a wide range of beliefs and commitments, as long as they held them at a tactful distance. Neutrality

was a function of politesse.

Weber,

> Cultural consensus in the field of education can be justified basically only on the condition of severe self-restraint in the observance of the canons of science and scholarship. If one desires this consensus, one must put aside the idea of any sort of instruction in ultimate values and beliefs; similarly the university teacher, especially in the confidentiality of his lecture hall—nowadays of such solicitude—is under the sternest obligation to avoid proposing his own position in the struggle of ideals. He must make his chair into a forum where the understanding of ultimate standpoints—alien to and divergent from his own — is fostered, rather than into an arena where he propagates his own ideals.[17]

The choice is between the rule of specialists without spirit or of political enchantments and chaos; again, a ubiquitous trope of the period, and the century.

By the time anything becomes known as an *idea*, it's been around for a while. *Concepts* come late to the game. Sensibilities predate their clear articulation. Most serious scholars of Eliot and Kafka, of the art and the literature of the period have read Weber, and know the connection. The reverse is less common, at least in English. This isn't a matter of taste or aesthetics but error, the mistake Weber himself makes, though he was a broadly literate man in a time when it was assumed a man in his position would be. It's a mistake all philosophers make in imagining themselves as *unmoved movers*, the cause but not the product, imagining their own freedom even as their arguments describe, and prescribe, the lack of it for others. Their followers, in their role as followers, compound this, smoothing out the conflicts their masters' works describe.

We need, finally, to separate Modernism from modernity. They are not synonyms. Modernism is an ideology and modernity merely a situation: it's where we're at. The dream and lie of Modernism was the fantasy and the nightmare of disenchantment, of the fiction of the scientific or revolutionary vanguard, free from history, the instrument of reason alone. Modernism celebrated the range of fantasies that modernity inspired: Marx was a Modern, engaging contradictions, including his own; Marxists were Modernists, dreaming of the end of contradiction. These fantasies have aged badly, devolving from idealism to reaction and now farce. Modernism is dead; its defenders aren't. Roberta Smith's Picasso is Picasso after Clement Greenberg. Like contemporary defenders of reason, revolution, and enlightenment, she's not describing the works, she's defending a fantasy of what they're supposed to mean.

It's been over 30 years since I published my only piece of criticism.[18] The following pages have turned into a rewrite and expansion of a second piece I worked on, off and on, for years. Later I realized it had been part of an attempt to justify craft to an audience of those who disdained it, to defend a focus on the self in order to situate it in the world, rather than a focus on the world and as a way to escape the self, a defense of art for an audience of intellectuals who have fantasies of knowable universal truth. And regardless of my parents' intellectual defense of the pleasures of art, it was clear they saw their

understanding of it as something higher than the thing itself. Their relation was either worshipful or condescending; they thought of artists themselves mostly with contempt. Like Fried and his mentor Greenberg and all the vulgar propagandists they opposed my parents began not with art itself or history but with Modernism: with philosophy, with ideas as a form of secular theology. They had faith in the superiority of things that claimed to be *not fiction*, a claim long made for philosophy, and also for painting, if made only recently by Jews.

There's something Talmudic in the assumption that it's more important to study what's been written than to try to produce something new other than commentary. And there's something of the modern intellectual tradition, or what it became, that condescends to craftsmen as opposed to critics. In the age of science, the defenders of culture take precedence over its practitioners: "the history of nonsense is scholarship."[19] The man who spoke those words was referring to the study of Jewish mysticism, (and was a Rabbi nonetheless). My mother said once, in annoyance, that art should grow on trees. She said it only once, to end an argument, but it was telling.

It was a fantasy of Modernism that scholarship was science, and only mystics and eccentrics questioned science. But progress undefined is as irrational as any other value goal. Hermann Broch put it well in two essays. I'll quote from both:

> Although art is no longer a part of the religious system, having become autonomous like all other value-systems since the breakup of that all-encompassing system of religion, reinforcing this autonomy with the principle of *l'art pour l'art,* nonetheless, art even today has set down its own private theology in a series of aesthetic theories, and continues to hold to its highest value-goal, and this, too, continues to hover in the realm of the infinite, be it called "beauty," "harmony" or whatever else. And the ethical demand made of the artist is, as always, to produce "good" works, and only the dilettante and the producer of kitsch (whom we meet here for the first time) focus their work on beauty.
>
> For the aesthetic in general as an expression of the supreme ultimate value of a system can influence the result of ethical action only secondarily, just as "wealth" is not the main goal but the side effect of individual commercial activity. And "wealth" itself is an irrational concept. It is an almost mystical process, the setting of ethical values: Arising from the irrational, transforming the irrational to the rational, yet nonetheless it is the irrational that radiates from within the resulting form.[20]
>
> …[R]eligious belief is not required, but at most just that self-evident *religio* without which there is no desire for knowledge, not even the desire for atheism.[21]

Why go to Mars? "Because we need to know." The logical structuring of a desire does not make the desire itself logical.

Progress is most often defined in terms of helping others, and criticized when it fails to do so, but what if it succeeds? Medical

ethicist Daniel Callahan on “the research imperative “

> Though unfamiliar to most scientists and the general public, the term expresses a cultural problem that caught my eye. It occurs in an article written by the late Protestant moral theologian Paul Ramsey in 1976 as part of a debate with a Jesuit theologian, Richard McCormick. McCormick argued that it ought to be morally acceptable to use children for nontherapeutic research, that is, for research with no direct benefit to the children themselves and in the absence of any informed consent. Referring to claims about the “necessity” of such research, Ramsey accused McCormick of falling prey to the “research imperative”, the view that the importance of research could overcome moral values.
>
> That was the last time I heard of the phrase for many years, but it informs important arguments about research that have surfaces with increasing force of late. It captures, for instance, the essence of what Joshua Lederberg, a Nobel laureate for his work on genetics and president emeritus of Rockefeller University once remarked to me: “The blood of those who will die if biomedical research is not pursued will be upon the hands of those who don’t do it.”[22]

It’s war communism in the war on disease, Stalinism for the betterment of the race. And isn't that what Stalinism always was? The logic trumps even the claims of astrophysicists that we need to know the “final answers”. According to Lederberg even most scientific research is a criminal waste of time. On a less extreme note we have the well known self-described neoliberal economist, Brad DeLong, defending his definition of economic progress:

> …you have to either live in the countryside or live in the city and be really rich to say that rubber tomatoes suck. For those humans who live in the city and are not really rich, rubber tomatoes provide a welcome and tasty and affordable simulacrum of the tomato-eating experience.[23]

We make sacrifices big and small to get to where we’re going. Where that is, is unexplained because it’s unexplainable. And in the meantime who am I to judge others’ “revealed preference”?

The empiricism central to art and to all communicative acts that Panofsky described so well has been ignored in favor of a desire for some sort of objective “truth”, even artistic or poetic truth. Artists, those professional liars, are now the model for philosophers who claim so proudly to be immune to enchantment. The French historian Emmanuel Todd in a recent discussion of the endurance of *Laïcité,* put it well: "A religion is a form of utopia: when it disappears, alternative utopias appear.” [24]

The arts, engaging the language and forms of a society at any given time, are synecdochic for society. Reading Linda Nochlin on French Orientalism[25], on Jean-Leon Gerome and other artist/fantasists of the Paris Salon, it was impossible not to see the parallel to Clement Greenberg’s claims for his favored art. The best description of Impressionism is to say it demanded no more than honesty as opposed to the self-regarding hypocrisy of the Salon, but the claims of Modernism call for something

closer to what Baudelaire called “philosophic” art, ending in Greenberg’s blank Apollonianism, and beyond that in other equally rationalized assumption of artistic or political value.

> What is pure art according to the modern idea? It is the creation of an evocative magic, containing at once the object and the subject, the world external to the artist and the artist himself.
>
> What is Philosophical Art according to the ideas of Chenavard and the German school? It is a plastic art which sets itself up in place of books, by which I mean as a rival to the printing press in the teaching of history, morals and philosophy.[26]

Remember Weber. The questions for all this don’t concern politics or art as such but the relation of ideas and ideology to language. In Eliot’s description James concentrates on the ideas he holds, not those he wants to; he’s describing himself, not what he wants to be, and in doing that he’s able to describe honestly not the world itself but his perceptions of it. Eliot restates Baudelaire, but he’s slipping, which is why my mother could argue that his poems were “about language” without being able to say what that meant. Putting Eliot in the context of his time, and reading him without defending him, it seems clear that subjectivity and objectivity scare him equally, he’s phobic, so he both argues against and presages Greenberg.

Eliot is torn between what he sees as the only options in a culture ruled by positivism: either a history founded in high conservative morality or the specious aestheticism of art for art’s sake. Eliot’s modern poetry is not the Modernism of an abstract ideal; like James’ prose it’s the art of knotted desire, of representation sought, denied and affirmed in an absence that the form itself is constructed to describe, the art of abstraction and allusive representation, of the potter’s bowl and the water that dare not speak its name. It’s this arch *formality* that later split completely, leading into anti-representational formalism and the illustrational representational model of conceptualism, the absurd dichotomy of propaganda and empty art for art’s sake, of ideas about everything and art about nothing.

Eliot’s arguments and language exhibit in their irony and moral confusion a critical defense of the humanities and humanism that fits well with the historians Panofsky and Johan Huizinga, and that allows for Marx, Freud and Weber as observers but not as founders of dogmas built from rationalism and science fiction. Eliot describes his own desperation, and it’s a desperation that needs to be understood, as much as we need to understand the logic that mandates rubber tomatoes for the urban poor.

Technocracy is founded in numbers and numbers have no subtext. The subtext to technical understanding is in its use: the subtext to automobile design is the experience of driving and traffic jams, subjects of limited interest to car designers, if not to those who drive, or prefer public transit. The subtexts of Eliot’s poems are right on the surface. That’s why we read them. The reduction of the humanities, and therefore of all thought, to technics, fostered by the construction of formalisms in language in imitation of mathematics, means now that subtext is marginalized in precisely those fields that once

acknowledged it as inevitable and chose to face it. The result is a philosophy opposed to politics itself.

The Cartesian subject speaks in propositions and concepts and to operate outside those concepts is to be unrecognizable, illogical, irrational. If words are like numbers then as has been argued philosophical logic is science. Mathematics is formal but most mathematicians are Platonists and numbers are seen as modeling the world. But words don't model the world they represent or *depict* it. And their relation to the world itself is fluid. That's why not only do we read the same books over and over again, we even go see different people perform the same texts. Each performance of Hamlet is both different and distinct. We don't pay to hear performances of mathematical equations.

Remember Weber… and Saint-Simon, and the first modern* use of "avant-garde" to refer to artists, in a dialogue between an artist, a scientist and an industrialist.
From *Dreams of Happiness: Social Art and the French Left, 1830-1850,* by Neil McWilliam.

> Taking up Saint-Simon's belief that in a fully developed industrial society government would be rendered redundant, the artist argues that it is the triumvirate of progressive capacities who best understand popular needs and whose destiny it is to administer the state. Only suspicion and misunderstanding prevent them from assuming this role and bringing about sweeping change in the moral and political order. The remarks placed in his mouth signify the artist's final admission into ruling circles as the peer of both industrial and savant. His newly recognized powers transform him from an independent professional into a public figure whose work must be dictated by broad considerations of polity. In this respect, Saint-Simon robs him of the autonomous exercise of moral judgment demanded by such eighteenth-century commentators as Diderot and La Font de Saint-Yenne; in return for social eminence, he is obliged to direct his talents toward propagating ideas that emerge from the deliberations of the administrative triumvirate. From this perspective, the artist in the Dialogue foresees his colleagues taking on decisive responsibilities:
>
> > It is we artists who will serve as your vanguard, [*C'est nous, artistes, qui vous serviront d'avant-garde.*] since art's power has greatest immediacy and rapidity. We have arms of every sort: when we wish to spread new ideas among men, we inscribe them on marble or canvas; we make them popular through poems or melodies; we use in turn the lyre or the flute, odes or songs, stories or the novel; the dramatic stage is also open to us, and it is there above all that we exert an electric and victorious influence.[27]

"L'Artiste, le savant et l'industriel", and the earlier *"Le Catéchisme des Industriels"* [Catechism of the Industrialists], sound

* Matei Călinescu finds an earlier source, in the late sixteenth century. Călinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Duke, 1987 pp 97-8

like contemporary fantasies out of Silicon Valley and MIT, minus the need for deliberation, since the distinctions between the three have vanished. We'll get to that later.

Nochlin, in "The Invention of the Avant-Garde" [28] cites the passage as quoted by Donald Egbert in "The Idea of "Avant-garde in Art and Politics"[29]. Neil McWilliam responds to Egbert in a footnote.

> Egbert's suggestion that the phrase avant-garde prefigures its later usage in the sense of an artistic vanguard is entirely misleading. Rather than referencing formal or thematic experimentation, the context in which the term is habitually used within modernism, its deployment here refers exclusively to the political relationship the artist sustains as mediator between the leadership and the people. Valuing the artist only insofar as his talents contribute to the progressive amelioration of society, Saint Simon restricts his discussion to a range of functional priorities entirely indifferent to any formal characteristics intrinsic to the various media embraced within the term beaux-arts. In emphasizing his designation of the artist as being in the avant-garde, Egbert ironically overlooks the term's appearance in Saint—Simon's earlier work, where he speaks of a scientific avant-garde in a sense closer to modern usage, albeit in the context of a different discipline.

As if intellectual history weren't a game of telephone, of evolution, decay, and transformation. Etymology and philology are the history of change, of ideas and objects signifying one thing at one time and the opposite two centuries on. And Egbert is clear in describing what artists took from Saint-Simon and what they left behind. The history of the avant-garde is a history of visions and revisions. Honest history, partial by definition but stripped of enthusiasms, makes a mockery of fantasies of rational continuity. McWilliam says Saint-Simon is "important in elevating the Middle Ages as a period of exceptional creative achievement." [p.49] He and his disciples, like the Catholic revivalists, "judged the Renaissance from the perspective of the Middle Ages, and regarded the later period as initiating a critical era of which contemporary society was the inheritor." [p.133]. This is humanism seen from the perspective of anti-humanism, an ideology foundational to modernist purism in both politics and form.

Nochlin cites Baudelaire's reply, in his posthumous *Mon cœur mis à nu,* but doesn't quote him.

> XXXI
>
> Of love, of the predilection of the French for military metaphors. Here every metaphor wear s a moustache. Militant literature. —To man the breach, —To bear the standard aloft, —To maintain the standard high and firm. —To hurl oneself into the thick of the fight, —One of the veterans. All these fine phrases apply generally to the college scouts and to the do-nothings of the coffee-house.
>
> XXXII
>
> To add to the military metaphors: Soldier of the judicial press (Bertin). The poets of strife. The litterateurs

> of the advance guard. [*Les poètes de combat. Les littérateurs d'avant-garde*] This habitude of military metaphors denotes minds not military, but made for discipline, that is, for conformity, minds born domesticated, Belgian minds, which can think only in society.[30]

Rationalism, as either the rationalization of ends or as an end in itself, now dominates the academic arts and humanities. Even supporters are obliged to refer to the result as "baroque specialization"[31]. Economics is still seen by many as a formal science, and the same dreams hold in other fields so founded in assumptions and the study of both the products of human action and human beings themselves as objects, by implication unlike their observers (as designers now see tradesmen as tools) that substantive self-reflection is thought pointless. The academy is dominated by ideas and by systems, of objectivity, philosophy and theory, in a culture of self-reinforcing illustration. "I am *thus* -intellectual/scientist/liberal/leftist- because I say so." Subtext has become a technical category, applicable only to the language of the uneducated, un-philosophical "folk". Irony is reduced to an ironic appreciation of the limits of outsiders.

Economics as a field is in as much of a crisis as the economy. Continental and Anglo-American philosophy are collapsing in on themselves and on each other, and formal logic for lack of anything better is returning to its roots as theology. The Modernist anti-humanist academy of *idées fixes* is unable to compete with advances in the hard sciences or to respond to events on the street. It's clear to the world at large that American readers of Max Weber could never do justice to the Arab Spring, as it's become clear even to Americans that the American model of journalistic objectivity is merely objectively pro-American. The Enlightenment has been under attack for as long as its existed, and that should have put a break on utopian fantasies, but until recently optimists always found a way to use every new "discovery" of the depth of human folly to claim that mistakes would never be repeated.

To adapt a Russian joke from the 90s, about communists and capitalism, everything the Postmodernists said about Postmodernism was a lie; everything they said about the Enlightenment was true. Academic instrumentalism and academic Postmodernism are variants of Modernism. Rationalism and irrationalism begin with the individual, either as pedant or poet, but both face the same dilemma: how to reconcile individualism, which is taken as a given, with community. To read all their fantasies for subtext and context is to resituate ideas in the world of facts and events, to counter rationalism not with irrationalism, the other side of the same coin, but with empiricism, and empiricism places the individual as a creature of community. Again, that's not an original statement, but it never seemed to stick. American academics reinvented French philosophy the way the American "hospitality industry" reinvents French bistros, as simulacrum, stripped of the sociability central of the original. If Continental philosophy is now the philosophy of the flaneur, Anglo-American philosophy is the philosophy of the schoolmaster, pedant and *fan*. American critical theory, no less than American Analytic philosophy is the bureaucracy of received ideas. Political science is what Kant called "Private Reason". The politics is deadly.

From Eliot to Santayana: his review, from 1911, of Bertrand Russell's *Philosophical Essays*.

> Mathematics seems to have a value for Mr. Russell akin to that of religion. It affords a sanctuary to which to flee from the world, a heaven suffused with a serene radiance and full of a peculiar sweetness and consolation. "Real life," he writes, "is to most men a long second-best, a perpetual compromise between the ideal and the possible; but the world of pure reason knows no compromise, no practical limitations, no barrier to the creative activity embodying in splendid edifices the passionate aspiration after the perfect from which all great work springs. Remote from human passions, remote even from the pitiful laws of nature, the generations have gradually created an ordered cosmos where pure thought can dwell as in its natural home, and where one, at least, of our nobler impulses can escape from the dreary exile of the actual world." This study is one of "those elements in human life which merit a place in heaven." "The true spirit of delight, the exaltation, the sense of being more than man, which is the touchstone of the highest excellence, is to be found in mathematics as surely as in poetry."
>
> This enthusiastic language might have, I should think, an opposite effect upon some readers to that which Mr. Russell desires. It might make them suspect that the claim to know an absolute ideal necessity, so satisfying to one of our passionate impulses, might be prompted by the same conceit, and subject to the same illusion, as the claim to know absolute truth in religion. [32]

James, Proust, and others made art from the memories of the past in ways that did not ape it, cheapen it or embalm it. They used it as Santayana did, to gauge the present. Santayana on the James brothers.

> [William] and his brother Henry were as tightly swaddled in the genteel tradition as any infant geniuses could be, for they were born in Cambridge, and in a Swedenborgian household. Yet they burst those bands almost entirely. The ways in which the two brothers freed themselves, however, are interestingly different. Mr. Henry James has done it by adopting the point of view of the outer world, and by turning the genteel American tradition, as he turns everything else, into a subject-matter for analysis. [33]

Eliot was like James but also like Marcel Duchamp, who less refused to embalm the past than made embalming his subject. The question for Santayana, and for Duchamp -or at least his later academic champions- is whether this observant counterpoint to Modernism can be called analysis, since that implies a claim to objectivity that Santayana might otherwise avoid.

Anti-moderns were moderns who opposed the present and preferred an idea of the past; the past itself was gone. The paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites represent a fantasy, at best borderline kitsch; Eliot understood that and wrote about and against his own desire. Duchamp avoided the fate of Alfred Jarry, as Warhol avoided the fate of many of his “superstars” by understanding them better than they understood themselves, though Warhol more than Duchamp was an observer of others.

Santayana refers to distance, and "the outer world", dodging the fact that it's no more than a relation, Europe to America, and one relation among others. Rather than romanticizing a place he romanticizes a history and an ethos: James, Eliot, Duchamp, Russell and Proust hewed to the manners of the aristocracy and the high bourgeois. But Santayana indulges aristocratic sentiment and Russell elides it, trying to escape contradictions that all the artists dive into head first. Santayana chides Russell but in the end they're both philosophers, men of ideas before experience. And again that's the final subject here: the relation not of art to science, but of art and science to independent philosophy and theology, of empiricism in all its forms to rationalism.

It would take more of a philologist than I am, to describe to the history of analysis, with all the word implies, because all of the various 20th century pseudo-sciences begin in the 18th century, and earlier. It's not a question anymore whether or not Descartes' imagination was formed in the 17th century counter-renaissance. "History" he writes, "is like foreign Travel. It broadens the mind but it does not deepen it."[34] Stephen Toulmin quoting him in the early 90s is much too polite. James Boon, twenty years before Toulmin, writing about the relation of Levi Strauss to the Symbolists[35] is so apologetic as to be almost obsequious. But it's no longer a question whether or not Saussure and Mallarmé exemplify the concerns of an era, whether ideas of synchrony and timelessness, of ideal order, satisfied a desire in an age of dynamism and instability. It's interesting that in books on the relation of fine art to philosophy, reticence is the least of the authors' problems, again due to the historical relation of the fine arts to the Church, to theology and to "truth" as opposed to fiction and "lies". Eliot and Santayana both would be surprised to find Duchamp, another heir to Huysmans, hailed as a philosopher by none other than the editor of the *Journal of Philosophy.* Arthur Danto was nothing if not an heir to the genteel tradition that Santayana mocked. Still, philosophy and *theory* are different things and philosophers who want to defend art continue to worry.

> I am not sure that the structure of rhetoric and the structure of philosophy are of a piece, since it is the aim of philosophy to prove rather than merely persuade. [36]

Philosophers can't imagine their own words as attempts to persuade. Plato can't imagine Socrates as an orator, and neither can Danto. He hopes against hope to give art the affirmative function of philosophy, the model mocked not only by Baudelaire but Alfred Kazin. In America, "art is good for you"[37]. It must be: if it's not good for you it's bad for you. One way or another philosophy as philosophy becomes the literature either of rationalized despair or a Whig theory of culture, or both. Nietzsche after all is trying desperately to improve us; his anti-Christianity can only be predicated on Christianity, his anti-moral imperative predicated on moralism. And his fantasies bear all the relation to ancient Greece that Dante Gabriel Rosetti's fantasies do to the Quattrocento.

Arguments for prescription are a given. Artists will build a world according to imperatives that define their imaginations, imperatives that others will not share, but which as articulated they may find interesting. Art at its most extreme can be a description of mania or psychosis, but no matter what it describes it's as description that it succeeds or fails, and the politics

of description is non-hierarchical, regardless of the thing being described. That's true as much for the writing of history as for poetry. But philosophy is predicated on prescription and on hierarchy. It's conservative by definition, a collaborative debate among the elite, whether of the Church, the academy or our nominally elected technocracy. And it sets itself above all other forms of discourse. With the modern separation of science and sense and a rise in the ideal of apolitical objective reason, philosophy moved from conservatism to anti-politics. Descartes' relegation of history to pleasurable bunk was the inspiration for the deadliest of all the wrong turns of the past 300 years.

> Nine days before his death Immanuel Kant was visited by his physician. Old, ill and nearly blind, he rose from his chair and stood trembling with weakness and muttering unintelligible words. Finally his faithful companion realized that he would not sit down again until the visitor had taken a seat. This he did, and Kant then permitted himself to be helped to his chair and, after having regained some of his strength, said, "Das Gefühl für Humanität hat mich noch nicht verlassen"—"The sense of humanity has not yet left me". The two men were moved almost to tears. For, though the word *Humanität* had come, in the eighteenth century, to mean little more than politeness and civility, it had, for Kant, a much deeper significance, which the circumstances of the moment served to emphasize: man's proud and tragic consciousness of self-approved and self-imposed principles, contrasting with his utter subjection to illness, decay and all that implied in the word 'mortality.'[38]

The passage above is from another Panofsky essay, *The History of Art as a Humanistic Disciple.* It's a story told by a historian about a philosopher and what philosophy, and language, were losing.

The entry for humanism in Simon Blackburn's *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*

> Most generally, any philosophy concerned to emphasize human welfare and dignity, and either optimistic about the powers of human reason, or at least insistent that we have no alternative but to use it as best we can. More particularly, the movement distinctive of the Renaissance and allied to the renewed study of Greek and Roman literature: a rediscovery of the unity of human beings and nature, and a renewed celebration of the pleasures of life, all supposed lost in the medieval world. …[39]

The above is taken from the 2005 edition; the underlined words were not in the first edition in 1994. Adding them lessens the error without eliminating it, and the snide reference to humanists' supposed claims regarding the "pleasures of life" is an argument no historian would make.

Panofsky, again. Remember Saint-Simon.

> [T]he Renaissance conception of *humanitas* had a two-fold aspect from the outset. The new interest in the

> human being was based both on a revival of the classical antithesis between *humanitas* and *barbartias*, or *feritas*, and on a survival of the mediaeval antithesis between *humanitas* and *divinitas*. When Marsilio Ficino defines man as a "rational soul participating in the intellect of God, but operating in a body," he defines him as the one being that is both autonomous and finite. And Pico's famous 'speech' 'On the Dignity of Man' is anything but a document of paganism. Pico says that God placed man in the center of the universe so that he might be conscious of where he stands, and therefore free to decide 'where to turn.' He does not say that man is the center of the universe, not even in the sense commonly attributed to the classical phrase, "man the measure of all things."
>
> It is from this ambivalent conception of *humanitas* that humanism was born. It is not so much a movement as an attitude which can be defined as the conviction of the dignity of man, based on both the insistence on human values (rationality and freedom) and the acceptance of human limitations (fallibility and frailty); from these two postulates result responsibility and tolerance….
>
> The Middle Ages accepted and developed rather than studied and restored the heritage of the past. They copied classical works of art and used Aristotle and Ovid much as they copied and used the works of contemporaries. They made no attempt to interpret them from an archaeological, philological or "critical," in short, from an historical, point of view. For, if human existence could be thought of as a means rather than an end, how much less could the records of human activity be considered as values in themselves.
>
> In mediaeval scholasticism there is, therefore, no basic distinction between natural science and what we call the humanities, *studia humaniora*, to quote again an Erasmian phrase. The practice of both, so far as it was carried on at all, remained within the framework of what was called philosophy. From the humanistic point of view, however, it became reasonable, and even inevitable, to distinguish, within the realm of creation, between the sphere of nature and the sphere of culture, and to define the former with reference to the latter.[40]

The contemporary definition of humanism as used by philosophers now comes from the 18th century. The humanism of the Renaissance was not "optimistic about the powers of human reason". Blackburn admits this himself in his entries on Erasmus and Montaigne. Erasmus, "had little confidence that the unaided powers of men were capable of forging new utopias". Montaigne

> …had no very high opinion of the faculties and achievements of mankind. His attitude found ample confirmation in the work of Sextus Empiricus whose motto 'Que sais-je' (What do I know?) Montaigne adopted to himself.

Strangely, Montaigne isn't referred to as a humanist, and neither is Montesquieu, whose entry is laced with moralizing contempt. Neither of these entries was altered between 1994 and 2005.

The conclusion of the entry for humanism

> Humanism in this Renaissance sense was quite consistent with religious belief, it being supposed that God had put us here precisely in order to further those things the humanists found important. Later the term tended to become appropriated for antireligious social and political movements. Finally, in the late 20th century, humanism is sometimes used as a pejorative term by postmodernist and especially feminist writers. applied to philosophies such as that of Sartre, that rely upon the possibility of the autonomous, selfconscious, rational, single self, and that are supposedly insensitive to the inevitable fragmentary, splintered, historically and socially conditioned nature of personality and motivation.

The "rational, single self… *supposedly* insensitive" Like the "pleasures of life… *supposed* lost "

You don't have to look forward to postmodernism and feminism to question the possibility of the *selfconscious, rational, single self*. Humanism begins with the acceptance of its absence. The unification of the humanities and sciences was a hallmark of the Gothic, and it became the hallmark of Modernism. "For, if human existence could be thought of as a means rather than an end, how much less could the records of human activity be considered as values in themselves."

From Russell's discussion of Erasmus in the *History of Western Philosophy*

> And so the curiosity of the Renaissance, from having been literary, gradually became scientific. Such a cataract of new facts overwhelmed men that they could, at first, only be swept along with the current. The old systems were evidently wrong; Aristotle's physics and Ptolemy's astronomy and Galen's medicine could not be stretched to include the discoveries that had been made. Montaigne and Shakespeare are content with confusion: discovery is delightful, and system is its enemy. It was not till the seventeenth century that the system building faculty caught up with the new knowledge of matters of fact. All this, however, has taken us far from Erasmus, to whom Columbus was less interesting than the Argonauts.[41]

He adds: "As regards the life of Erasmus, I have mainly followed the excellent biography by Huizinga."

Russell the aristocrat and arch formalist can't help but have a richer understanding of humanism than Blackburn is capable of. He's a broadly educated man from a different era, connected to an older tradition of humanism whether he wants to be or not. His language can't help being more interesting than the ideas he claims to represent.

Modern liberalism, in theory and practice, is predicated on often fraught relations of self and other, and between freedom and equality. Any sense of *internal* discord, between freedom and obligation, has become externalized; it's enough for the self-interested rational and free man to be governed by ideal and fair rules. That serves Blackburn and his cohort but that wasn't enough for Russell and it certainly not enough for Kant.

> If understanding in general be defined as the faculty of laws or rules, the faculty of judgement may be termed the faculty of subsumption under these rules; that is, of distinguishing whether this or that does or does not stand under a given rule (*casus datae legis*). General logic contains no directions or precepts for the faculty of judgement, nor can it contain any such. For *as it makes abstraction of all content of cognition*, no duty is left for it, except that of exposing analytically the mere form of cognition in conceptions, judgements, and conclusions, and of thereby establishing formal rules for all exercise of the understanding.
>
> Thus, it is evident that the understanding is capable of being instructed by rules, but that the judgement is a peculiar talent, which does not, and cannot require tuition, but only exercise. This faculty is therefore the specific quality of the so-called mother-wit, the want of which no scholastic discipline can compensate. [42]

I've seen that passage brought into the present via philosophy and the late works of Wittgenstein but not related to the past and to the wider culture of the humanists, even as Wittgenstein's late work shows him trying to find his own way intellectually and emotionally out of scholastic pedantry and the autistic functionalism of the *Tractatus*. As a lay reader I'm comfortable saying that Wittgenstein began his career alongside Russell and ended it closer to Proust, but no "technically" minded reader would allow a philosopher of Wittgenstein's importance to be linked to a novelist without making some form of apology for slumming.

The ideological myopia becomes even more telling in discussion of public reason, the definition originating again with Kant.

> [B]y the public use of one's own reason I understand that use which someone makes of it *as a scholar* before the entire public of the *world of readers.* What I call the private use of reason is that which one may make of it in a certain *civil* post or office with which he is entrusted. Now, for many affairs conducted in the interest of a commonwealth a certain mechanism is necessary, by means of which some members of the commonwealth must behave merely passively, so as to be directed by the government, through an artful unanimity, to public ends (or at least prevented from destroying such ends). Here it is, certainly, impermissible to argue; instead, one must obey. But insofar as this part of the machine also regards himself as a member of a whole commonwealth, even of the society of citizens of the world, and so in his capacity of a scholar who by his writings addresses a public in the proper sense of the word, he can certainly argue without thereby harming the affairs assigned to him in part as a passive member. Thus it would be ruinous

> if an officer, receiving an order from his superiors, wanted while on duty to engage openly in subtle reasoning about its appropriateness' or utility; he must obey. But he cannot fairly be prevented, as a scholar, from making remarks about errors in the military service and from putting these before his public for appraisal. A citizen cannot refuse to pay the taxes imposed upon him; an impertinent censure of such levies when he is to pay them may even be punished as a scandal (which could occasion general insubordination). But the same citizen does not act against the duty of a citizen when, as a scholar, he publicly expresses his thoughts about the inappropriateness or even injustice of such decrees.[43]

The contemporary understanding of public reason comes from John Rawls, who turns Kant's definition on its head.

> The idea of public reason, as I understand it, belongs to a conception of a well ordered constitutional democratic society. The form and content of this reason -the way it is understood by citizens and how it interprets their political relationship- is part of the idea of democracy itself. This is because a basic feature of democracy is the fact of reasonable pluralism - the fact that a plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious, philosophical, and moral, is the normal result of its culture of free institutions. Citizens realize that they cannot reach agreement or even approach mutual understanding on the basis of their irreconcilable comprehensive doctrines. In view of this, they need to consider what kinds of reasons they may reasonably give one another when fundamental political questions are at stake. I propose that in public reason comprehensive doctrines of truth or right be replaced by an idea of the politically reasonable addressed to citizens as citizens.[44]

Kant assumes a public space for reasoned debate, reason in the widest sense, and a profound moral obligation on the part all involved, even, as Panofsky writes, a "proud and tragic consciousness" of the world beyond their own private interests. That obligation was fading in Kant's time; at this point the only commonly acknowledged ethic of service is in the military.

Rawls assumes the primacy of private interests, both as a fact and *as a good*. If it weren't the latter, he wouldn't defend it. Public reason has become little more than a form of public rule following, public displays of Kantian private reason.

Kant assumes community; Rawls assumes atomism. Liberalism takes it for granted that Rawls is the more "objective" and scientific of the two, and that pretense is one of the reasons for the rise of liberalism. Republicanism demands a virtue ethic. Liberalism is predicated only on law. The 1994 edition of Blackburn's *Oxford Dictionary* had no entry for Republicanism. It included an entry for Isaac Newton but not for William Blackstone. Both were added. Times have changed, and not because

philosophers or anyone else led the way.

The implications of the doctrine of individualism and equality can be written in one sentence.

> "If *her* interests have the same value as *his*, then *my* interests have the same value as *yours*."

The above is the model of bureaucratic egalitarianism, of contract laws for everything. For those who prefer sociability, it's the beginning of the desire for the hive; not for shared public space but a private shared space. In both cases the model of the individual is one dimensional, not only the opposite of the psychologism of Freud, but of Kant, Erasmus and Shakespeare. We don't have to look very far for examples in contemporary culture. Libertarianism is an ideal, as are the Hive Mind and the Borg. Raves and geek uniformity describe something extant in the world. Individualism as an ideology results in conformity. Imagining ourselves as self-interested un-conflicted monads has changed our behavior. It's not a question of whether these models of behavior are moral or not, but of whether they're the smartest choice. And the point is that most of the people who follow them do only that. It takes a model of divided consciousness to ask yourself why you prefer what you prefer. It takes the same model to ask seriously why someone would prefer something else. It takes a form of *second order* curiosity that by definition cannot be technical. Intelligence can not be reduced to expertise.

Recently, again, experts have become critical of expertise, philosophers critical of philosophy, but they miss the point. They're unwilling to see themselves as part of a process that preceded their "discovery' of the flaws in past assumptions. Philosophers who recognize themselves as orators become no more than sad ex-priests. The "postmodern" defense of bad writing and of theory as art doesn't work as a defense of poetry or of lawyers, whose role hasn't changed that much over the last 2000 years. Social scientists refuse to see themselves as tradespeople even as historians have never quibbled over whether their field can be called an art. The members of the Frankfurt School were exemplars of bureaucratic reason, the most famous of them so horrified of the implications that he called desperately and pathetically for unreason as the only possible response. Adorno was either unwilling or incapable of the empiricism, directed inwardly and outwardly, that might have allowed him see just how much both he and his beloved "old institute"[45] were products of the same forces that made the things he claimed to oppose. The rise of a self-conscious *geek* culture, the proud celebration of the preadolescent imagination in adulthood, came in earnest ten years after the publication of *One-Dimensional Man* and the release of *Dr. Strangelove*, the title character an amalgam of Werner von Braun and the *ur-geek* von Neumann. "If you say why not bomb them tomorrow, I say, why not today? If you say today at 5 o'clock, I say why not one o'clock?"[46]

How and why culture moved as it did is a narrative that cannot be described by reason alone. It's a gold mine for ironists, but neither *Strangelove* or *The Social Network* were products of the academy or of technocracy as such, and the question for academics in the humanities is why the works they study, works of art, of skill and craft made by participant observers, as poets or politicians, are so much richer than the works they themselves produce. This is the question that faced the scholastics in the past as it does now. Richard Sennett may write about craftsmen and James Scott about "metis" but an academic book

about street smarts is to street smarts what a book about how to pick up girls is to getting laid. And politics like fucking is a social act.

Before I move ahead, I'm going to return to Russell and Santayana, the culture they shared, and the ways the two of them negotiated it.

Russell on William James.

> His warm-heartedness and his delightful humour caused him to be almost universally beloved. The only man I know of who did not feel any affection for him was Santayana, whose doctor's thesis William James had described as "the perfection of rottenness." There was between these two men a temperamental opposition which nothing could have overcome. [47]

I've quoted Santayana's praise for James. Here's James on Santayana, including the source of the quote Russell refers to.

> If our students now could begin really to understand what Royce means with his voluntaristic-pluralistic monism, what Münsterberg means with his dualistic scientificism and platonism, what Santayana means by his pessimistic platonism (I wonder if he and Mg. have had any close mutually encouraging intercourse in this line?), what I mean by my crass pluralism, what you mean by your ethereal idealism, that these are so many religions, ways of fronting life, and worth fighting for, we should have a genuine philosophic universe at Harvard. The best condition of it would be an open conflict and rivalry of the diverse systems. (Alas! that I should be out of it, just as my chance begins!) The world might ring with the struggle, if we devoted ourselves exclusively to belaboring each other. I now understand Santayana, the man. I never understood him before. But what a perfection of rottenness in a philosophy!
>
> ...I have meant to write to Santayana; but on second thoughts, and to save myself, I will just ask you to send him this. It saves him from what might be the nuisance of having to reply, and on my part it has the advantage of being more free-spoken and direct. He is certainly an extraordinarily distingué writer. Thank him for existing![48]
>
> ---
> de Boeldieu: May I ask you a question?
> von Rauffenstein: Of course.

B: Why did you make an exception of me by inviting me here?

R: Because your name is Boeldieu, career officer in the French Army. And I am Rauffenstein, career officer in the Imperial German Army.

B: But my comrades are officers as well.

R: A 'Maréchal' and 'Rosenthal,' officers?

B: They're fine soldiers.

R: Charming legacy of the French Revolution.

B: Neither you nor I can stop the march of time.

R: Boldieu, I don't know who will win this war, but whatever the outcome, it will mean the end of the Rauffensteins and the Boeldieus.

B: We're no longer needed.

R: Isn't that a pity?

B: Perhaps.

It was hard for me not to think of the exchange above, from Jean Renoir's *Grande Illusion*, when reading James' letter. Both describe the anti-instrumentalism of the aristocracy, the rule of social as opposed to asocial formalism. And both are written as comedy. Look at the photograph; it's an image of aristocracy as high camp. And the double reversal: the hyper masculine von Rauffenstein has become matronly and the fey de Boeldieu slyly aggressive. Later, the resolution.

R: Forgive me.

B: I would have done the same. French or German, duty is duty.

R: Are you in pain?

B: I didn't think a bullet in the stomach hurt so much.

R: I aimed at your legs.

B: It was 500 feet, with poor visibility... Besides, I was running.

R: Please, no excuses. I was clumsy.

The last time I saw it in a theater I was with an Italian ballerina who yelled "Kitsch!" and screamed with laughter. Hilarious. And yet the tragedy is real. This is the irony of modernity. The only reference to aristocracy in the first edition of Blackburn's dictionary is his description of Montesquieu as born into the aristocracy but having "a rather unaristocratic avarice."

I was almost surprised at Blackburns' reference to greed since many academics, political philosophers and political scientists now are oblivious to the distinction between the ruling classes before and after the rise of capitalism, a distinction that both nouveau riches and leftists for opposite reasons would prefer to ignore. But as George Lefebvre wrote in *The Coming of the French Revolution*,

> The great majority of nobles either did not know how, or did not wish, to get rich. The great majority of younger sons had no desire to "derogate." They sought the remedy elsewhere, in a growing exclusiveness. Some held that the nobility should form a body like the clergy and be constituted as a closed caste.[49]

"…did not know how, or did not wish, to get rich". Self-interest, beyond a point, was *vulgar*.

19th century books, literature, history and philosophy are full of descriptions of tensions between various classes, but the aristocracy and bourgeois have become lumped together. William Blake had more in common with Edmund Burke than with Bentham. The point was made only recently by the editor of the Bentham's collected works. "Blake, I suggest, both embodies that antithesis and proclaims the imperfection of Bentham's understanding of happiness."[50] And as Broch made clear, as far as Blake's open religiosity and Bentham's fantasies, it's less a question of faith than where you put it.

The language of the anti-bourgeois in the age of full-on capitalism has become simplified by those who want to see either or both philosophy and fine art, connected through their shared history, as superior or leftist. Eliot was a political conservative; Duchamp's anti-politics was reactionary. His works have become associated with a sort of leftism, but they're the art of a prerevolutionary Salon. When I called Duchamp a monarchist while talking to the only man I've met he knew him, he laughed. "Of course!" And Warhol was a Catholic moral conservative. The ambiguities are part and parcel of the anti-technocratic avant-garde: elitist, anti-bourgeois but also in a strict sense, anti-snobbery. Snobbery is the mark of the insecurity of the middle classes. The avant-garde for most of its existence was defined as the highbrow and the lowbrow against the middle, and opposed to moralists. That was its strength and weakness. Duchamp who lived in his own words "like a waiter", could be said to be in agreement with Santayana.

> I like to walk about amidst the beautiful things that adorn the world; but private wealth I should decline, or any sort of personal possessions, because they would take away my liberty.

And both would agree with Baudelaire

> It is painful to note that we find similar errors in two opposed schools: the bourgeois school and the socialist school. 'Moralize! Moralize!' cry both with missionary fervor.

There's a wonderful passage in *On Liberty* where in trying to describe relations among other Mill describes a conflict within himself, a division that's unresolvable in terms of the education of Blackburn's*, rational, single self* .

> In politics, again, it is almost a commonplace, that a party of order or stability, and a party of progress or reform, are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life; until the one or the other shall have so enlarged its mental grasp as to be a party equally of order and of progress, knowing and distinguishing

> what is fit to be preserved from what ought to be swept away. Each of these modes of thinking derives its utility from the deficiencies of the other; but it is in a great measure the opposition of the other that keeps each within the limits of reason and sanity. Unless opinions favourable to democracy and to aristocracy, to property and to equality, to co-operation and to competition, to luxury and to abstinence, to sociality and individuality, to liberty and discipline, and all the other standing antagonisms of practical life, are expressed with equal freedom, and enforced and defended with equal talent and energy, there is no chance of both elements obtaining their due; one scale is sure to go up and the other down.

I want to add, "to utility and its lack". Baudelaire would laugh.

The 2005 edition of Blackburn's Dictionary includes a definition for aristocracy that covers all of this.

> Rule by a privileged class. In classical Greece an appealing alternative to monarchy, the rule of one person, or democracy, rule by the mob. The aristocracy is defended also by Burke, in his *Reflections on the Revolution* in France as the repository of tradition, honour, responsibility, and education, dedicated to stability and the guardian of necessary virtues that have stood the test of time. In the contemporary world, similar claims are made for CEOs, company directors and retired judges and civil servants of the right kind.

Blackburn has been changing with the times. Drollery now conflicts with pedantry. But authorities allow themselves the privilege; the sounds of their own voices offer continuity even as the arguments drift.

You can't reason yourself out of pedantry. Following its imperatives it locks you in, to private reason, and locking you in makes argument with those outside impossible. In the nineteenth century even the pedants tried to write well, because it was important, and in trying to write well they wrote books more complex, more artful, than their ideas. But as the world became more chaotic, the pedantry increased. Russell's still aristocratic formalism became bourgeoisified.

I'm not sure what you say to a historian of science who writes about The Vienna Circle and its relation to the Bauhaus. Peter Galison won a MacArthur fellowship six years after publishing "Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism". By writing a history he undermined the arguments of the philosophers, but they did so themselves through their interest in art. And then by relating the art to the philosophy he undermining the art. I'll return to Galison later with his more recent publications with Lorraine Daston but for now a brief response to his claims about the Bauhaus will do.

Very few people study the art of the Renaissance because they're interested in furthering Catholic doctrine. In contemporary terminology, few people are interested in the Sistine Chapel as "illustration". Works that interest us help us to understand the desires of the people who made them to the point that we understand them better than they understood themselves, and we can do so only because the record they've left is so rich. Art is illusion and subtext, the description and observation, (or

analysis) of the sensibilities and desires of its makers. A description of a desire is not a desire; a desire for utopia is not utopia. Art has the relation to truth that walking around in a hair shirt is to proof that you're predestined to salvation. It's rhetoric. An actor playing a character screaming in pain is not in pain; he's mimicking and making a reference to pain. The greatest examples of modernist architecture function in the world that exists while describing a desire for something more, as manifest in concrete and glass. If the buildings didn't function as examples of anti-philosophical worldly sophistication they'd simply fail. If Tatlin's monument were ever built it would have become a monument to kitsch. As a building it's absurd. But as a model it's still a dream each of us can build in our own minds.

The Bauhaus at its best was not a monument to science but to contradiction, to German academicism as ideal and as seen in von Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel*. The image that best suits it would be Paul Klee painting his brilliant parti-colored doodles in a spotless lab coat. But we'd remember Klee if the Bauhaus had never existed. The Bauhaus itself is first and foremost in our memories as theater, as a theatrical performance of utopia in the years just before an actually existing hell on earth. Beyond that it's furniture and dinnerware. The best art made there transcended it. It was *better*. The philosophers of the Vienna Circle would be unable to make the distinction between their model of the Bauhaus as illustration of a fantasy, or its reality as a minor tragic episode in history, as evidenced by the tchotchkes left behind.

How do we describe bureaucratic reason as poetry? "Design" as its come to be known is inseparable from aesthetics, which is again, an invention of the 18th century, and a theory that says theories come first. *In the beginning was the Word*; acts come after, the opposite of historian's understanding that retrospective intelligence is key; and the opposite of art, that the act of making and the logic of craft is key. "The logic of craft" is the logic of Klee at work, making decisions based on what he thought was, *right, proper, fitting,* or *appropriate,* and changing them when he thought they were *wrong*, or *inappropriate*, according to a logic connecting his preoccupations with his materials. "Art" is the difference between *A History of Western Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell and another under the same title, by the famous logician, Norman Mailer. To logicians they might be similar, but to historians and the rest of us they're very different, because we know that in both cases the authors spent time choosing their words in the same way Paul Klee chose paints. I'm not interested in Bertrand Russell's intent or Mill's, *as such*. If I'm interested at all, I'm interested in the words on the page, in contexts past and present, which meant and mean more than they meant to the men who wrote them. Anyone following the *ideas* of the Vienna Circle knows that they opposed metaphysics. Anyone simply reading the words on the page will remember that idealism –the dream of the ideal– *is* metaphysics.

I'll return to Galison later, but it should be clear already that as a historian of science his definition of art is the Paris Salon, The Bauhaus, Greenbergian formalism and Madison Avenue. Panofsky and von Neumann were refugees from Nazi Germany; both ended up at the Institute for Advanced Study. Panofsky, writing in 1939 called the new return to the Gothic unity of art and science, "'a Middle Ages in reverse' – a Satanocracy"[51]. The physicist John Archibald Wheeler, a neighbor in Princeton who joined the hydrogen bomb project in 1950, remembers being told Panofsky's response to the FBI men who came around asking questions about the Wheelers' loyalty. "They are not subversives, they are mass murderers! We are the

subversives."[52] *Dr. Strangelove* was released in 1964.

I'm going to continue in down a list of examples, more texts written as propositions and read as words, written as philosophy or as science, and read as documents, placed alongside evidence based on recorded or common experience.

> Modern empiricism has been conditioned in large part by two dogmas. One is a belief in some fundamental cleavage between truths which are *analytic*, or grounded in meanings independently of matters of fact and truths which are *synthetic*, or grounded in fact. The other dogma is *reductionism*: the belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience. Both dogmas, I shall argue, are ill founded. One effect of abandoning them is, as we shall see, a blurring of the supposed boundary between speculative metaphysics and natural science. Another effect is a shift toward pragmatism.[53]

That paragraph is the introduction in its entirety of Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". It's been called one of the most important papers in post-war Anglo-American philosophy. The reference to "the supposed boundary between speculative metaphysics and natural science" made me laugh as much as I had reading the first sentence of Roberta Smith's defense of late Picasso. From the Vienna Circle we've drifted only a few degrees away from Alan Sokal's "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity", the fake essay that punked the editors of *Social Text*. What grounds could Quine have for criticizing Derrida beyond pointing out that he was a bit of a fop? Nonetheless his arguments less fostered a respect for pragmatism than licensed a continuing indulgence in its opposite.

From the entry in Blackburn's *Oxford Dictionary* for Donald Davidson, a friend of Quine who shared many of his interests.

> Davidson is also known for rejection of the idea of a conceptual scheme, thought of as something peculiar to one language or one way of looking at the world, arguing that where the possibility of translation stops so does the coherence of the idea that there is something to translate.[54]

The further banishment of subtext and judgment, once required by Kant and still implicit in Mill. Now, if it's impossible to translate the finer points in Mallarmé they don't exist. This is pragmatism at its most vulgar: the need to dumb things down, to get things done.

> In America there are comparatively few who are rich enough to live without a profession. Every profession requires an apprenticeship, which limits the time of instruction to the early years of life. At fifteen they enter upon their calling, and thus their education ends at the age when ours begins. Whatever is done afterwards is with a view to some special and lucrative object; a science is taken up as a matter of business, and the only branch of it which is attended to is such as admits of an immediate practical application.[55]

Davidson's paper is titled "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme"[56]. I've asked academic analytic philosophers in public and private if his arguments applied to literary translation, as transliteration, and every time the response was confusion. But it's not just a question of language. By Davidson's definition, the Sistine ceiling could be put into words and Hamlet could be made into a painting with nothing lost. We're back with the Pre-Raphaelites. You could almost imagine philosophy professors saying that the complexities of their own interior lives, since they could never be communicated, did not exist. Adding the quote from Tocqueville may seem like piling on, but following Lefebvre the issue isn't wealth but the distance or disinterest Tocqueville assumes only the wealthy can afford, and the origins of the deeply flawed American and Anglo-American model of utilitarian objectivity.

But if academic philosophy is keen to deny complexity where it exists, it's added where unneeded. Practical necessity to be justified by the formal requirement of philosophy needs to be absolute and non-contradictory. And this results in careers dedication to the solution of insoluble problems.

In the mid 1980s, Callie Angell, known now for her writing on Warhol's films but who had recently been the Secretary of *The Journal of Philosophy,* (she didn't answer the phones) gave me a subscription as a present. The first piece I read, the first piece of academic philosophy I'd read up to then, was "Morality and Self-Other Asymmetry", by Michael Slote[57], on what philosophers call "The Trolley Problem".

The original form was written by Philippa Foot

> A trolley is running out of control down a track. In its path are five people who have been tied to the track by a mad philosopher. Fortunately, you could flip a switch, which will lead the trolley down a different track to safety. Unfortunately, there is a single person tied to that track. Should you flip the switch or do nothing?[58]

This was expanded by Judith Jarvis Thompson:

> As before, a trolley is hurtling down a track towards five people. You are on a bridge under which it will pass, and you can stop it by dropping a heavy weight in front of it. As it happens, there is a very fat man next to you—your only way to stop the trolley is to push him over the bridge and onto the track, killing him to save five. Should you proceed?[59]

Slote's essay expands on these to question of the relation of utilitarianism in various forms to common-sense morality. Why is it permissible in the latter to throw oneself off the bridge but not someone else? As someone unschooled in contemporary philosophy I thought the answers were obvious. I defined common-sense morality as morality among equals. I associated

utilitarianism as the logic of the military, a hierarchical social order where superiors send inferiors to their death if it serves the goal of victory, and where there are rules against fraternization. Officers are forbidden to befriend the enlisted, and any psychologist or anthropologist, as an empiricist, will tell you why those rules are necessary to maintain order.

But Anglo-American philosophy doesn't concern itself with the terms of representation. It's concerned with modeling in the mathematical sense, of formal structure, and structure is therefore reducible to a form of truth category. To admit that our moral systems function as others do in less technologically advanced societies, as stabilizing forces and means of conflict resolution –to think in terms of function more than truth- would be to forgo our claim to enlightenment as defined by logical and now computational technocracy. The machine must be able to spit out the answer. It's a parody of vulgar Marxism, or vice versa, an intellectual command economy.

Anglo-American academic philosophy tries to solve problems of existence in the world through terms of objective aperspectival knowledge that can never be successfully overlaid on experience itself, and that in fact are counterproductive for our attempts to understand it. "Are Jews Black, or White?" "That depends." According to much of contemporary philosophy the question makes little sense and the answer none. Those who acknowledge the point refuse to face the implications.

The trolley problem has morphed to include many variations, and even its earlier forms included discussion of "the doctrine of double effect" and of intentionality, treating the act of killing to save lives as an unintentional consequence of a moral act. The doctrine of double effect originates with Aquinas. We're back to the authoritarianism of the Church and the research imperative. Utilitarianism doesn't need to nit-pick about intention; it's simple enough to say "I chose to kill 3 people to save 10". But the focus on intention, the inner workings of the killer's mind, denies full moral existence to those who've been killed, and I know of no study asking people to imagine themselves as the fat man and asking if they're able to intuit a moral difference between being pushed by a man's hand or by a turnstile with someone's finger on the switch.

As far as the changing intuitions of the actor are concerned, Stanley Milgram's 1963 experiments showed that proximity, of authority to subject and of subject to victim, was the main factor in affecting the level of obedience to the command to cause harm.[60] An anthropologist will know why a guillotine is not like an ax and why a governor is not called an executioner even if the man who bears that title is only following orders. Again, such data are treated as irrelevant to philosophy, because once the point of view is chosen it can't be changed. Rather than seeing the inevitability of competing perspectives of the actor and his victim, the moral issue to be faced is defined only through the experience of one of them and not the other. Philosophy searches for truth and perspectivism just doesn't fit the bill.

Representation is not replication. All representations require interpretation and if seen by more than one party that means public debate. There's no such thing as "naturalized" representation: language is politics/politics is language. And democracy, as a form of government and as an ethos, is the culture of language not in structure but *in use*. Quine again:

> Meaning, let us remember, is not to be identified with naming. Frege's example of 'Evening Star' and 'Morning Star' and Russell's of 'Scott' and 'the author of Waverly', illustrate that terms can name the same thing but differ in meaning.
>
> …Once the theory of meaning is sharply separated from the theory of reference, it is a short step to recognizing as the business of the theory of meaning simply the synonymy of linguistic forms and the analyticity of statements; meanings themselves, as obscure intermediary entities, may well be abandoned.[61]

Evening Star and Morning Star / Palestine and Israel. Meanings exist as long as language exists, and language is politics. What does it mean *to want to become* a logician? We're back with the art, the poetry, the smoke and mirrors, of those who want to elide their own desires. Desire for utopia is not utopia. The fantasy of science is not science. And Quine's politics was openly reactionary. The only way forward as a pragmatist is to engage the fact of subjective experience and of politics, not of meaning as truth, but of meanings as extant in the world as we know it.

When I was young I chased a girl. I said: *"I love you."* She said: *"No, you don't."* How did she know? She couldn't read my mind; she had no way to prove she was right. And now I think she was, but I didn't at the time. She made her decision by following not just my words but my performance of them. She listened and watched for *subtext* and saw conflict. Meanings are private, locked in, we negotiate decision-making processes by interpreting form. Debates over the definition of abstract truths in language are not only useless, they're counterproductive: they're based on a misunderstanding and as models for intellectual activity they set a bad example. This is what humanists find so annoying about debates over the truth or falsity of religion. I have no interest in god or gods but I can't prove they don't exist any more than I could have proved my love existed for the girl. And I can't prove people believe what they say they believe, or for the reasons they claim. Truths are unavailable to us. And now I think the girl had a better grasp of reality than I did.

If you can't know the truth of what's going on in other people's minds, you also can't teach the skills to read their gestures. You can teach rules but not judgment, the ability to read the space between assumptions. You can't teach things that are learned primarily through experience. And connoisseurship as observer is tied to connoisseurship as producer: you can teach techniques but not craft. A violin teacher is a coach; the students teach themselves the distinctions necessary to improve their playing. Connoisseurship is empiricism, and in a world where objective reality is unknowable, it's a necessity.

The history of modern intellectual life, more even than the history of modernity itself, if it were to be written now would need to need to be written by a historian from Mars, someone so far removed from the events of the past century that their biases are wholly *other*. Objectivity does not exist; the sociological history of the present describes the present no more than cognitive science describes the mind. You can't pretend to describe yourself and call it science. Skinner was right to call cognitive science "the creation science of psychology". There's no scientific study of ideas as ideas; there's no scientific

study of metaphysics. They're what we are as persons, as people with experiences, desires, and names. Once you've acknowledge yourself as "Rudolf Carnap" any hope of the end of metaphysics is gone. It was never there to begin with.

Perceptions precede ideas and together they're the first tools in our study of facts, but since our tools are our enchantments science is no more than comparative enchantment. The more formal the technics the more the enchantments are shared, and being shared they seem to fade. But they don't fade. The culture of technics qua technics is the sociality of elision, at this point known as the culture of geeks. The culture of shared enchantment in public life is the conversation of polite racists and earnest liberals about "the Jews", "the Negro problem", "the strangeness of foreigners", and "what women want".

The history of modern Germany cannot be understood without the history written by Jews. The history of modern Judaism cannot be understood without the history written by Palestinians. There's no end to it. Absent that the best we'll get is the equivalent of the feminism of men. Philosophers now imagine a gender neutral feminism but even if it were possible, that neutrality is the result, not the cause.

The recorded descriptions of modernity are voluminous, if only because of the technological advances in recording. We have a record of ourselves greater by scale of thousands than of any time in history. But the operative term again is *description*. The failures of modern criticism are greatest when description becomes positivism and prescription. The philosophy of empiricism is still the practice of rationalism; empiricism itself is something else. Quine was a logician. The philosophy of biology is not biology. And I will argue here that the arts, not as idea but as activity, are the most intimate description, the most intimate *empiricism* that we have. If you want to understand the Vienna Circle, Plato, Kant, or Wittgenstein, you need to read their works as logic, as documents of history, as desire, and as form.

The Oxbridge Marxist G.A. Cohen could have been a character in someone else's novel. He was raised a Stalinist and died a maudlin sentimentalist. He was the product of his time who was unwilling or unable to model his own relation to it. He wanted people to be nice to one another but there was no sense that anything beyond the individual actor was constitutive of our world of experience. In the middle of his career he was a proponent of "Rational Choice" Marxism, or as he also called it "Non-Bullshit" Marxism. At the end of his career he was an ex-Marxist.

In his Tanner Lecture[62] Cohen begins by bypassing a discussion of the economic and moral logic of Margaret Thatcher's policies to focus on the moral logic of Rawls' ideas, ceding the empirical and practical and arguing the rationalist and ideal. He begins with a discussion of the theories of egalitarians using hypothetical examples of their arguments and referring to the debate between freedom and equality, but not to obligation.

We're pack animals. I have obligations to the state and to friends and family, and my obligations to the latter two aren't rules. Montesquieu seems to have understood this even if Locke didn't. Ideas as rules need to be non-contradictory, but people don't. Idealism, whether based on god or mathematics, remains authoritarian. Not originating in description, statements taking

precedence over questions, prescription is the only model left. If the state is not an outgrowth of community, it must be the product of abstract authority, looking down from above.

The following is a passage from Cohen's last book, *Why Not Socialism*, with bracketed comments by Harry Brighouse, on the academic blog Crooked Timber[63]

> "It does seem to me that all people of goodwill would welcome the news that it had become possible to proceed otherwise [i.e. in ways that tapped into our nobler, rather than our more selfish, motives] perhaps, for example, because some economists had invented clever ways of harnessing and organizing our capacity for generosity toward others."
>
> The problem, for Cohen, is that we lack such technology. We should not pretend that we have such a technology, but nor should we pretend that the search for it is futile, or that the lack of it means that the organizing principles of our own society are more appealing than they, in fact, are.

So if the master is the machine itself rather than others like ourselves…

Brighouse is a professor of Philosophy in the department of Education Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin. And since I quoted him on Cohen I may as well quote him again. His logic is in many way synecdochic for that of journeymen in his profession. He's the co-author with Adam Swift, at Oxford, of a paper titled "Legitimate Parental Partiality" [64] which goes to the heart of the perversity of idealist liberalism.

> These relationships are inegalitarian in deep ways. The parties to partial relationships can exclude others from the mutual benefits their association yields and have special responsibilities to one another that give them the right, and sometimes the duty, to further one another's interests. To give scope to these relationships is to limit what may be done in pursuit of equality. Samuel Scheffler calls this observation (when made in an appropriately hostile manner) the 'distributive objection' to special responsibilities: 'the distributive objection asserts that the problem with such responsibilities is not that they may place unfair burdens on their bearers, but rather that they may confer unfair benefits...special responsibilities give the participants in rewarding groups and relationships increased claims to one another's assistance, while weakening the claims that other people have on them'. Participants in these protected relationships benefit twice over. They enjoy the quality of the relationship itself, and they enjoy the claims that the relationship enables them legitimately to make on one another, at the expense of those excluded from the relationship.

It's unfair to love your children. This is madness, less rationalism than ideological, almost pathological, anti-empiricism. Partiality is a function of proximity: we care about those close to us. We're back to the trolley problem. Brighouse may

claim that his interest in abstraction is heuristic, but the need for an imagined authority is present in the construction. Again, what authority gives permission? Viewed from the standpoints of basic empiricism, of ethnography and democracy, of what we can learn from experience and observation, the problem we face is not to how to ameliorate or *police* partiality but expand it so that concern for our own children can be related to concern for others'. Brighouse's philosophy, like Cohen's, like all the liberalism of ideas, is deeply anti-social, laced with the melancholy superiority of a schoolmaster of a school for wayward youth.

In an interview in 2007, focusing on inequality of wealth, the interviewer noted the "anachronistic opulence" of Cohen's academic home, All Souls College, Oxford, "a college with many eminent scholars, but not a single student. College retainers serve dinner; there's port on offer, and posh cutlery on display." Cohen admitted he didn't give much to charity and although he believed he should pay higher taxes "It's difficult to expect a person who lives in a particular social niche to depress the circumstances of himself and his family below a certain level even for the sake of principles that he sincerely affirms. …I'm a less good person than I would be if I were as good as I could be. …I just think that I'm not a morally exemplary person, that's all."

> I think there are two reasonable answers that a person who doesn't give too much of it away can give and one of them has to do with the burden of depressing yourself below the level of your peer group with whom you're shared a certain way of life, and in particular, depriving your children of things that the children around them favor. And also, and slightly separately, the transition from being wealthy to being not wealthy at all can be extremely burdensome and the person who has tasted wealth will suffer more typically from lack of it than someone who's had quote unquote the good fortune never to be wealthy and therefore has built up the character and the orientation that can cope well with it.[65]

Given what I've written already the best response Cohen comes from *The New York Times*, in 2012: "Affluent, Born Abroad and Choosing New York's Public Schools"

> Miriam and Christian Rengier, a German couple moving to New York, visited some private elementary schools in Manhattan last spring in search of a place for their son. They immediately noticed the absence of ethnic diversity, and the chauffeurs ferrying children to the door.
> And then, at one school, their guide showed them the cafeteria.
> "The kids were able to choose between seven different lunches: sushi and macrobiotics and whatever," Ms. Rengier recalled. "And I said, 'What if I don't want my son to choose from seven different lunches?' And she looked at me like I was an idiot."
> For the Rengiers, the decision was clear: Their son would go to public school.
> "It was not the question if we could afford it or not," said Ms. Rengier, whose husband was transferred to the city because of his job as a lawyer and tax consultant. "It was a question of whether it was real life or

not."[66]

According to the article, wealthy immigrants in major US cities send their kids to public schools at double the rate of native-born parents at the same income level.

On a blog post linking to memorials for Cohen, a friend of his posted the following:

> Late this past April, Jerry and Michele traveled to India to visit Sarah, Jerry's "ultraspiritual Hinduizing daughter," as he put it. In an email that Jerry sent the day before they departed, he mentioned "[his] journey from parentally induced anti-religionism to anti-anti-religionism to my current pretty pro-religious condition in which spiritual things keep on happening to me." What spiritual things? Well, "like sitting in a subway train and looking at the faces and a voice inside me--not me, exactly, but in me--says: They are all suffering emissaries of God. And I don't smirk."[67]

Freedom, equality, and responsibility are not elements or particles. They don't exist in nature, only in the imagination, after winnowing the chaff of the social, the social that is nonetheless constitutive of how individuals come to be. Cohen was so caught up in ideas abstracted from politics -as he saw them- that simple politics was beyond him. You don't have to claim to be a moralist to recognize the silliness, and the cost. Liberal idealism begins in fantasy, not in observation. Cohen's analytical idealism lead him finally to a kind of melancholy as asocial and as passive as the rigorous formalism that preceded it.

All the above are varieties of bureaucratic formalism, with some of them using politics as justification. They're all art for art's sake, or God's sake, in one form or another. But there are other equally bureaucratic and thus equally unsuccessful models of the social, that aim to address politics directly in a way the others don't: the fantasies of Chomsky and Bourdieu.

Chomsky will go down in history as an amateur reporter of fact who spent his professional life attacking the importance of facts. He's an extreme rationalist who's a good journalist only because he doesn't take journalism seriously. But his diagnoses are shallow. He promotes an ideal of radical democracy based on assumptions that are as self-serving as they are banal. And he sticks with them while those who shared his Modernist idealism have replaced naive hope with arch cynicism. In a sense his arguments are founded in a theory of rational action, not of unbridled self-interest but rational civility, a civility frustrated by outside forces that he can only describe in the simplest terms. And if they're outside, then of what? His logical anarchism matches analytic philosophy and contemporary academic economics, products of the same era, from the same foundations. Chomsky's career begins with claims for a linguistics modeled on physics, a model as absurd as Quine's for a philosophy "continuous with natural science"[68]. Equally absurd or more so, since Quine's pragmatism has led to accusations of postmodernism.[69] At MIT Chomsky's model still applies; they use it as a tag line for prospective graduate students: "Linguistics Is Basically Physics"[70]. His argument for the "poverty of the stimulus", that infants and children, and thus adults, live in a barren world incapable of fostering language through experience, is scholastic dogma, Cartesian anti-humanism.

Arendt

> You will remember that Plato said that only his body still inhabited the City and, in the *Phaedo*, also explained how right ordinary people are when they say that a philosopher's life is like dying. Death, being the separation of body and soul, is welcome to him; he is somehow in love with death, because the body, with all its demands, constantly interrupts the soul's pursuits. In other words, the true philosopher does not accept the conditions under which life has been given to man. This is not just a whim of Plato, and not just his hostility to the body. It is implicit in Parmenides' trip to the heavens to escape "the opinions of mortals" and the delusions of sense experience, and it is implicit in Heraclitus' withdrawal from his fellow citizens and in those who, asked about their true home, pointed toward the skies; that is, it is implicit in the beginnings of philosophy in Ionia. [71]

I'll repeat two things I said above. *The fantasy of objectivity is the fantasy of the universal through the elision of the particular, beginning with the elision of the particular self. – The impersonal in art and technocracy, though the product of the same events are very different things*. Keep them in mind as you read on.

Chomsky's said he sees no connection between his politics and his linguistics but they're founded in the same Talmudic imperative, intellectual and moral: that man is and must be other than animal. His greatest achievements will be remembered as philosophically his most mundane.

I first looked through *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste,*[72] Bourdieu's famous work on correlations of taste and class, in the late 80s on the recommendation of a friend who was a fan and who would soon be studying with him in Paris. I didn't get very far before putting it down, but it brought out a vivid memory. Ten years earlier I'd put my fist through a window, severing the tendon in my index finger at the joint where the finger meets the hand. The surgeon who sewed my hand back together was from Texas. He wore expensive cowboy boots and listened to country music while he worked. He drove a new Mercedes.

I understood that Bourdieu was writing about France, where the culture of the aristocracy outlasted the old regime, and still held and holds great authority. I understood that while England has the *Oxford English Dictionary* France has the Académie française, and that they're very different things. I understood that the book's specific findings had limited relation to the US, and that the Americanization of Europe meant that things were changing in France, just as they were in the UK under Thatcher. France lagged a bit. Or maybe it's better to say that in France, Thatcher followed Blair. Nicolas Sarkozy, "Sarko" married a fashion model/ pop singer, and he's a fan of Celine Dion. The ex-wife of his successor wrote a tell-all book.

From the preface to *The Rules of Art*

> "Shall we allow the social sciences to reduce literary experience—the most exalted thing we have, along with love—to surveys about leisure activities, when it concerns the very meaning of our life?" Such a question, lifted from one of the innumerable timeless defenses of reading and culture, would certainly have unleashed the furious mirth that the well-meaning commonplaces of his day inspired in Flaubert. [73]

He begins the first section of Part I: 'The Conquest of Autonomy' quoting Baudelaire, a quote I've used earlier, and the beginning of Part II, "Foundations of a Science of Works of Art" quoting Flaubert

> "It is painful to note that we find similar errors in two opposed schools: the bourgeois school and the socialist school. 'Moralize! Moralize!' cry both with missionary fervor."[74]

> "When for a certain time the human soul has been treated with that impartiality invested by the physical sciences in the study of matter, then an immense step will have been taken. It is the only way for humanity to rise a little above itself. It will then consider himself candidly and purely in the mirror of its works of art. It will be god-like, judging itself from on high. Well, I consider this feasible. It is perhaps, as for mathematics, just a matter of finding a method."[75]

Elsewhere he writes: "Taking Flaubert at his word…"[76] Has there ever been a bigger mistake when reading an author of fiction?

Again and again in this work and others Bourdieu returns paradoxically to a defense of autonomy and an attack on the decontextualized formalisms that result from it. And he moralizes.

From *Sociology is a Martial Art: Political Writings* [77]

> "On Television"
> But journalistic forces and manipulation can also act more subtly. Like the Trojan Horse, they introduce heteronomous agents into autonomous worlds. Supported by external forces, these agents are accorded an authority they cannot get from their peers. These writers for nonwriters or philosophers for nonphilosophers and the like, have television value, a journalistic weight that is not commensurate with their particular weight in their particular world.
> …What I find it difficult to justify is the fact that the extension of the audience [made possible by television] is used to legitimate the lowering of the standards of entry into the field. People may object to this as elitism, a simple defense of the citadel of big science and high culture, or even an attempts to close out ordinary people (by trying to close off television to those who with their honoraria and their and showy lifestyles, claim to be representative of ordinary men and women, on the pretext that they can be understood

by these people and will get high audience ratings). In fact, I am defending the conditions necessary for the production and diffusion of the highest human creations. To escape the twin traps of elitism and demagoguery we must work to maintain or even to raise the requirements for the *right* of entry—the entry fee—into the fields of production.[78]

"Culture is in Danger"

I have described and analyzed (in my book *The Rules of Art* in particular) the long process of autonomization at the end of which, in a number of Western countries, were constituted those social microcosms that I call "fields": the literary field, the scientific field, and the artistic field. I have shown that these universes obey laws that are proper to them (the etymological meaning of the word autonomy) and at variance with the laws of the surrounding social world, particularly at the economic level. The literary and artistic worlds are very largely emancipated, at least in the most autonomous sectors, from the rule of money and interest. I have always stressed the fact that this process is not in any sense a linear and teleological development in the Hegelian type and that progress toward autonomy could be immediately interrupted, as we've seen whenever dictatorial regimes, capable of divesting the artistic worlds from their past achievements, have been established. But what is currently happening to the universes of cultural production and circulation throughout the developed world is entirely novel and truly without precedent: the hard won independence of cultural production and circulation from the necessities of the economy is being threatened, in its very principle, by the intrusion of commercial logic at every stage of the production and circulation of cultural goods.[79]

"Social Scientists, Economic Science, and the Social Movement"

One of the theoretical and practical errors of many theories—Starting with the Marxist theory—has been the failure to take account of the power of theory. We must no longer make that mistake.[80]

It's obvious we're still in France, with communists and socialists and the Académie française. But we're also in the world of formalization and elite technocracy. You can see why American academic liberals like him. He's certainly not a radical democrat. He makes claims for aestheticism and high art that Anglo-American social scientists would never make, but he renders culture, or *Culture*, non-threatening. His claims for the autonomy of fields are a Modernist fantasy but he refuses to see that fantasy -his fantasy- in context. The Flaubert quote in itself isn't surprising but refers less to the words of *Madame Bovary* and *Sentimental Education* than to their author's fantasies about their meaning (I'll return to this in a later section). Bourdieu's naive deployment of it 60 years after Quine's most famous paper and 50 after the publication of the passage below, is sad.

Clement Greenberg, in 1961

> The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.[81]

For Bourdieu to accuse others of committing a "dehistoricization", with or without italics, is simple self-blindness. Bourdieu wants to rescue science and Modernism from neoliberalism, but it's impossible. The rules of the bureaucracy aren't the problem; bureaucracy is the problem, more specifically the assumption that bureaucracy as bureaucracy is or can ever be foundational for living culture. Bourdieu is an empiricist but he's an empiricist of systems not people. He's closer to Kubrick than to Frederick Wiseman, without the coldly superior and indulgent but at least honest sense of tragedy. He would chart the French postal system, but not intuit the imaginations of letter writers. Bourdieu mocks the "singularity of experience" in literature while defending Baudelaire. What is there to say? Maybe he thinks we should admit to the singularity of others only in person, and that from a distance data sets will do. But that's not how language works; it doesn't simply transmit information as content. "I love you" as I intended it was content, but that was contradicted in my interlocutor's eyes by my performance, and performance is form.

Language from a distance is reconstructed always as performance, independent of the speaker. "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." The language of the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution demonstrates -is predicated upon- the singularity of experience. It's written to *begin* debate, not end it; and that debate takes place not in the past but in the present. Baudelaire doesn't preach "form for form's sake" but honesty to one's perceptions and opinions, against self-censorship; he defends both the singularity of experience and the universality of form, not as something pure, but as the facilitator of all communication.

There are no emotions in language: it's inert. But if it's used well it can create *the effect* of proximity. And it can do this over a long distance of geography and time. It's the mistaken Modernist assumption that rules are primary. But even if you want to argue for the primacy of perception, you have to be willing to argue *from* it. In social life trust and flexible obligations are primary: trust that will outlast the breaking of an obligation or victory in argument. Rules are not dynamic; they can foster dynamism or constrain it. The skills of writing and reading, of performance and observation are central to politics and life. What that girl said in so many words years ago was that she didn't trust me. She was not a naïve reader of my words or actions, nor should she have been.

From Bourdieu's reading of a short story by Faulkner:

> A *Rose for Emily* is a reflexive story, a reflecting story which encloses in its very structure the program (in the computer sense) for a reflection on the novel and for naïve reading. In the fashion of an experimental text or device, it calls for repeated reading, but also for the divided reading which is needed to combine the impressions of the first naïve reading, and the revelations it arouses, with the second reading, the retroactive

> illumination that the knowledge of the ending (acquired at the end of the first reading) casts on the text, and especially on the presuppositions of a naïve 'novelistic' reading. Thus, caught in this sort of trap—a veritable provocation to a truly paradoxical allodoxia since it results from the natural application of the presuppositions of the *doxa*,—the reader is forced to acknowledge openly everything he customarily and unwittingly grants to authors who are just as unaware of what they are demanding of the reader. [82]

This is written as if Bourdieu had spent his life reading reports and is still a little uncomfortable with the fact that someone would spend so much time crafting something so manipulative. "Ok, it's a story… but *then he twists it*." That's an explanation worthy of a precocious 12 year old.

When I was in college a few friends and I, on a lark, went to a lecture by a man who made a career inveighing against the social manipulation of popular music. It turns out it wasn't just pop he worried about, though he quoted Frank Zappa saying something comically egregious, it was Beethoven. The only musical form he and the organization he represented approved of was the march. At the end he played John Philip Souza, smiling, tapping his feet, pointing out to us how it matched and reinforced the beating of the human heart.

Bourdieu worries about the power of lies. He wants to isolate them. He makes a great effort to isolate the arts, or defang them. But art is not separate from society; it's a manifestation of society.

We order the world according to our preferences. The forms that Bourdieu's impersonal (not intimate) empiricism takes, in language, in graphing, in statistics, constitute themselves as forms of desire. The preference for synchronic analysis of diachronic form itself manifests a set of values. Synchronic form is multiplex and simultaneous, Narrative form is an arc, with a beginning and an end. As value systems they are moral opposites. Synchronic form is timeless, eternal. Narrative assumes instability and death. Objects are inert, our categories give them life, including moral life. The central categories of modernity in the period where Modernism was dominant were synchrony/atemporality, objectivity, the ideal, and truth. The politics, left right and center, were idealist and authoritarian. Bureaucracy, *bureaucratism* the empiricism of structures before people, is an authoritarian ideology. For Bourdieu to call out "the imperialism of the universal" is beyond hypocrisy. And for him to call on intellectuals to lead is to undermine all his claims to humility. Bourdieu is a concerned schoolmaster and bureaucrat

The age of reason is the age of the theater of science, of people brought to submission not only by violence but by the moral rhetoric behind it. The strangeness of Adorno, to me, reading him for the first time, was that he seems terrified by men in lab coats only because he's terrified that in some way they represent the truth. But from the start in the 18th century the rhetoric of truth overshadowed, overwhelmed, any interest in facts themselves. Facts alone are inert and banal. Only the human imagination makes them glow with life. Adorno the idealist like his science-loving enemies imagines that facts glow on their own in the objective world. He's terrified of disenchantment even though he knows also that enchantment is false. Raised to

believe in progress, he intuits correctly that the enchantments of science result in a linguistic "short circuit", a false authoritarian unification of people and desire, but as an idealist he can't see beyond the false paradox of his conflicting assumptions. He can't recognize the rhetoric of scientific enchantment for what it is, and that facts in the world, absent our desire, are brute and silent, saying nothing about how we should respond to them. And the irony of ironies is his near fetishistic image of his preferred art, though he could almost be Schoenberg's Baudelaire, marking his work as the latter had Manet', "first in… decrepitude."[83] Adorno is unable to separate instrumentalism from the instrument (it's been a nearly universal error). He's seen by many as the condemning father but he's a child, the victim of a father's cruelty that he can't help but see as just.

Again, the problem isn't one of Analytic or Continental philosophy any more than one of academic left or right. The problem is philosophy itself, the academicizing of politics, of all thought: the placing of ideas over acts. If in the beginning was the word, then our world begins with God. If in the beginning was the act, then it begins with us. The Derridean critique of Logocentrism is little more than a critique of those who would be speak before their maker. Derrida is a Biblical exegete for whom secular literature is parasitic[84]. Even when he could have been direct and to the point, as in his dismemberment more than deconstruction of John Searle's arguments, in the essays published in *Limited Inc*[85], his indirectness shows as little more than the false modesty of an ostentatiously self-deprecating priest, constantly referring to a higher authority. His 'performance' as an author reminds me of my mother's painfully deferential attitude when playing Bach; painful precisely because of her refusal to *perform*, as if to do so would be to usurp the authority of the composer. Derrida's philosophy is as opposed to art as is any other form of Modernist intellectualism. How does his whispering discussion of "…the other" fit with the vulgar realities of theater or law? If an actor *plays* Macbeth, a fictional character written by William Shakespeare, where's the self? Can you imagine the theater reviews of Derridean passivity as applied to Hamlet? Deconstruction is nothing but the manifestation of hypertrophied individualism, overdetermined and under analyzed, glossed-over by the sincere desire to be something more. And sincerity, like intention, is wishful thinking and thus meaningless. Better the powerful insincerity, and ironic selflessness, of Olivier or a trial lawyer at the bar. Better philosophically, better politically.

I've never knew how to respond to claims from either side of the Atlantic that technology is the end of metaphysics. Cars are made for driving fast and drunk. Enchantment is part and parcel of our relations in the world, and language and all related formal systems, from poetry to law, are how each of us in our enchantments communicate: in collective form across enchantments. What does it mean that in writing this I'm spending most of my time trying to write *well*? How go on to metaphysical speculation without dealing with that simple question, of the craft of writing and oratory that metaphysicians rely on no less than the rest of us?

There is no aspect of scientific knowledge that mandates institutionalized instrumental reason in all aspects of life. There is no telos to the world beyond entropy, and even that puts too much of a glow on physical events. The 18th century was the age of enchantment with science, an enchantment morphing over time into various forms of a philosophy along a line also described in the arts, which themselves describe (again) not the world but our perceptions of it. Equality in the language of

philosophy originates in the discovery or construction, by members of an elite, of the idea of equality, rather than in the recognition of the practice of it by the people, and has ended in the study of people by that same elite not as equal but alike: the study of each of us only in terms of the aggregate. And in this the logic of individualism becomes its opposite, except that the elite observers have quietly removed themselves from the game. The greatest heroes of technocracy are those who can predict the behavior of the middling and in this they have become middling themselves. But it's these heroes who are left to make the decisions for the rest of us. This is the model of society founded on not on democracy but on the "imperatives" of research and progress.

The absolute unity of purpose is the end of social life. I've called these fantasies the theater of science but they're also of course the theater of aspiration, with the same conflicted relation of form to subject found in Plato's dialogues and the story of Moses and Aaron: the paradox of oratory against rhetoric, the argument via the neutral—dead—medium of language, across subjectivities, for absolute value.

The best of Modernism described the desire for transcendent order, either rational or chaotic. The worst claimed simply to guarantee one or the other, marking the difference between art and kitsch, between politics as social life or private dream. The laboratory model, of art making or society, from Lenin and the Constructivists to the Bauhaus and the contemporary vogue for the language of "theory" and "practice", is founded on pretense. That pretense once had a wide following and complex linguistic presence, and it still has a following in the academy, but we look now at the artwork of Tatlin and Rodchenko, only because it succeeds in describing the desire for progress in a certain place and time, and there's nothing about revolution or progress in the description of desire. The most prescient of revolutionaries spent most of their times as historians, but even the greatest minds teach us less what to think, than *how*.

The products of culture can describe the past in the language of the present or describe only the present. When they try to describe the future they fail, still describing the present by default. The literature of modernity and Modernism -poetic philosophical, political and economic- has succeeded primarily in describing the world that made it. The art and culture of 20th century modernity describes impossible dreams, chaos and crisis. Modernist, anti-Modernist, or simply modern, "abstract" or not, it was representational, mimetic, descriptive of its time. If it weren't all those things we wouldn't pay attention. And what the future doesn't see in it as descriptive of the past, will fade into obscurity.

Institutional Modernism in culture and the academy is unable because *unwilling*, to model the world as experience, because that would sacrifice its claims to universality and purpose. It helps me that Bourdieu, the Continental aesthete of bureaucracy, links those two movements together so directly, while in the American tradition the relation is sidestepped. What I'll try to do in the next section is write a brief history of Modernism and modernity in art, to re-contextualize their forms, returning art to culture not as a history of prescription and intention, with which I may or may not agree, but as a history of actions that deserve interpretation. I'll talk about art mostly because of its connection to theories and programs. There aren't many grand theories of literature in the 20th century fiction, for the same reason 20th century philosophy disdained it. Narrative mimesis

and idealism are opposed by default. And art is my field; it's what I know and where I watch the conflicts play out, in my own life and in my own mind.

Fine art has moved recently more and more towards inward-looking academicism and/or baroque high style, in the latter case abandoning the Modernist intellectual aristocracy (and various forms of shallow leftism), and returning to the simpler and less contradictory aristocracies of the past, or their contemporary simulacra, as entertainment for big money and occasional public view. Twenty years ago the a second generation European art dealer told me there wasn't much difference anymore between art and fashion. He said it with a shrug, but it's not the world he grew up in, and he's now one of the largest most important dealers in the world, or at least the business bears his name. The evolution mitigates the fading importance of "fine" art in a bourgeois and democratized mass culture. The change is unavoidable, since static forms can't compete with dynamic forms of narrative, popular, or serious. As Panofsky understood almost 80 years ago, in the essay quoted in the first of the epigraphs that begin this book[86], Hollywood and now HBO and Canal+, and activists giving video cameras to peasants in rural India to document their own lives, all do a better job at fulfilling the basic function of art, as representation and self-representation, than discrete objects that hang on the wall or sit the floor of an oligarch's house. Hollywood was always more democratic than the New York School, and the art world now may accept photography but has never come to terms with film as its intellectual rival, we should be clear, as a result of it being also a rival political and economic model.
Beyond the major and now institutional Modernisms in art there's a smaller one, of rationalist politics in art, now most often seen as a subcategory of writing on architecture, going back to the contradictions in the Bauhaus, and before. This form of commitment was seen as having an important role in the "art world" even recently; a lot of the most high production value art now descends from it, but by the late 90s those who needed to label themselves as political had been reduced to obvious parody, even if it wasn't admitted: agitprop for an academic avant-garde, a community of a few thousand people, committed, like followers of Rawls' Ideal and Non-Ideal theory, to the idea, of the idea, of the idea, of political action, the same asymptotic relation of endless theorizing to invisible ends. These radicals fight a war not only from the library but within the market for luxury commodities. In the past a few people made work that transcended their intentions, eccentric angry poet jewelers, almost—and sometimes explicitly—against their will, but this sort of work had become so institutionalized in the academy -not as poetry but as philosophically important- that an artist-professor made the newspapers and became a minor cause célèbre when police arrested him on suspicion of terrorist activities for growing harmless bacterial cultures in his basement, for a politically radical artwork[87]. By comparison if my parents' house had been raided in the late 60s, the home of a tenured Jewish professor of American literature married, as my mother put it, above his station, the police would have found draft dodgers and AWOL servicemen on the way to Canada and depending on the date, boxes of files stolen from the FBI. There's a difference between spending your time reading radical books and reading books while being radical, or even liberal, since there are plenty of people now who aren't even capable of being that, regardless of the books they're proud to read.

Others do not see us as we see ourselves. Experience or its lack is a lens, and a lens can be or can become a mirror: some narcissists never see their own reflection. Even the most intelligent people need to be tested by strangers and by strange

ideas. And it's guaranteed that our great grandchildren will think of us as odd. What Baudelaire called a pure art—and a not very pure one at that—is the only logical and defensible model for the products of a full intellectual life, "containing at once the object and the subject, the world external to the artist and the artist himself." What's been called the modern project, *Modernism,* has resulted in the replacement of an intellectual culture of retrospective intelligence, of historical awareness and of the inevitability of *art*, with one of technics, design, and the illustration of fantasy. "History is like foreign travel. It broadens the mind, but it does not deepen it." History has shown that art gives us the most honest description of its present, and that historians in studying the past are the only people who've ever come close to predicting the future.

A few years ago, at a gallery opening I got into a conversation with an astrophysicist from Caltech; we were mutual friends of the curator. He felt slightly dragged along. He was game but said he didn't understand art. The conversation drifted, and he mentioned a book he was reading, a biography of Sandy Koufax[88], the great pitcher for the Dodgers, in Brooklyn and LA. He said what he liked most was the way the author wrote not only as an observer, a professional sportswriter, and fan, but as a woman, an outsider in the world of male athletics, and as a Jew writing about Koufax, another Jew and outsider in the gentile world of professional sports. He said her description of those relations was really interesting. I asked him if he could have described any of it as she had. He said no. I told him he understood art.

TWO

I thought one or two of the paintings in the Picasso exhibit were charming and that the rest mostly were awful. There's no accounting for taste. But taste itself is not the issue, and if there's no hard line between the intellectual and the aesthetic there's still a distinction; taste and the history of taste are related, not synonymous, so Roberta Smith may like or even love the paintings and they may spike at auction but that doesn't make them any more important. History has made a decision about late Picasso and I don't think that's going to change, but what's that mean? What's the importance of *importance?* This leads us away from a discussion of art as art and to a discussion of art and ourselves as aspects of history. And in an age when we fixate on ourselves it's important to remember in the long run that's all we are.

Art both describes and makes order of the world. Starting in the period before Impressionism, artists more and more made works that less elided this distinction than made it clearer; the common theme in fact is the relation of depiction and manifestation. Photography made depiction mechanical. In order to describe the world painting would have to remind people more and more to its existence *in it*. In the age of the photographic image painting had to find a function; photography had to find a way to transcend its function.

Regardless of medium—language, paint, film, or now pixel—representational art from any time, not just the past 150 years, represents its methods first. And what's marked, mimicked, recreated or described is not either the maker or the subject but their meeting. Art-making is an empirical process acknowledged also as a subjective one, since artists do not simply record but inevitably filter and respond. And what we're left with is a record of a response to an event, person, or thing. A Holbein portrait is first a painting, second a Holbein, third a portrait, and fourth a portrait *of*. Art is first *artifice* and the medium carries the weight and the responsibility of presence.

It's important to remember that the form, the ordered substance, may contradict intention. A good artist will be loyal to his sensibility. The unity of ideas as discrete objects hides the disunity in the things—books, people—who carry them. But all of these issues are more limited in discussions of abstract form alone. Mondrian's art is a response to the world, not merely a fabrication. It's understood that way and always has been. No one would be interested in his paintings if they were about nothing but verticals, horizontals, and 3 colors. If that's all they are then Mondrian would be van Doesburg, and both their works would be the wallpaper their detractors see them as. We may begin with similarities but we end up arguing about distinctions and the distinctions in and among Mondrian's works are fine. To pay close attention is to follow a rigorously

sensuous argument in defense of an imperative. The contradictions are the pleasure; after all if they were printed they'd be as terrible as Warhol's would be if they weren't.

But an image of Christ on the cross or the story of how he got there, have complex discursive qualities a Mondrian lacks. Intentionality is or should be less central to a discussion of Pollock's *Blue Poles* than to either the US Constitution or Michelangelo's *Pieta.* In the long run that sets a limit for Pollock. The less there is to read, the more room there is to read *in to*. Still, the power of art is that it plays specifically to these ambiguities and complexities. Art prizes subtext, which is why a Russian Icon, a Ming vase and *Anna Karenina* are all art and a biology textbook, in its function as a biology textbook, is not. Art is a moot court for questions of communication and interpretation. Through it we examine text, subtext, subject matter, and form. All of these together give us the best picture we can get of our subjects: the craft, the artist, his/her subjects, and their time. And the pleasure we get from art, the most complex pleasure, is the pleasure of this explicitly bounded communicative exchange.

From the early to mid 19th century the necessary focus on form in visual art as manifestation and counterweight began to atrophy. This connects to the rise of photography and to the use of numbers as representation: of idealist technocracy. The 19th century was still a century of language and the complexities of language. Marx is still read, and read best, as a *writer of*…. No historian would be insulted to have their works described that way. A pretense to transparency of words as the mechanical reproduction of ideas, of political, philosophical or aesthetic ideology, was still in the future; the rhetoric of *visual* transparency came sooner. This is what Linda Nochlin and other historians recognized. But this pseudoscientific objectivity, of art as *illustration*, became a model, and is now a model in crisis, in the fine arts, academia, and explicitly in the American press. All are founded less in shared if bounded curiosity than simple shared assumptions.

Objectivity fades into neutrality and passivity. The model for contemporary news reporting in the U.S. until very recently has been a sort of moralizing voyeurism, simultaneously lecturing and prurient. The prurience is universal, the moralizing more specifically American. Professionalism adds an air of respectability and as the British journalist Andrew Marr puts it, "a protective gloss of self-importance"[89] If the myth of journalistic objectivity has faded, Rupert Murdoch should get more credit than he does. A friend of mine commented 20 years ago on Murdoch's genius: he gave America just what it wanted, left wing entertainment and right wing news. But the UK has maintained a level of serious engaged writing that the US has lacked and still does. And this had to do with how writing is treated.

> Certainly, British Journalism is not a profession. Over the years many people have tried to make it one. In the United States they have mostly succeeded.[90]

Andrew Marr's history of British journalism is called *My Trade*. He describes his own beginnings as an ambulance chaser, knocking on front doors of grieving widows. Journalism in Marr's description fills an important role in society without being a profession a science or a job for saints. There's something vulgar in the search for facts instead of truths.

The worst of journalism, internationally, is photojournalism, where the immediacy of the impact is taken for transparency, as an image of truth and as truth therefore as art. The images above Manet's *Olympia*, were taken in Haiti in 2010. The middle image won an award[91]; the upper one shows the context. Compare them to the picture of the pin-up model Bettie Page. Take the time to imagine yourself taking any of them. You don't have to know the history of the photographers known collectively as *The Bang-Bang Club*, or the suicide of Kevin Carter[92], to understand the perversity.

A reviewer of a posthumous exhibition of Helmut Newton photographs wrote him off for in one sentence, as a fetishist, without bothering to explain why it was an insult. Newton wouldn't have been offended -he never took himself that seriously-

but the understood explanation was that Newton was passive before his preoccupation and his audience: he didn't describe his fetishism he merely followed it. He didn't use a common form for complex communication hut as a set of rules –private reason in public– the pleasures are the pleasures of over-determination. It's illustration of course and illustration is always simplistic, but it's also illustration for a very limited audience, or the most broad: the audience for indulgence in guilty pleasure. You share his eye or you don't, and if you don't his work does nothing to try to convince you why you should. Newton's was an open indulgence, and an honest one.

The mixture of perversity and high seriousness now ubiquitous in photojournalism and indulged just as much but less seriously in fashion photography is seen for the first time in the art the 19th Century Paris Salon, in painting. But its greatest champions in the 20th were in the intellectuals' avant-garde, where photography was celebrated for having the transparency that painting lacked: as if Jean-Leon Gerome would have been a better artist if he'd stuck with the camera.

The engagement, between makers, subjects, and audience in the art of the Salon was both tense and slack, again, passive. The best paintings were like handmade versions of mid 20th century commercial photography: staged, mechanically precise, more labor intensive, but rote. The worst were technically incompetent as well. The shock and scandal of *Olympia* was the shock of recognition, of a forced self-awareness in an audience looking at the record of a meeting between a man and a woman, a naked prostitute lying in a cheap ersatz-mythological setting, and the description of all this bluntly stated in daubs of dried pigmented paste. The shock was also in the woman looking back directly at her audience. The recognition was of the fact that many of the men in attendance had been there before, and seen such women in person, and now were being forced in public to face their own vulgarity. But the painting is not made to shock it's made *to describe*, and what it describes, is

anxiety and ambiguity. This is the Avant-Garde of Baudelaire's *Flaneur*, not of the voyeur but the engaged, and thus participant, observer.

Gerome by comparison like a common type of photojournalist, is an illustrator of defensive rationalization, claiming to stand at a cool remove from the necessary mechanics and his subjects. The claims in both cases are hollow. I've never forgotten the imagery in *The Snake Charmer,* or *The Slave Market,* any more than I've forgotten the imagery of *Saddle 1* but that's not saying much. It's not like saying I've never forgotten Stendhal's *Gina Sanseverina*. Affectless technical mastery and cheap eroticism are what they are, but hypocrisy deserves more contempt than honest indulgence and you'll find better layouts than Gerome's in *Vanity Fair*. As far as subtext is concerned, it's there. All too often it overwhelms everything else, out of control, while in more interesting artists it runs below the surface of the work, as another level of conscious awareness: the sexual anxieties of Manet and Picasso, or the beautifully crafted hatching brushstrokes that mar Mondrian's neo-Platonism so wonderfully. But it's Gerome's art that is foundational to the later prescriptive theory of the avant-garde, and the art of Socialist Realism. Gerome is the maker of philosophic art, a combination of illustration and prescription and grand pretension.

If visual art were taken to be like other arts, and stripped of the association with philosophy and finery, the age of mechanical reproduction would have begun with Gutenberg. The sense that a photograph can be said to act as an *index,* in Peirce's terminology, now a ubiquitous reference, is the end of photography as art. It's the definition of photography as illustration, the model of Gerome and Winterhalter and Madison Ave.

> Using the terms of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, though the photograph appears to be an icon (through resemblance) and though it is to some extent a symbol (principally through the use of the camera as a codifying device), its proper sign type, which it shares with no other visual representation (except the cast and, of course, cinema), is the index, i.e. a sign causally related to its object. [93]

The viewer is said not to be looking at the photograph, but at the thing depicted. To repeat what I wrote above: a Holbein portrait is first a painting, second a Holbein, third a portrait, and fourth a portrait *of*. According to the art theorist Thierry de Duve writing in *October* in 1978, -theorists being neither historians nor critics but both and more - photography has succeed where all others failed in reversing that order. And what's left?

> How does one relate to a space of such precision? One thing is certain: it doesn't give way to a *reading* procedure. For an image to be read requires that language be applied to the image. And this in turn demands that the perceived space be receptive to an unfolding into some sort of narrative. Now, a *point* is not subject to any description, nor is it able to generate a narration. Language fails to operate in front of the pin-pointed

> space of the photograph, and the onlooker is left momentarily aphasic. Speech in turn, is reduced to the sharpness of a hiccup. It is left unmoored, or better, suspended between two moorings that are equally refused. Either it grasps at the imaginary by connecting to the referential series, in order to develop the *formerly* into a plausible chronology, only to realize that this attempt will never leave the realm of fiction. Or it grasps at the symbolic by connecting to the superficial series, in order to construct upon the *here* a plausible scenography; and in this case also the attempt is structurally doomed. Such a shock, such a breakdown in the symbolic function, such a failure of any secondary process -as Freud puts it- bears a name. It is trauma.

de Duve ends on a high note of grand intellectualism and cheap drama.

> Hegel's prophecy that art was about to come to an end was published in 1839, the very same year in which Talbot and Daguerre independently made public the invention of photography. It might be more than mere coincidence.

His piece is a discussion of long and short exposures, time and snapshot, which he treats as distinct up to a point. If he were more of a historian and less of a philosopher he'd have noted that the advances that made the snapshot possible did the same for cinema and collage, both of which returned language to photography even accepting the limits of photography itself as he describes them. Long exposures have a compressed but visceral sense of narrative, and that narrative quality returns expanded exponentially in film. Photography though ubiquitous even after acceptance as an art was still kept apart, as a smaller form; collage was accepted as immediately as any of its competitors, while film emerged as the most important visual art of the century. Finally although it's easy to blame the market for novelty for photography's place now in contemporary art it makes more sense to argue that photography would never be fully integrated into the model of art comparable to painting until it was seen as *independent from its role as index*. It's a sign of just have much we've changed, and how much we haven't that the contemporary exemplars of the honesty of Manet's Olympia are Cindy Sherman's portraits of herself.

Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, includes a photograph from 1865, of one of John Wilkes Booth's collaborators before his execution. Barthes' caption reads, *"He is dead and he is going to die ..."* That is the base, the ground, on which any photographer has to build if he or she wants to make anything that will be remembered as anything other than one anonymous image among others. Barthes certainly would never wish that anonymity on his own writing. A couple of years ago as I was walking out of the annual show put on by the Association of International Photo Art Dealers, AIPAD, in NY, a well dressed couple were hurrying in, the man obviously on the prowl. As they walked by me the man turned to the woman "Remember, it's it not the image… It's the material!" No serious connoisseur of photography, rich or poor, critic or collector, has ever been interested in photographs as index as opposed to art: the relation of formal construct to the world. Photographs on paper

are physical things; until recently the prints were made by hand, nothing like the images in a book or on a screen. Film and video are immaterial, intangible, but made of thousands of images in series. Different forms have different capacities, strengths and weaknesses. Philosophers like to claim now to find exceptions, to discover or invent. Mechanically produced images and words are now the rule. Before saying they do new things you should be able to show they don't do old things in new ways.

Manet's preoccupations weren't different than those of other men of his position. But he wasn't passive before his tastes; he didn't merely indulge them. His works exhibits a second order curiosity; he described his preferences to an audience that still exists and we learn to understand them and him through a process of imaginative empathy. Manet in paint is a complex character; Gerome in paint is not. You sense Manet's struggle with his limitations as a technician, and his struggle to be honest to that as well. Other artists didn't struggle as much as he did; Manet wasn't Velázquez, and putting their works side by side ruins him. But he wasn't ever in a position where it could be otherwise, (again to Baudelaire's description of "decrepitude").

It's a truism at this point to say that after Ingres or Degas, the historical place of painters proficient in the technical craft of painting is often the inverse of those who tried instead to do something interesting with what skills they had. Degas is interesting as one of only two mature academicians who moved over the course of their lives and careers to near abstraction. The other of course, from another generation and tradition, is Turner. But in joiner's terminology Picasso was probably the first and last artist with the skill to carve a cabriole leg by hand while becoming famous, and important, for carvings made only with a chisel and an adz. There were plenty of bad technicians showing in the Salon, but they hid not very well behind chintzy effects: the unacknowledged vulgarity of pretense. And of course they shared the illusions of the majority, in a feedback loop of mutual support. Manet didn't hide from his clumsiness in paint any more than from his vulgarity in sex. Cezanne is a more extreme example since he lacked even Manet's abilities as an academician, and was more of an outsider. Cezanne reinvented painting from the ground up because he had no choice. And this wasn't a preference for the primitive, since 'primitive' art is often highly polished and its rhetoric fully functional as part of a larger social system. If preference played a part it was a preference for the rustic, a form that only exists in relation to the urbane. Cezanne's work is the work of someone on the margins of society (in Cezanne's case comfortably so) not integrated but not apart and negotiating that relationship through reference and models of representation and craftsmanship, however eccentric and individualized, that we recognize as related to our own.

The shock of Manet was the shock of shame and recognition. For Cezanne it was less publicly sexual and political but the same rule of recognition applies. His work continues the move away from representation and mimesis by limiting even further the reproduction of psychology, of the full personhood of his sitters. He reproduces shapes not character, at least not in comparison with those who came before him. There's a lot to be said about Cezanne and representation. And what made his work bad when it was is almost as important in its way as what made it great when it was. Because he failed at something, and that failure was consistent, making works that were both obscene and absurd. In a very real sense Cezanne began with

kitsch, with grand intent—often violent—and overreach. But he turned to articulating what he could learn to articulate well: the space between ourselves and the objects around us. But again its down to specifics, since what he articulated was the space around *himself* and the objects around *him* and what we sense is his sense of the world through his use of the rhetoric of pigment on canvas. And again, against the logic of philosophic art and of intent it's not a question of whether Cezanne was right or not. If he was right then about what? The basis of our interest in both Manet and Cezanne is that they describe their sensibilities, rather than merely indulging them. The most complex pleasure to be found in their paintings is not the pleasure of liking them—is not Roberta Smith's pleasure of enthusiasm, of a simplified sense of identification—but the pleasure of asking: "Why?" The pleasure is in engaging something foreign brought close by something universal: technique in common form.

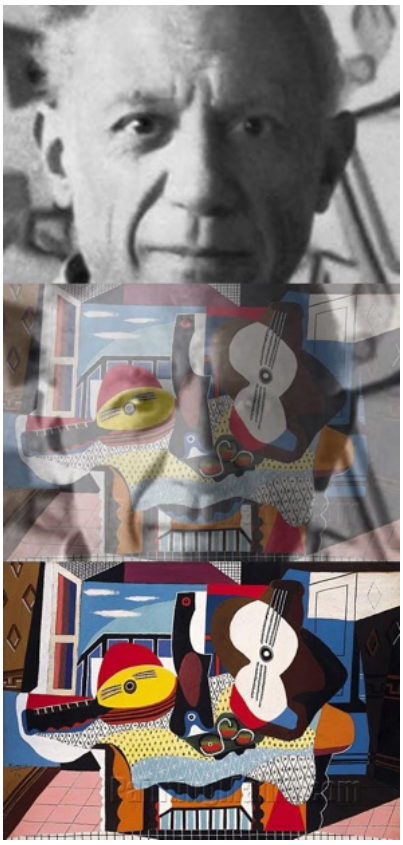
Manet and Cezanne may have both broken with the past but the breaks were minor compared with the ways in which they continued from it. The only way their contemporaries learned to understand them, the only way we understand them—the only we understand each other in daily life—is by a process of recognition: putting old forms and signs in new contexts. We may no longer feel the shock Manet's contemporaries felt but the process is the same, the only difference being the additional distance of time.

Towards the end of the 19th century, as social relations weakened, as culture continued to atomize and the individual faded more and more into the mass, the rhetoric of individualism moved towards hypertrophy. Bohemianism is the model of artist not as craftsman but as *artistic*. The bohemian strikes the pose as he imagines it of Baudelaire's flaneur, while observing not the people around him but himself in the mirror. The pose is a pretense of something more. The model of "life as art" misunderstands art as it misunderstands politics, which helps to explain the relation of bohemianism to political narcissism at both ends of the political spectrum. My father used to ask his freshman students how many wanted to be poets, and hands would shoot up. Then he'd ask how many wanted to write poetry. This was the pose Picasso affected later in life, when Braque called him "now… only a genius", a brilliant designer. But when Picasso was at his height in the first two decades of the 20th century, his work was art and his art described a crisis.

The best -the most complex- work of any period maps political and moral life in ways minor work succeeds in doing viewed only in bulk; it personalizes culture through a powerful imagination, or a series of them, resulting in an integrity that causes the work to function as a lens. And we look both through the lens and at it.

All art is divided consciousness; the best is the most dynamic in its tension. Picasso's greatest works are his most fraught; they struggle to depict the world and mostly fail, in ways even Cezanne's did not, succeeding only in documenting the

strangled desire and the attempt. There's a desperate falseness to the figuration in most of his work, the progression is towards a failure as mimesis and a focus on manifestation alone. The works embody and articulate a complex reaction to the world but the world exists more and more in the experience of methods and material. He's "competing with the world."[94] But that's not what he wants. And at his best with the conflicts at their peak there's no pretense at resolution. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is so important to our understanding of the period because it is one of the few great moments of depiction in 20th century painting, and the last great act of depiction in Picasso's career. His terrifying whores of Barcelona's Calle Avignon are not complex characters by the standards of art history as a whole but they're more autonomous than we're used to with Picasso, especially in his images of women. They look back at us as Manet's barmaids and prostitutes do and Picasso tries to destroy them for that and fails, the proof, lying between the artist and his models his severed member on a plate. The greatness of the painting, as in Eliot's poetry, has everything to do with the artist's admission of defeat in the world beyond it.



Before *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and the paintings that immediately preceded it Picasso's work had been a sort of melancholic illustration of adolescent bohemia, brilliant in a youthful way: the Blue and Rose Period works succeed in spite of their melodramatic emotionality, not because of it. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is on a different level entirely. But Modernism with its pretensions of idealism and intent rescued Picasso from that, beginning with the perverse pseudo-academicism of analytic cubism then through neo-classicism and surrealism, the latter two becoming little more than excuses for indulging in the imaginative life of a precocious second childhood. Not for nothing did he adore Ingres. And with this rescue Picasso's work ends as the perhaps unwillingly a precursor to Roy Lichtenstein's Pop.

Critics and others refer to the banal and debased imagery of Pop, but it's no more or less banal than the imagery of most of Picasso's work from the early 20s on. By a few years after the First World War Picasso was making paintings that people may now refer to or acknowledge or praise, but which I've never heard anyone discuss convincingly in any depth. The famous exception is *Guernica*, a work that has both the advantage and disadvantage of noble intention: the most famous artist of the twentieth century, disgusted by the barbarity of fascism, turned his abilities to creating a memorial to its victims. T.J. Clark struggles mightily in *Picasso and Truth*, to defend all this work, to the point of willfully misreading, or hoping to misread, Picasso's own words. He quotes Picasso later in his life saying he preferred *The Three Dancers* to *Guernica* because he painted it *"sans arrière-pensée",* without ulterior motive. Clark refers to this as cryptic.

> Maybe he meant, again with Rimbaud's dictum in the background, that the work happened essentially without him –him the thinking individual- and all that he could do was look at it as baffled (and admiring) as the rest of us [95]

Rimbaud's dictum is not *his*. Picasso is following Rimbaud only as Rimbaud followed Baudelaire, and as Baudelaire followed Homer: "Goddess, sing me the anger of Peleus' son, Achilles." A craftsman follows his training and his reflexes. A dancer follows the rules of the dance, and in performing them, hopes for more. A batter at the plate has no time to articulate thought, but in the moments before swinging the bat, he's thinking. When Soccer players from Catholic countries look up and cross themselves after scoring a goal, it's not just faith or false humility, it's an acknowledgement of their own surprise. This is how most decisions are made, for better or worse, and in the arts it's standard practice. You don't have to indulge in romance, 19th century or otherwise, to understand how these acts function in relation to philosophy and morality. It's the history of art, contra pedantry, that I've laid out here before.

In 1923 Picasso wrote that the idea of research in artmaking was a "poison" [96]. By 1927 he'd succumbed himself[97] Clark on the same page refers to Picasso's "project", the language of Modernism bureaucracy and design, of *philosophic art*, art without surprise. One of the centerpieces of Clark's book is *Guitar and Mandolin on a Table*, a painting that's annoyed me since the first time I saw it. Yet Clark makes no mention of the obvious. How can you write about it without referring to Giuseppe Arcimboldo? How can you play it straight? But Clark the social historian of 19th century art has become a philosopher and theorist of 20th century Modernism.

> Calling Picasso a misogynist, though maybe accurate biographically, has as much to tell us about the nature of his achievement in *Young Girls Dancing* as calling Velázquez a servant of absolutism has to tell us about *Las Meninas.*

The statement is absurd on its face. Misogyny is as key to key to Picasso's work as the monarchy is to Velázquez. The difference between *Young Girls Dancing* and *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is the artist's earlier willingness to face his fears *"sans arrière-pensée"* .

The ideal of Modernism was that it was a sort of return to the Renaissance, but the Renaissance was a loosening of rules, while Modernism was a closing down. Gursky's nihilism begins in Seurat. To see Picasso's greatest work from 1906, alongside Matisse's *Piano Lesson,* as the high-points of 20th century painting is to imagine a century beginning with the Carracci and Titian's *Flaying of Marsyas* and fading into Florentine Mannerism. Modernism was always either the idealism of a cold high church or the equally strict, fearful, mockery of the same church.

By the late 1920s Picasso was caught up almost entirely in a sort of formalist meta-painting, trying to make art in the grand tradition with no grand beliefs and with representation in any real sense off limits. His imagery is the equivalent of Pop, mostly without irony, or without enough of it that anyone to notice. His *Crucifixion* from 1930 is frankly silly. Aside from refusing to face the emotional stakes required for his art to carry any weight as representation, as exposing/presenting his own perceptions and anxieties, Picasso along with everyone else in the fine arts also faced the problem of new technologies,

mass media, and mass violence, of the century itself. Picasso the figurative artist was outflanked by photography and film, and by his own arrogance and fear. He took himself much too seriously –Clark makes the mistake of taking him at his word in 1950s about what he was thinking in the 1920s– when humor and irony that would have saved his later work from the failure it became. *The Studio,* from 1927-8, is a brilliant exception to the rule, but looking at it now it's clear what kind of exception it is: it's pure Pop. And given this, the careless little sketch, *The Dream and Lie of Franco* is much more interesting than *Guernica*; much more articulate, angry, funny, and personal; much less burdened by purpose, by intention, those things that are now so important to Clark.

The odd man out here is Matisse, who may or may not have reached Picasso's heights while never reaching the lows. His great ugly paintings were never as graceless as the best Picasso. Is that a problem? The diagonal shadow bisecting his son's face in *The Piano Lesson* is one of the great disturbing moments in art in the century, like the face of the woman on the Odessa Steps in *Potemkin,* but to stand with an open mind in front of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* you end up asking how something so broken can function, can be an order and not an absence of it. It's the tastes of an *Ortolan* in reverse order: first you get the bones and shit. It manages to be the worst of the most vulgar pornographic early Cezanne, and his best. Matisse never reached that level of dissonance, and Picasso never reached when he tried, though he was able briefly to manage it when it wouldn't go away.

Picasso's best works were anti-formalist; Matisse knew he had to make formalism rich enough to be more. His later works come closer to design -his closest imitators were designers- if only because he fit the model of an ideal Renaissance art that Modernists claimed for themselves, in his case a cross between Raphael and Fred Astaire. "Why not a brothel, Matisse?" "Because nobody asked me, Picasso."[98] Blasphemy was common in Modernism; casual blasphemy was common mostly among the unserious. Matisse's response to Picasso's bullshit communism carried the weight of a commitment that Picasso lacked, not a commitment to revolution or dreams of utopia but to the social itself, to the world around him, including the world of other people. There's a way in which Eliot's wry comments on James fit Matisse as well, because there's always a mimetic power to his work. Figures and plants are never simply an excuse; there's always a sympathy, even if it's a physical rather than psychological or intellectual sympathy. There's still in Matisse the warmth of other's bodies.

Ginger Rogers describing one of her most famous scenes with Fred Astaire, dancing down the stairs, in *Top Hat.*

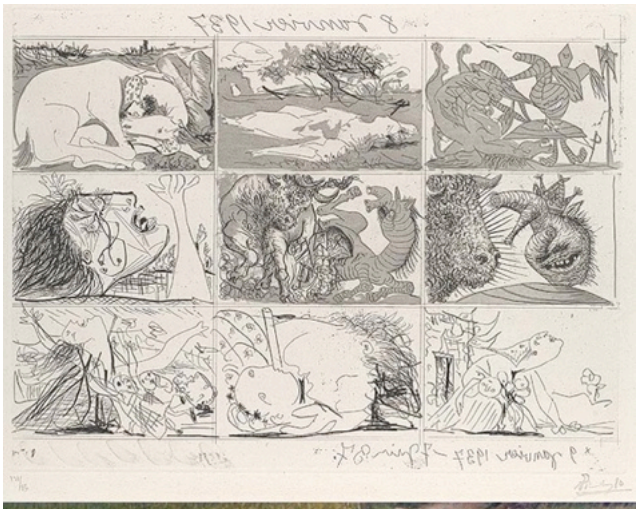
> We did final work on this number into the wee small hours of a Saturday night, and more than forty-eight takes were recorded. Everything that could have gone wrong did during the shooting of this number: an arc

light went out; there was a noise in the camera; one of us missed a step in the dance, where Fred was supposed to catch me in the final spins; and once, right at the end of a perfect take, his toupee flipped off! I kept on dancing even though my feet really hurt. During a break, I went to the sidelines and took my shoes off; they were filled with blood. I had danced my feet raw. Hermes saw what had happened and offered to stop the shooting. I refused. I wanted to get the thing done. Finally, we got a good take in the can, and George said we could go home - at 4:00 a.m.[99]

Matisse

That is what normal people never understand. They want to enjoy the artist's products – as one might enjoy the milk of a cow – but they can't put up with the inconvenience, the mud and the flies.[100]

Ginger Rodgers' feet covered in blood, and Matisse's mud and flies.



Astaire and Rogers, and Matisse, struggled to make to make things look easy, but if you don't see the struggle you miss the point. There's no confusion of art and life, no delusions of utopia; the art, visibly as artifice, brings out in us a heightened desire for the impossible without denying its impossibility. Picasso did something else, but not for very long. He represents in 20th century painting something similar to what Michelangelo represents in the 16th, but in no way equal in importance. He manifests a contradiction in form, and manages to stabilize it and somehow to present it as a unity. It's an illusion but a compelling one. Michelangelo is the equal of Shakespeare in the creation of a far more powerful illusion: he's the first to record, to describe and depict, the interior life of an individual figure, a character. He did what novels were made to do, but he did it in the most conservative form, fighting the limits of his own mute, static, medium.

The drawing by Raphael [*Study of Soldiers* in *The Conversion of Saul,* c.1515-16] is an object lesson, literally, in the principles and poetics of the High Renaissance: simultaneously static and full of motion, a perfect but lightly held balance of action and reflection, observation, representation, and free craft; rigor seemingly without tension, or tension seemingly without its affect. The figures fly off the page, yet they're anchored as solidly in place as they would be seated and face forward in a Byzantine mosaic. The last time this conflict was depicted and

this balance achieved, was Athens. Michelangelo did something even more compressed, since he put the tension seen among the figures on a page or frieze within single figures and single blocks of stone. The torqued muscles in a torso of a Michelangelo sculpture manifest a tension, equal parts unity and schism, unmatched in western art or in any material art before or since; Michelangelo created the illusion of figures not only physically but psychologically alive, not as types but individuals, while following the requirements of classical form. As far as my comments on Raphael at least I'm not saying anything new. I said the same thing while standing in front of this drawing at the Met, to an old acquaintance I'd met by chance and his companion, a well-dressed European, French or Swiss, a curator or collector. My friend smiled. His companion shrugged, bored, and said, "of course". The only audience for whom any of this is new is the audience of pedants who write and read only for intent, who read text without reading for subtext, who are interested in the ideas of Rawls and G.A. Cohen without noticing the culture they're a part of.

As with Gerome and Manet but again at a much higher level it's not a question of technical facility but of its use. Gian Lorenzo Bernini is the greatest technical sculptor in the history of the west, or of the world. Few people think of him as a better artist than Michelangelo. Bernini indulged his skill; it was easy for him to take things for granted and he did. But he didn't fetishize technique so much that he wasn't in awe of Poussin, whose technical skills by comparison were limited. The Baroque was considered decadent precisely for the discord between easy artifice and rough integrity, but the period was focused less on the balance of ideal and worldly order as in the Renaissance, or on the more extreme dichotomy of otherworldliness and corruption –the panicked pretense of Counter Reformation Mannerism– than on a worldly sophistication as such: the narrativizing of ideal order. The Baroque is the culture of monarchy and aristocracy at the beginning of the age of theater, the age of the bourgeoisie.

By the beginning of the 20th century we're far from all of this. It had been hundreds of years since fine art, the art of luxury, had played such a central role in the cultures of the day, or in our understanding of it. By the 19th century the bourgeoisie had many other -cheaper and more appropriate- ways to represent its interests and its preoccupations than mimicking the manners of the old regime. By 1914 nearly everyone admits the aristocracy is dying. It's only if you want to see progress and advancement in everything that the next big thing becomes an improvement by default, as a car with a top speed of 60 miles an hour is better than one that goes no more than 20. Argue for progress in taste and we're back again to intention and the imperatives of philosophy.

Picasso as a Modernist, in the 1920s, was a Mannerist. What Roy Lichtenstein learned from him was that he had to find a way to deal with crap, to make something of value from what he had around him, and for him as it had been for Picasso, value meant ideal form.

Lichtenstein needed for personal reasons to find a way to return idealism to the melodramatic romance, and the military comics he himself saw as fascist. [101] He had to rescue the ideal from the banal. He had no interest in the mundane or every-day. The thought that something could be mundane and profound wasn't idealist enough, and idealism was a moral imperative.

> *Antagonistic critics say that Pop Art does not transform its model. Does it?*
> Transformation is a strange word to use. It implies that art transforms…. I think my work is different from comic strips—but I wouldn't call it transformation; I don't think that whatever is meant by it is important to art. What I do is form, whereas the comic strip is not formed in the sense I'm using the word; the comics have shapes, but there has been no effort to make them intensely unified.[102]

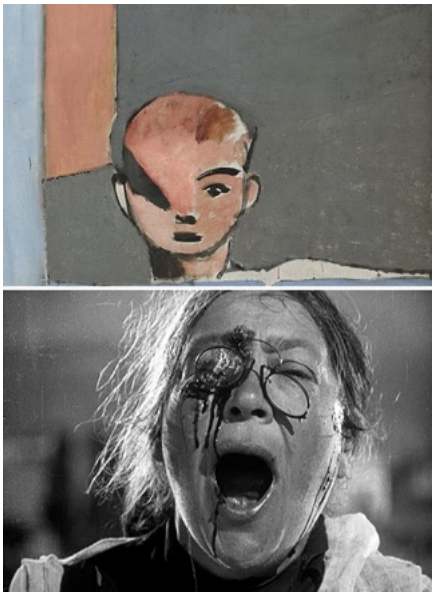
Comic books are structured as films are, as visual narrative; the unity is a unity over time. But to Lichtenstein they're simply indexical, non-art. By his logic to see comic books as art would be an error. The question is whether we see that designation as Broch does, as Eliot and James do, as the following and articulation of a sensibility -even couched in the language of a moral imperative- or whether we choose to see those imperatives as philosophers do, as Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried do, as representing a truth not about one person's metaphysics –a relation to the world- but about the world itself.

Artists as artists can never allow themselves to forget that their models of utopia are inseparable from their chosen craft. Painters use paint, writers use words, singers, actors, and dancers, use their bodies. Their search for order is through artifice and whatever perfection they reach is perfection in artifice. There's no art more ironic than a Fra Angelico. Without irony there's only pedantry, and the sincere delusions of pedantry are much more dangerous than the ironic delusions of art. Most vocations are predicated on optimism. Art and historical writing are the only fields where you can spend your entire career articulating failure and tragedy with the only optimism being your ability to describe them well.

Lichtenstein's paintings have a mix of innocence and irony that Picasso never matched. What was half-empty for Picasso the European was half-full for Lichtenstein, the American who wanted to make paintings, not films, not novels or comic books, and who had to find a way to make it work, while Picasso could rest on his laurels, or pose like a bohemian. Greenberg traveled a similar route from observer to pusher of kitsch but here he is in 1957: "I suspect that posterity will find a lot more that is truly ridiculous in Picasso's recent art than we can"[103] Lichtenstein needed be able to make -and at his best he succeeded in making- an art that gave full credit both to high irony and American optimism. He bypassed the tragedy, like Astaire and Matisse, but with more effort and a stranger result. Warhol couldn't escape it: he had to face optimism and its opposite, and he found a way, resulting in the most profoundly terrifying paintings since Picasso's in 1906.

Themes of apocalypse are both implicit and explicit in Pop, as it turned manically both towards and away from the world. Nobody remembers the Vietnam paintings of the 60s. The touchstones for the era are in mass media and books; the iconic work connecting the war and the art world is a poster. Picasso's work from this time are minor, *at best*, because (again at

best) they are irrelevant to history. They can't compete with either Lichtenstein or the Art Workers' Coalition My Lai poster. They can't compete with Warhol as earlier they couldn't compete with Rauschenberg. Clark is right to argue that the physicality in Picasso's earlier work relates to the intimacy of 19th century interior space. I was surprised Clark didn't adapt Alois Riegl's term, "haptic". As I've said, the hypertrophy of presence, of *manifestation,* -foregrounding the hand-made- was a logical and inevitable counterweight for art in the age of photography. When I first heard of the lectures that became his book I assumed Clark intended to trace Picasso's move from haptic to optic, and he does, but only indirectly. Absurdly I didn't think he was going to defend the work made after the shift. But here I'm going to make the first argument that's not in some way old wine in new bottles, or old sounds in new ears. Because I think the best work of the post-war era, the best before Pop, returns to the hybrid abstraction/figuration of the earliest years of the century. Rauchenberg and Johns and the *Zero School* return to the haptic, and also to a more honestly bourgeois idea of the avant-garde, less grand, more ironic and again, more intimate. The primary optic arts, the arts of the image, were photography and film. Nothing could compete with them. The Modernist avant-garde could use the same tools, could conceptualize photography and film as intellectual philosophical art, but in the long run the result is minor. In art school we studied Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* as a work of art, a kind of abstraction, alongside other forms of abstraction. We saw some Bauhaus films; we didn't study Eisenstein. We didn't watch *Potemkin,* or *The Gold Rush*. Man Ray came up but Nadar and Stieglitz were left for the photography students. The only cross-pollination that occurred was extracurricular, and of course there was a lot of that.



Pop responded to photography in a way that still may not be understood by the intellectuals who write about it. The flat printed colors of a Warhol background surrounding an object or a body carry more weight than the earnest color fields of cinemascopic abstraction. The ink has a physicality that contradicts the recognizable but ephemeral imagery. As figuration Pop grew out of the earlier return to collage and to the haptic, and through a mix of the hand-made and the mechanical became a return to the optic. But contra philosophers and philosophy Pop isn't an art of images, an art as index, but of things made from images. The best paintings, Lichtenstein and Warhol, function for the viewer fully as material. It's their physicality that allows them to work at large scale, a scale rarely seen in photographs, and never successfully as art, until the manipulations made possible by Photoshop.

Earlier in the century American artists painted commercialism as an aspect of culture, but the descriptive capacity of paint on canvas is limited: intimate but less so than a photograph, and with no way to compete with the spectacle of film. Lichtenstein studied with Reginald Marsh as Pollock had with Thomas Hart Benton, and they outgrew their mentors, but no one questions the importance of Walker Evans and Robert Frank. Their photographs show the weight of their subjects as persons, following Baudelaire, "at once the object and the subject, the world external to the artist and the artist himself." There's moral ambiguity

in them because they're more awareness of the moral burdens of depiction. The paintings by comparison are an awkward mix of formalism and sentimentalism.

Conservative defenders of figurative art want to defend a craft as craft and not as function. There was no conspiracy pulling painting towards abstraction, or away from it, it but a sense of what painting could describe that other media could not. The market's involved but that doesn't work as a defense of forgotten paintings, any or more or less than forgotten pop songs. It's important to be blunt when dealing with advocacy, especially advocacy on behalf of seriousness. You can't separate the sensibility of the audience for art, especially the buyers in the market for luxury items, from the sensibility of those who produce it. Artists, authors, and their audiences, work in tandem. And when discussing the politics of the fine arts you need to begin by focusing on the relation of the words "politics" and "fine." Fine art has become more rarified as its function has decreased. Purist abstraction came about when hand-made figuration seemed pointless –and the best pure abstraction wasn't very pure at all. Figuration rebounded when abstraction seemed less concerned with the void as an aspect of the world than to exemplify it as banality. The various theories of art are no less products of their times than the art they're written to define. Words no less than objects become dated, or not. Analytical Marxism was a formalism, and John Rawls wrote a theory of justice, when a history would be much more useful.

In art as in philosophy the questions relating to mimesis are the same in 1950 as in 1906 and 1860. Abstraction means abstraction *from*. The works of art acknowledged as the highpoints of the time record the same desperate stab at representation: the crises of Manet and Picasso reenacted on new ground. With few exceptions later art concerned with the "tragic and timeless" is an art of intent, made of a few gestures done with an air of high seriousness. I can enjoy the works of the Zero school without asking them to more than their weight. Rauschenberg's best early works have all the terror in the nightmares of a closeted Willy Loman, or a character out of Tennessee Williams, without the melodrama. His best works are figurative and crushingly intimate. But Barnett Newman's paintings are claimed to be in the grand tradition, and the claim is hollow. My glib cocktail party version of this is seen in the two images, of Newman's *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, from 1951, and a still from the last scene of John Ford's 1956 film *The Searchers*. Both are attempts at representation and the thematics are nearly identical: the individual in the American landscape. But where one originates in the specific and resolves to something approaching grandeur, but a grandeur only allowed for after an acknowledgement of tragedy and irony, both concerning the story and the artifice of film, the other is unabashedly both grandly self-aggrandizing and grandly unspecific. Of the two, Newman's high art is the one that deals in the wishful thinking foundational to kitsch. But it's also foundational to Modernism itself. Modernism is aspirational, and kitsch is the ultimate in aspirational logic: to dream is to succeed; pretense is reality. But again there is the difference between aspiration—desire—and its description.

Pollock is a harder case; but the literature on him as well is still caught up with the romance of overreach. I've spent a lot of time with Clark's Pollock in *Farewell to an Idea*[104] Overreach is what the book is about. Writing on the 19th century Clark pulls ideas out of material substance, but by the 20th he begins to push them in. Despite his protests it was clear by then that he was never as interested in the working class as he was in the revolution, and we know now they're not the same thing. *Farewell* to an idea (more than once I've written it as "*Requiem*…"); so he has no problem transitioning from Pollock to Adolph Gottlieb. Gottlieb ended as kitsch, and Pollock began with it: look at *Guardians of the Secret*. But Pollock at his best made paintings that even as a child reminded me of Uccello. I remember that because I always thought that was strange, and beautiful. Clark's language reenacts the crises of modernity as defined by Modernism. His recent book is as mannered as its subject. *Farewell to an Idea* is an elegy, and a fitting one, but it doesn't answer my questions about Pollock.

Pollock's paintings are commonly associated with music, with 'free' jazz, Coltrane or Ornette Coleman. I'm going to take a different tack, not because jazz doesn't is the obvious parallel, but because it *is*. But it's not the parallel favored by the high-brow intellectuals of modernism: the philosophers, for whom the parallels need to be high-brow as well (and more serious than art.)

Classical musicians are modern people performing a historical art. As with lawyers, historical research is part of the job. That's the strength and weakness of performance of the classical canon: the works are no longer part of a living tradition. The strength and weakness of jazz is that it developed in the shadow of a great but dying one. You get the sense in the mid 20th century of a mutual sense of jealously and even awe between the classically trained and the brilliant autodidacts (or their heirs); the tragedy attached mostly to the latter. The Swing era will be remembered as a brief period when people working in a popular form thought of themselves as making art without the need to capitalize the word. Like the great Hollywood films of the same era the art comes out of the craft through great effort but not fuss. I don't think it's worth arguing anymore that jazz produced the most important music of the first half of the 20th century. But for now this is a sidebar. I'm interested in historians and craftspeople as opposed to philosophers, and the best discussion I've found of the tension between expression and communication, between emotion and form, is an exchange between two pianists in the classical tradition known also as scholars, but not pedants.

Alfred Brendel describes a moment in one of Beethoven's piano sonatas when the "chains of music itself" are thrown off. This moment comes as the end of a slow progression towards an aesthetic or anti-aesthetic "musical self-immolation" Modernism has always flirted with self-immolation, in art and politics: the sloughing off of the physical mediating form in the desire for pure experience. And in the context of communication, of human exchange, that pure experience is one of unification, of one person with another, with a group, or with "the absolute." I'm going to include a long passage from the exchange between Brendel and Charles Rosen in the New York Review because it both explicates and exemplifies the tensions of the Modernist relation to culture and the *meaning* of culture and cultural history in the modern era and the present. It's a wonderful exchange between two people fully engaged with—and *within*—the tradition they're discussing. And very clearly Pollock's in there too.

> Brendel: In Charles Rosen's review of William Kinderman's highly stimulating book on Beethoven [*NYR*, September 21], he raises a question about a quotation from one of my articles. The context from which this quote is taken is readily available in my book *Music Sounded Out* ("Beethoven's New Style," page 71). To sum it up: During the inversion of the fugue of opus 110, the constraints of polyphony are shaken off in a gradual process of foreshortening that is a feature of the movement's return to life.
> …At the same time, the appearance of the augmented theme in its original, upward shape initiates a process of liquidation: when the basic key of A flat is reached, the texture has become virtually homophonic. The goal of revival has been attained. But Beethoven proceeds even further. The lyrical hymn in A flat that carries the piece to its end becomes more and more euphoric until another, ultimate liberation is achieved: finally, after an exertion that surmounts two fortissimo diminished seventh chords, the "chains of music itself" are thrown off. This last extreme effort amounts to a kind of musical self-immolation; it needs to be conveyed by the performance before silence takes over. In my view, only an extreme metaphor could do it justice.
>
> Rosen: I made no criticism of Alfred Brendel in my review. I only wrote that I assumed he meant something specific by the grandiose expression "the chains of music itself"; I was reproaching William Kinderman (who occasionally writes program-notes for Brendel) with quoting from the work of other scholars out of context in a way that makes their phrases seem empty and pretentious. There was, therefore, no reason to refer to Brendel's book, although I am glad that it is readily available, since I was sure that the particular metaphor had some justification. I agree that the lyric euphoria of the final page of opus 110 is extraordinary. In his letter, however, Brendel has now added the additional metaphor of "musical self-immolation" which is less persuasive. It is not so much its lack of clarity that is unfortunate (who is being immolated, Beethoven, the pianist, or the sonata itself?) but the Wagnerian resonance which can be applied to Beethoven only with a certain lack of tact. Beethoven's pretensions may be as great as Wagner's, but they are less morbid and less coarse.[105]

This is a conversation as I said from within a tradition, and an outsider is left to wonder what those last sentences with the words 'tact,' 'morbid' and 'coarse' even mean. The definition of theology is the use of terms of objective knowledge in discussion based on subjectivity and sense. But we live within our subjectivity and in this sense we live within theology. We can't escape but we communicate, indeed the only way we do so, is by comparing terms.

In fact Rosen's letter made me laugh out loud and at the end I felt a shiver: the shiver I've felt watching great actors play with an audience. Tact in Rosen's sense is one's proper relation to the question of the curtain in the *Wizard of Oz*; which one should maintain even knowing what's behind it. And the shiver I felt is the shiver of recognition that the priest you're arguing with is as much of an atheist or an ironist as you are, but that the fact of a godless world is nonetheless irrelevant. Rosen and

Brendel are both arguing explicitly from within their culture because what they are each interested in, indeed preoccupied by, is not the truth value of that culture—or of culture as such—but its ability to foster a wide range of categories of event and experience.

Imagine being asked to judge a poetry competition where the entrants are asked to write on the same subject. Comparing the results you're not comparing the poems' relation to the objective truth of the idea, event, or object -their assigned subject- but the poets' ability to build a complex and evocative description out of their perceptions and responses. You're not judging the ability to see a thing in absolute terms, but the ability of each poet to make you see what they see, which still must begin with the assumption that at a basic level you already do, since the object or theme has a common, public, form. From a simple commonality, a common denominator, a tea pot or spare tire, each participant is asked to develop a perspective which is then reformulated in language (returned) as a new and more complex common form. The process is one of group mimesis, collectively developed representation, through conversation and debate of individuals about the community and the world they share. The external world -in an absolute sense- is secondary to the social, and to the method of description, the world as experienced and responded to in time. This is the foundation also of the rule of law.

The vulgarity in Wagner and incipient in Beethoven—hence the need in Rosen's terms for 'tact'—is not the vulgarity of subject but of the composer's assumptions about and attitude towards language. Beethoven is in a line of gradation with Wagner, Gerome and Helmut Newton, in the sense that Wagner indulges a bombast that Beethoven at his best merely passionately describes. Wagner's music is written for Wagnerians in the same sense that Newton's photographs are made for voyeurs, yet identification—as pseudo-community—is encouraged but not yet a requirement. All communities are communities of selves and others. Collective identity, as imaginary collective unity, is either a false—unrealizable—ideal, from fascism to *The Singularity*, or mere collective reflex: the community of tech geeks, fetishists and junkies.

The experience of the sex act is social, formal, communicative, and if the world is seen as the social realm, world-creating. The moment of orgasm as reflex is aformal, asocial (isolate), ecstatic and if the world is seen as social, world destructive. Sex as performance is a form of communication; orgasm is artless. The pretense of an 'art' of orgasm is vulgar. The popular understanding of Pollock's work is as an 'act' of 'expression,' as orgasm not structure. Mondrian saw structure. The what and how of communication for Pollock's work are complex; as complex in their way as the question of orgasm in Beethoven.

What Rosen is debating with Brendel is the increasing presence of instrumentalism in form: the growing tendency to craft to reflex that reaches its apogee in the illustration and the false community of the fetish: of pure instrument. Wagner is preaching to the choir (and Pollock is in there somewhere); Gerome is a soft-care pornographer playing to an audience, Newton and his audience are almost interchangeable, his form of communication identification with the masturbator, which is to say barely communication at all, one step away from the final shift, the final descent from interpersonal communication to masturbation in public.

If communication is a circuit, reflex is a short. The fantasy of the premature ejaculator is a state of eternal orgasm. It's also the logic of the perfect economic man. The mania for progress becomes no more than simply the desire to go faster. If knowledge is measured in conclusions not in processes then the shortest distance between two points, the short circuit, is the obvious choice. Pornography and technical illustration are the model of art in a technocracy: immediate gratification. This is the crux of the struggle over the human imagination that begins in the 18th century, with the rise of idealist anti-humanism.

In 2003, I asked Jack Balkin, Knight Professor of Constitutional Law at Yale, if there were any discussion between legal scholars and musicologists and historians such as Richard Taruskin, known for criticizing theories of originalism in musical performance. In the various overlapping intellectual interests that marked my childhood, the connection was taken as a given. I still take too much for granted about what others take for granted, but Balkin was the right person to ask. Here's Taruskin, from his keynote address at the conference, "Law, Music and other Performing Arts" at U.T. Austin in 2002

> About ten years ago I received out of the blue an offprint of an article[106] from the University Pennsylvania Law Review… by Professors Sanford Levinson of the University of Texas and Jack Balkin of Yale…. I read it with fascination and gratitude, the latter simply because the authors had so well understood the position I had taken in the debates about what was then known as authentic performance practice in music. My musical and musicological colleagues seemed unable to hear what I was really saying when I said that their ideas of historical performance practice, on which the claim of authenticity was based, derived from a selective reading of history in the service of a modern—or, more strongly, a Modernist—ideology.
> All works of art… are subject to social mediation. It is, indeed, the price of living…. Ought it to require a musicologist and a pair of legal scholars to come up with such a truism? Maybe not, but apparently it does.[107]

If all communication is communication among individuals through mediating forms -of which language is the prime example- then beyond the most rudimentary functions we operate always on speculative induction and generalization, and we should be clear: we build most often on foundations of desire and hot air. Only in language can you live on the 10th floor of a building that doesn't reach the ground. It amazes me that philosophers have built careers without having to respond to our model of the law as formalized adversarialism: mandated moral semi-consciousness. My ignorance is why I took for granted that more than one or two scholars of constitutional law would have read Taruskin. I assumed philosophers understand that we've chosen the rule of law because we understood the dangers of the rule of reason.

Having grown up around lawyers and literature professors –readers of fiction– debates over rationalism and irrationalism left me almost speechless. I'd forgotten that Plato hated lawyers as much he hated poets, and that his ideal was Sparta. The rule of law is the rule of public language and the public description of the world. Under the rule of reason justice is ad hoc, devolving always into the rule of the reasonable as defined by the strong.

Taruskin is a musicologist. Brendel and Rosen are performers who write criticism, and as soloists are advocates for the causes that they choose. Jobbing lawyers, like orchestra players, don't always have a choice. From the NY Times obituary of John Mortimer, Barrister and novelist, creator of *Rumpole of the Bailey*

> Doing these cases," he wrote, "I began to find myself in a dangerous situation as an advocate. I came to believe in the truth of what I was saying. I was no longer entirely what my professional duties demanded, the old taxi on the rank waiting for the client to open the door and give his instruction, prepared to drive off in any direction, with the disbelief suspended."[108]

How in the context of modern social life does one make a statement or a proposition that acknowledges both the integrity of that statement—the speaker's desire that it be 'true'—and the possibility, most often the fact, that it doesn't operate on that universal level? How do we manage irony and belief, and the dual imperatives of integrity and sociability? The passage above is the statement of a man who spent his life as a performer in the theater of law. He understood the question, and his career was predicated on the response most of us take too much for granted to ever bother articulating. Taruskin on the other hand, defending the "authenticity" of performing in and for the present, defends censorship, even to the point of arguing that we should stop listening to Prokofiev, regardless of the music itself, simply because he worked for Stalin.[109] By his logic the greatest art of Europe, or any other culture beyond a few tribes of hunter gatherers, should be in deep storage. Concert halls should be silent. In his arguments with Rosen[110] and Daniel Barenboim[111], both get the better of him easily. Taruskin: "As one who regards Rosen's literary output—all of it—as Cold War propaganda…"[112] Rosen replies[113], but it's not worth the effort to go into details. I'd argue with all of them that Schoenberg's serialism was a desperate attempt to escape becoming a Hollywood competitor of Erich Korngold, famous for *Captain Blood* and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* –listening to *Verklarte Nacht*, I can't help seeing Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland– and that Milton Babbitt's music and writing, "Who Cares if you Listen"[114] *aka* "The Composer as Specialist"[115] (a title too perfect by half) fit with every example of post war rationalism I've described: scholastic formalism, positivism, erudition as art, dead ends imagined as progress. I'd argue that there are "bad" or "inappropriate" ways to play Bach, as there are "bad" or "inappropriate" ways to interpret the constitution. But those are arguments to be made and answered in debate, and censorship is refusing to argue and then demanding others do the same. No one mentioned above would disagree with Taruskin's critique of originalism, just as none of them would agree with Babbitt's diktats. Rosen was a friend and performer of his music, but he wasn't a follower; Babbitt lost his argument from authority well before he died. Take away the positivistic moralism and the work is left to stand on its own, and the description and manifestation of a kind of desire, from a place and time. It will stand or fall as record or relic. In the end the terms are not Babbitt's or Taruskin's. History is the judge.

Joseph Kerman on Babbitt the theorist

> His writing of the 1950s had developed into a strange amalgam. Conjoined with a fanatical scientism, a search for quasi-logical precision of reference which tortured his syntax into increasingly Jamesian spirals for very un-Jamesian ends, there was an undertone of distress, even rage, erupting into repeated assaults and innuendos directed against various predictable targets. This scarcely contained emotion issued obviously (and openly enough) from the same sense of modernist alienation as was expressed very differently by Schoenberg or, to take an even more extravagant case, Adorno. But while Adorno was telling anyone who would listen at Darmstadt and Donaueschingen that modern music was decisively cut off from decadent bourgeois culture, Babbitt at Princeton was pointing out that avant-garde music could find its niche after all – though only by retreating from one bastion of middle class culture, the concert hall, to another, the university. Like pure science, he argued, musical composition has a claim on the university as a protector of abstract thought. (The complicity of composition and theory, it will be seen, was crucial to this argument, the complicity of theory and mathematics extremely helpful.) Instead of lamenting the no-doubt irreparable breach between avant-garde music and the public, composers like mathematicians should turn their backs on the public and demand their rightful place in the academy. Otherwise 'music will cease to evolve, and in that important sense, will cease to live'.[116]

"Jamesian spirals for very un-Jamesian ends." Kerman restates my arguments, marking the same line from the subjective but impersonal to the 'objective', formality to formalism, elision to denial, from bourgeois culture to technocratic anti-culture. But he ignores that Babbitt's and Adorno's prescriptions are variations of the same institutionalism, with the same positivist, Weberian, contempt for art. If Babbitt's art succeeds it succeeds in spite of this. The undertones in his essays, "of distress, even rage, erupting into repeated assaults" is matched in his music. The parallel is not science or mathematics but the other art music of its time: free Jazz. Formal logic is a cover.

Expressionism is the emotion escaping the denial of emotion; it's the melodrama behind positivism, from Vienna to Weimar. In the atomic age, of technocratic order and annihilation, it's the relation of Strangelove to von Neumann. This is what Brendel and Rosen, and Kerman, as exegetes, interpreters not pedants, who are neither positivists nor emotionalists, rationalists nor irrationalists, are describing and debating. If music is formal, how can a gesture that breaks with the form, function within it? Rosen says Brendel defends farting in Church; he misses the logic behind the change. If Beethoven puts an explosion at the end of the metrical line, then formal art has become mimetic. One of my teachers, Abe Ajay, an arch modernist, a friend of Ad Reinhardt who worked with him at *The New Masses*, used to complain that Beethoven ruined his music with images. "All those wonderful notes and then... Birds!!" Abe wasn't joking, but I laughed. This is what Schoenberg and Babbitt rebelled against, not Beethoven but the only option for those following him into the 20th century: the vulgar romance of Korngold and the program music of Hollywood, music of the classical western tradition no longer independent, now subservient to another form, the art of images.

THREE

On April 17th 2009, one day after Roberta Smith's Picasso review, the Times published a review of a film by Jean-Pierre Melville that had just been released in the U.S. almost 50 years after it was made.

Melville was one of the heroes of the French New Wave. He was an Alsatian Jew and he'd fought with the Resistance. His birth name was Grumbach; he renamed himself after his favorite author. He chose his subjects carefully, while Picasso barely knew what he was plugged into even when he was. But of course both Picasso's paintings and Melville's films function first as description. *Léon Morin, Priest*, based on autobiographical novel of the same name, tells the story of Barny, the widow of a Jewish communist, in a village in the alps during the occupation.

> She and her young daughter, France, who has been squirreled away with local farmers, enjoy a cautious if strangely untroubled existence. Barny appears relatively indifferent to the Italians and then Germans who overrun the village, though soon after the story opens, she and some other women arrange to have their children baptized....
>
> What is remarkable is the depth of feeling he exacts from the juxtaposition of these ordinary moments with their extraordinary context. When Melville cuts to some Resistance fighters leaving the baptism and returning to the woods that shelter them, it's as if you were watching fathers leaving for that day's work.
>
> The baptism inspires Barny to enter another church, where she has decided to tell off a priest for no real reason (though cynicism, politics and boredom play their part). Inside a confessional — from the name on the door she guesses that the priest within will be poor — she repeats Marx's dictum that religion is the opiate of the people. To her surprise Léon Morin responds openly to her gambit. He suggests they continue their discussion, which they do during regular evening meetings characterized by theological discussions and increasingly electric contact…
>
> Although Barny narrates the story, her reasons for meeting with the priest remain largely implied if obvious. In an interview Melville said that she becomes converted in order to have sex, a perversely crude description of a relationship he develops with nuance and fascinating ambiguity. Barny's sexual desires add to that ambiguity. She confesses that she adores one of her supervisors, Sabine (Nicole Mirel, a stern beauty in the mode of Barbara Steele), whose small, knowing smiles imply worlds of possibility. In one startling office scene Sabine stands behind the seated Barny and leans forward, draping her breasts against the other woman's back. The priest says the lack of men accounts for these yearnings, though Barny's description of

Sabine (“She’s like an Amazon”) suggests otherwise.

> It is immaterial whether Barny has lesbian desires or yearns for the priest, though she feels for both. The point is that she feels passionate in a world marked by annihilating brutality: she is staking her claim to life amid so much death. In 1961 the critic Fereydoun Hoveyda wrote that the numerous dissolves in the film not only signify the passage of time, as dissolves often do, “but also the disarray of an individual consciousness and of an epoch.” Despite the apparent unifying function of Barny’s voice-over the world of “Léon Morin, Priest” is one of profound disarray — fractured, unstable, uncertain. In one scene Melville points the camera at a storefront window in which you see the reflected image of German soldiers arresting passers-by. No wonder Barny goes looking for God, even if all she finds is a muscular tease with a flattened nose.. [117]

This is a discussion both of art and of its subjects, of human relations as material for formal invention and of the nature of human relations themselves, not in fiction but as fact. Picasso’s work even at its worst deserves the same consideration, even when it demonstrates his failure. But art and film critics in the US operate in different worlds. Film critics and more recently television critics (a mark of change) are seen as akin to book critics, while art critics have become design critics. The press reaction to the Picasso exhibit was matched by the response to the Martin Kippenberger retrospective: “The Artist Who Did Everything” (NY Magazine) “Live Hard, Create Compulsively, Die Young” (NY Times).

Kippenberger’s closest predecessor in German culture was Fassbinder, and that’s stretching it. But the articles read like eulogies for a man who got in drunken fights at parties and was always invited back because he was so much fun to watch. Alienation and anomie have been turned into optimism and art has been turned into design.

> “If Robert Rauschenberg was the American Picasso -- constantly innovating and working, and also prone to churning out crud -- Kippenberger is the German Rauschenberg. …the curators give us Kippenberger the bacchanalian art-making machine… Although there’s much here that comes off as garish or schlocky, I left loving Kippenberger more than ever.”[118]

> “He suggested that painting as a form, while useful, was overrated. To test the response he bought a small gray 1972 monochrome painting by Gerhard Richter, fitted it with metal legs and turned it into a coffee table, which became by default a sculpture and original Kippenberger. The response was strong.”[119]

Kippenberger was born in 1953. The Red Amy Faction kidnappings were in 1977. When *Deutschland im Herbst* was released, he was living in Berlin. From The Guardian’s review of the Kippenberger exhibition at Tate Modern in 2006

> Accused of neo-Nazi attitudes by a German critic in the late 1980s, he made several mannequin sculptures of himself, called *Martin, Into the Corner, You Should Be Ashamed of Yourself*, placed facing the wall. As with the humour in Maurizio Cattelan's sculptures, there is a detectable thread of revulsion that runs through

> Kippenberger's work. It is a revulsion that is at once directed at the art world (in which he was a consummate player), at postwar German culture, at the pieties of other artists, at the meaninglessness of most art (of which his own work can be seen as a parodic example), and at himself. One way out was to make his art even more meaningless, more stupid and obvious and dumb than everyone else's.[120]

Punk was the revenge of pop music against the pretensions of theatrical art rock. It was made as a commodity that stated itself as such: a spike and glitter covered hand grenade, a 3 minute hate, the recorded sound of angry teenagers pressed on vinyl disks and sold back to them. Kippenberger made self-destructive anti-art for the walls of Christian Democrats. One way or another, major or minor, we're back again with Baudelaire and Henry James. Love or hate any of it this is where the conversation starts.

But if art and its audience are linked, I can't simply accuse critics of treating art as design as if it were unjustified. The centerpiece of the Kippenberger exhibit was an installation, *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's "Amerika".* Art installations are stage sets with or without props, but without actors. They're the continuation of the process described by Fried in "Art and Objecthood". Stage designers play a secondary role in theater, but artists came to it as an innovation, the same way they reinvent performance, having to find a way to justify new modes of expression by way of the old. Again, The Guardian's Adrian Searle.

> The best essay here is by Kippenberger's younger sister, Susanne. She describes her brother as a romantic who "wanted a Happy End". This short memoir is very moving. Kippenberger even wanted to supply a happy ending to Franz Kafka's unfinished novel, Amerika. The Kippenberger solution took the form of a sprawling installation, which provides the high point of the Tate Modern retrospective. An arrangement of about 50 chairs and tables stands on a green mat imprinted with the lines of a football pitch. The assorted furniture - including 20th-century design classics, chairs and tables "adapted" by other artists as well as refashioned by Kippenberger himself - is arranged as though for interviews. In Kafka's novel, the protagonist applies for a job advertised at "the biggest theatre in the world". "Whoever wants to become an artist should sign up," the advert invites.
>
> Kippenberger's desks and chairs are implausible, uncomfortable settings, each a sculptural tableau in its own right. There are Eames chairs and Jacobsens, a table set with jars of body parts (on which filmed talking heads by artist Tony Ousler are projected), chairs set with African carvings, desks with Kippenberger's own paintings stashed underneath, a metal table rimed in thick paint and gloopy silicon. Standing amid it all are rickety, concentration-camp-style watchtowers and a lifeguard's tower. Unfortunately, viewers won't be able to wander within the installation, but will have to be content to observe from the stadium bleachers at either side, like spectators at the big game.

This is still the struggle over the decay of the art object, of the function of the art object, a decay that's traumatic to fine artists but much less so to novelists and poets. Kippenberger was a failed actor who became a painter. He loved Picasso, crap

included, and in his paintings painted kitsch as kitsch, with the same desperation of the previous one hundred years: the need to represent the world, and to escape it into art; the need to replace the world, and the horror of the lie that resulted, of the illusion, and the bohemian hatred of the effort it took to make the illusion work. Much but not all of modern culture struggled with this. Modernism as an ideology, left and right: communism, fascism, Bauhaus and Borges, imposed formalism and told us to celebrate it. Bohemians said posing as an artist made you an one. That was another lie. Kippenberger was one more confused self-hating German romantic idealist. Contra Jerry Saltz, he was not the German Rauschenberg. More importantly he's not Fassbinder, and the German painters of the 1980's were not the *Neuer Deutscher Film*. Rauschenberg is not Picasso.

Panofsky in his essay "What is Baroque"

> The release or deliverance achieved by the Baroque period can be observed in every field of human endeavor. The Florentine intermedios of the manneristic theater (similar to the English masks) abounded in such complicated allegories as seen in the Intermedio of 1585 and 1589 where the conclusion of *Plato's Republic* appeared on the stage, including the Planets, the Harmony of the Spheres, the Three Goddesses of Fate, and even Necessity, holding the adamantine axis of the Universe. We happen to possess the diary of a nobleman who saw this play and stated that it was very beautiful but nobody could understand what it was all about. A few years later those allegories were replaced by the modern opera, full of natural emotions and tuneful melodies (Rinuccini's *Daphne*, 1594; Monteverdi's *Orpheus*, a bit later). The very style of writing had assumed a specific manneristic character all over the continent (Gongorism in Spain, Euphuism in England: Lyle, Greene and Donne). This too was overcome by Cervantes and Shakespeare. A beautiful instance is Shakespeare's Winter's Tale (1610-11) deliberately ridiculing the euphuistic prose of the courtiers, and opposing to it the emotional and even versified, but beautifully natural, profoundly human speech of the main characters.[121]

After reading Fried argue in 1967 that "theater is now the negation of art"[122], it was hard not to hear echoes of the condemnations of Vatican II and the mini skirt. After reading Panofsky it was hard not to see Fried reminding the assembled above that the staging of Plato's forms is a betrayal of everything Plato stood for.

And Here's Greenberg in 1980

> Modernism has to be understood as a holding operation, a continuing endeavor to maintain aesthetic standards in the face of threats -- not just as a reaction against romanticism. As the response, in effect, to an ongoing emergency. Artists in all times, despite some appearances to the contrary, have sought aesthetic excellence. What singles Modernism out and gives it its place and identity more than anything else is its response to a heightened sense of threats to aesthetic value: threats from the social and material ambience, from the temper of the times, all conveyed through the demands of a new and open cultural market, middlebrow demands.[123]

Fine art's been in decline since the rise of the bourgeoisie. Intellectual seriousness has been in decline since the rise of modern liberalism, and that's not a defense of modern conservatism. But who maintains this "holding operation"? Greenberg says himself, but why not Philip Roth? Why not Woody Allen or Jean-Luc Godard? Why not Wisława Szymborska, Ousmane Sembène, Aki Kaurismäki, or Abbas Kiarostami? Arthur Danto coined the term the "artworld" in 1964[124], and was proud to see it adopted by the scene, oblivious to the fact that it was a sign of trouble for the art world and himself.

I missed the Duchamp exhibition in Philadelphia in 2009, but I grew up there, and I spent many hours in the Arensberg collection. One of the nice things about the museums in Philadelphia when I was young is that they were informal, even sloppy. You were allowed to touch the bronzes in the Rodin Museum. Holding hands with one of the *Burghers of Calais* was a wonderful and unnerving experience for a 5-year-old. And every time I went to the Philadelphia Museum of Art I would give Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* a spin. It wasn't allowed but it was easy.

My father's take on Duchamp was simple and ideological. His works made no sense and they weren't supposed to. They were a "fuck you", *"Epater le bourgeois!"* and that was it. He didn't see perversity in Duchamp any more than my mother did in Eliot.

Danto, from "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art"

> Duchamp's *Fountain* is, as everyone knows, to all outward appearances a urinal—it was a urinal until it became a work of art and acquired such further proper ties as works of art possess in excess of those possessed by mere real things like urinals (the work is dated 1917, though it would take research into the history of plumbing to determine the date of the urinal, which made it possible for Duchamp to use urinals dated later than *Fountain* when the original was lost: the work remains dated 1917). In his own view he chose this particular object for what he hoped was its aesthetic neutrality. Or pretended that that is what he hoped. For urinals have too strong a cultural, not to say amoral identity, quite to allow them selves to be without affect. They are objects, to begin with, highly sexualized through the fact that women are anatomically barred from employing them in their primary function, at least without awkwardness. So they show their arrogant exclusivity through their form. (The fear of equal access to all johns was a major factor, it will be remembered, in the defeat of the ERA.) They are, moreover, given the cultural realities, objects associated with privacy (though less so than stools) and with dirt.[125]

The two paintings here are Ingres' *La Source*, and Courbet's *Origin of the World*. The sculpture is a bathing nymph from Sèvres, manufactured in 1921 after an 18th century original. Urinals like figurines are made by craftsmen in the factory and then they're mass produced. Porcelain has a long history in France. And the Courbet painting, like the urinal was made for private view.

Panofsky's response to the American New Critics was to have them spout Pierrot: "*Je sais bien écrire, mais je ne sais pas lire*."[126] I know how to write, but I don't know how to read." Danto is a blind man who thinks. He makes the effort to imagine

the physical awkwardness of a women trying to piss into a urinal, and as a proud liberal and feminist to bring in the ERA, but simple metaphor is beyond him. A urinal is an inverted triangle, a porcelain pussy shared by men. Duchamp remade Manet's *Olympia* as a sculpture for the age of mass production. It's a brilliant dirty joke, but if he'd done it as a satirical lithograph in 1860 no one would now would give it a second thought. Danto's blubbering pedantry reminds me of a story Callie Angell told me from her days at the Journal: a graduate student came back to her job at the office after teaching summer school at Princeton and when asked how it went replied, "It was strange. My students were all obsessed with sex. Not the idea of sex or the meaning of sex but sex!" The office nickname for Danto, behind his back, was Miss Piggy.

Rhonda Roland Shearer has argued that Duchamp's readymades were custom made.[127] Even if this were true that undermines none of the sharpness. But Danto's response to Shearer was to say that if she were right, "I have no interest in Duchamp". [128]

Duchamp, the symbolist poet of objects, shares the conservative anxiety of Eliot that later devolved into the arid intellectualism of Borges. "You say that reality is under no obligation to be interesting. To which I'd reply that reality may disregard the obligation but that we may not."[129] There's hardly a more Duchampian line than that, except that Borges is Duchamp as pedant, without the irony, Eliot without the regret. He's a conceptualist; as Eliot said of Chesterton, his brain swarms with ideas, without thinking.

I missed the Duchamp exhibition, but I browsed through the catalogue looking for references. I had a hunch. I found an image reproduced from *Blue Velvet*, but looking in the index for references to Hitchcock I found nothing.

Duchamp was more than anything a late 19th century artist in the age of film, which explains why he distrusted it as much as he did. He used narrative form only to cut it short; and Hitchcock was just on the other side of the same manic/phobic relation to time. A camera is a wooden box with a hole in it, and Hitchcock is the archetypal cinematic voyeur/peeping tom. The images below are of Jimmy Stewart in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, flanked by two views of Duchamp's last major piece, *Étant donnés*, the centerpiece of the recent exhibition, which he worked on throughout the 1950's, and now on permanent display in Philadelphia. The door on the right has two peepholes through which you can see the tableau shown opposite. The reference to Courbet is there too.

What works for Duchamp, works also in other ways for Warhol. *Double Elvis,* from 1964: a doubled image of a fake cowboy -a movie image- played by a pop "icon," and within and beneath that, of a person, Elvis Aaron Presley; two images of an image, of an image, of a man, and an image of psychosis. Below it are two stills from *Vertigo*, and one from *Psycho.* Think also of Hitchcock's Kim Novak and Warhol's *Marilyns* and *Jackies*.

My older arguments were too simple, especially so regarding Warhol, but in other places the bluntness is appropriate. From *Parody and Privacy* (1987)

> If I want to say that Duchamp had limited interest or even a distaste for the aesthetics of time, I need to show that his works undermine a consideration of time as a process or form that communicates anything of value. If, as Annette Michelson says: "Working unlike Bunuel and Dali, in the spirit of 'the reconciliation of opposites,' he maintains that characteristic refusal of 'either/or'..." then I must prove his acts of reconciliation are acts of banality, that the acts of refusal and denial result in this case in an aesthetic of nihilism, that in Duchamp's case is produced by conflating, perhaps correctly, the conceits of the Victorian period with those of the modern one, and being unable to posit an alternative. [130]

Duchamp and Borges, unlike Eliot, are credited with philosophical innovation. Politically Modernist critics, *theorists* who mock Greenberg's idealist formalism as liberal celebrate Borges' nihilist formalism as critique. From another Borges story, *The Challenge*

> Something fundamental in the brutal story just told saves it from falling into unalloyed barbarousness -an episode out of La Terre or Hemingway. I speak of a religious core. "His beliefs," said the poet Lugones of the gaucho, "could be reduced to a few superstitions, which had no great bearing an his everyday life." He then adds, "The one thing he respected was courage, which he cultivated with a chivalrous passion" I would say that the gaucho, without realizing it, forged a religion -the hard and blind religion of courage- and that his faith, (like all others) had its ethic, its mythology, and its martyrs. On the plains and out on the raw edges of the city, men who led extremely elementary lives -herders, stockyard workers, drovers, outlaws, and pimps- rediscovered in their own way the age-old cult of the gods of iron. In a 13th century saga, we read:
>
> > "Tell me what you believe in", said the earl. "I believe in my own strength," said Sigmund.[131]

Borges by his own admission had been a frail child. When he was older his father brought him to a whorehouse he was so traumatized he didn't attempt sex again for 30 years. He was a cloistered aesthete, a Duchampian formalist proselytizing a masculine moral relativism. His works return always to a violence that he describes and then explains, to justify it; the men he worships wouldn't care. He cerebralized an aristocratic anti-bourgeois social order as a bourgeois ideology, as if gauchos had built a way of life out of whole cloth and free choice instead of accommodating to hard reality. This is close to what Clark claims for Picasso as a representative of Nietzschean philosophical formalism, the formalism of Borges, Robbe-Grillet

and Paul de Man, like Bourdieu and G.A. Cohen, but fantasists of the right and not the left. Borges' writing is more violent than Hemingway because librarians are bureaucrats of books, and bureaucratized violence, cleaned of its smell is more violent than simple barbarism. Robbe-Grillet's literary and real, consensual and aestheticized sadism, obscured his history as a collaborator. Fantasy was Calvino's escape from the realism of his early stories. Formalism, aestheticism, in every example is an attempt at escape. It's the artistic parallel to bloody but bloodless reason.

Bureaucracy is the aristocracy of ideas not of action, with no need of sociability, courtesy, or even noblesse oblige, and no need even to pay lip service to the notion that the captain should go down with the ship. I started an argument with an investment banker and friend of friends of G.A. Cohen, by saying a general shouldn't be cavalier about sending men to their deaths. He replied that "cavalier" was a term of aesthetics, and emotions were irrelevant. I wasn't quick enough to say that

then the general should have his son lead the charge. Bureaucrats' war like bureaucrats art, is war without the mud and the flies, without the full reality of death, or life.

Compare Borges' stories to Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity,* a film that makes us feel sympathy for a murderer but not for murder. Wilder doesn't choose formal over moral integrity; he describes a moment when what's morally wrong is powerfully desirable. The audience shares the desire and the guilt. Wilder's film describes fantasy and temptation; Borges as a Modernist, indulges it. He simplifies and prefers simplicity whether it describes the world or not, because "reality is under no obligation to be interesting." Huysmans went from decadence to the Church. Borges' scholastic decadence begins there. Borges is the reactionary churchman as un-ironic unbeliever *and moralist*: the purest form of hypocrisy.

Wilder made films without worrying about whether narrative was untrue, obsolete, or old fashioned. The questions were as irrelevant to him as it was to Melville or to any of the filmmakers in cinematic *canon*. The greatest hero of the French New Wave was Jean Renoir, the son of a French Impressionist, who more than any other visual artist of the 20th century continued the Parisian model of the artist as bourgeois observer of the bourgeois world.

Cultures are systems of representation. The world is circumscribed by the normative assumptions of philosophy professors no more or less than cabdrivers. Just as a guillotine is not an ax and a governor is not an executioner, wearing a bikini on a city street will get you noticed in a way it wouldn't on the beach. We regulate our lives with categories. But we all see things from different angles, and sometimes that's enough to make our gestures memorable, even if only memorable in the context

of what came just before. A brilliant quip can lose its sharpness or even its intelligibility taken out of context, but that doesn't take away from the intelligence of the gesture, only our ability to recognize it. Duchamp's *Fountain* loses its meaning if we don't know its original function as an object. A *Descent from the Cross* has a lot going for it even if you have no idea what it's supposed to mean or be. Our most lasting works make their own contexts, that then are expanded outward. That's not a statement of opinion; it's simply a fact. A good deal of post-war art would lose its meaning outside the narrative it's a part of. The brilliance is ephemeral. A hemline could be daring; a bathroom fixture could be shocking, and the people who made that those decisions could be geniuses. It's interesting to watch someone who's chosen to bend the rules of the system they inhabit, even or especially if people accuse them of breaking them.

Eric Hobsbawm:

> Why brilliant fashion designers, a notoriously non-analytic breed, sometimes succeed in anticipating the shape of things to come better than professional predictors, is one of the most obscure questions in history; and for the historian of culture, one of the most central.[132]

Yves Saint Laurent was three when he pointed out to his aunt that her shoes and dress didn't match.[133] His statement can be designated an objective truth in the terms of the system in which he had already, and precociously, educated himself. At the age of three he was acknowledged as *a Judge*. But systems are always changing and are always in the process of becoming. Representational systems ossify into formal systems that outlast their role as representation: forms are still used even as they become brittle. And as I described in Manet and Picasso, and Duchamp and Warhol, this is the crisis that defines modern art, which is no more or less than the art of a culture in crisis. Sometimes forms are taken up in new ways, as in Duchamp's literary objects**.** Eisenstein's favorite author was Dickens.[134] With film the 19th century tradition moved onto a different track, but in art school we studied Vertov by which definition Eisenstein was simply a maker of popular film.

Eliot's poetry is memorial, describing a desire to hold on to what one loves even after it's dead. But he found a strange way to bring the dead to life. He used modern forms to describe an anti-modern philosophy and he ended up leaving behind one of the greatest descriptions that we have of the interior life of a modern conservative. If G.A. Cohen had the clarity of Eliot, he could have written a great novel about the dream and failure of communism in the west. And he would have been able to give communism a better defense at least in retrospect than he did. Unlike Eliot he lacked the ability to articulate his own tragedy.

Below is a passage from an essay by John Roemer, an economist and political scientist, a friend and collaborator of Cohen and others in the group of Analytical Marxists. From "A pragmatic theory of responsibility for the egalitarian planner"

> In the work of Rawls, [Ronald] Dworkin, [Richard] Arneson, and Cohen, a central example that clinches the case against equality of welfare as the ethically correct kind of egalitarianism is the required treatment of a person with voluntarily cultivated expensive tastes. Under welfare egalitarianism, such a person must receive a larger-than-normal bundle of scarce resources, which appears to render him a kind of exploiter of

others with more frugal tastes. In the model I have presented, a person who has a high rate of time discount (*r*) or who views education as very costly (low value of *s*) has expensive tastes, for he will choose a low level of education (*ceteris paribus*) will consequently have low expected future income, and will have a low expected welfare.

To take classic example, consider the person who derives satisfaction from a drink only If it is a pre-phylloxera claret. Such a person requires more money to derive the same satisfaction that a beer lover derives from her brew. Here is how Dworkin, Arneson, and I would differ in the treatment of a person. Dworkin would not compensate the one who could derive satisfaction only front pre-phylloxera claret if she *identifies* with those tastes. Arneson would not compensate her if it had been *prudent* for her to learn to like beer: presumably, if she knew that she would not have the income to purchase the ancient claret, and if she had the opportunity to develop frugal tastes, then it would have been prudent for her to do so. I propose that the decision whether to compensate her depends on how the median person of her type behaved. Let us say that her type is "child of impoverished aristocrats." If the "median preferences" of persons of that type are for pre-phylloxera claret, then she is entitled to compensation to increase her level of welfare to what the person of frugal tastes, who exercised a median degree of responsibility in other circumstances can experience with his resources.[135]

I'll repeat an earlier quote from Cohen

> …the transition from being wealthy to being not wealthy at all can be extremely burdensome and the person who has tasted wealth will suffer more typically from lack of it than someone who's had quote unquote the good fortune never to be wealthy and therefore has built up the character and the orientation that can cope well with it.

All of this is a parody of prescription. The reference to pre-phylloxera claret is obscure enough that it's simply in-joke Oxbridge snobbery. The "egalitarian planner" himself exists before and above the egalitarian world, and every example given of the various theories is itself based on assumption. How is it possible not to *identify* with a taste and still claim it? The judge has become a mind reader. And who's judge? Who defines *prudence*? Are we to hope that a future Solomon or Yves Saint Laurent will arrive to be the arbiter?

All of is all the result of a focus on individualism and the need to regulate it from above, and not within. All of it begins with modern liberalism. It literally denies the role of virtue, even as an ideal. The goal is to create a system of rules that allow

mediocre people to thrive according to their mediocre interests. I'll quote Lefebvre again . "The great majority of nobles either did not know how, or did not wish, to get rich." You could say the same thing about school teachers, but political philosophers aren't allowed to generalize from moral priors. You can't begin with a desire, only with a fact, or rather with the fact of one desire as the lowest common denominator of desires. To say that the state or society should educate and inculcate is a scientific and moral error, even if by refusing to teach, inculcate, indoctrinate, you are in fact doing just that. The first requirement for philosophers and political scientists is moral passivity –the passivity of journalists who take photographs of starving children and vultures– in the same of 'science'. It should be a problem for political philosophy that a German banker and his wife have a better understanding of the responsibilities of child-rearing than a Marxist philosopher.

The defense of democracy where it exists in these discussions is a defense of egalitarianism or fairness. Arguments for democratic "legitimacy" are arguments from morality. The underlying assumption is that a rule of knowledge or of the knowing few, an *epistocracy* is possible; the only question is whether or not it's desirable. All the evidence shows that epistocracy is impossible. It's always a fantasy of the elite.

Liberals associate defenses of free speech with defenses of wealth and property. But you can say just as easily that since republican governance requires informed debate, freedom of speech is subsidiary to freedom of inquiry, and both are necessary if citizens are to fulfill the obligations of self-government. But that's an argument from republicanism. Republicanism requires a virtue ethic. Liberalism, including the performative, de facto liberalism of leftist political philosophers, ignores it, and ignores the world itself, as do all the ideologies of the past one hundred years.

One more bit of liberal Borgesian high formalism, from the first chapter of *Democratic Authority*, by David Estlund, another friend of Cohen, who wants as he says: "to put democratic convictions on more secure footing."

> Democracy can seem to empower the masses without regard for the quality of the political decisions that will result. Concern for the quality of decisions can seem to lead in an antidemocratic direction, toward identifying and empowering those who know best. Partly for these reasons, philosophical treatments of democracy's value have often tried to explain why politics should be democratic even though democracy has no particular tendency to produce good decisions. I believe these ac- counts are weak, and I want to put democratic convictions on more secure footing. My goal is to show how a concern for the quality of political decisions, properly constrained by other principles, supports democratic political arrangements.
>
> ...Before turning to democracy, I begin with the idea of a philosophical framework. Political philosophy, as with some areas of ethics, is easily distorted by the ever-present thought that it might be of practical importance. Practical applications of philosophical ideas require engagement with a lot of nonphilosophy, and the danger is not just that philosophers are not normally especially good at the relevant nonphilosophical areas of inquiry. Even if they were, there are risks involved in trying to treat both kinds

> of questions in the same work. In the hurry to make a practical proposal it is easy to lose sight of the philosophical problems, and so to lose sight of whether and how they have been solved. Since even long-standing problems have, so often, not been solved (philosophy seems to be harder than science in this way), the idea that something is gained if political philosophers explain how to put their ideas into practice is hard to understand.
>
> ...There is a second aspect to the limitation I have in mind by providing only a philosophical framework: detailed factual information, while occasionally useful, is far from the center of our concerns.[136]

The second section of the chapter is titled "Making Truth Safe for Democracy", without recourse to facts.

All the examples I've given of engaged participation in debate, over art, and politics, and social life and sex, -"I love you", "No you don't"- has been the documentation of game playing and reciprocal adversarial exchange. Every example of pedantry and error has been predicated on a refusal to participate, a claim to be speak from above in the cloistered realm of collaborative private reason, free of the possibility of subtext or context beyond the elite, individual or collective, imagination. This is the first rule of political philosophy, predicated on the formalism of mathematics. The result is the formalism of the *Nouveau roman* and dime store science fiction: anti-politics as style. The final end is as artifact. That a student of Rawls and Cohen claims now to have put democracy on a firm foundation has less cultural and historical significance than Saint Laurent's, *Le Smoking*, the first dress suit for women in 1966.

Defenders of market economics defend the market as an adversarial heuristic. The model of the academy is collaborative, so that even most academic defenders of the market are far from practicing what they preach. And defenders of the market say it's the only game in town, so therefore the market itself doesn't need an adversary. Empiricism says that's not the case: only libertarians dream of contract laws for family members. So let's take this game to the next level.

The abolitionist John Brown was a political vanguardist, an outlier, and a more directly morally committed man than Lincoln; he saw slavery as evil and acted accordingly. There was no room for debate. But the fact that Brown was right, simply and straightforwardly, in his absolute condemnation of slavery and slaveholders doesn't make him the more important of the two. Lincoln's moderation, his political and rhetorical expertise, even considered as partially corrupt, make him the more complex figure, precisely because Lincoln could communicate with those for whom Brown would have no patience. Lincoln was more representative of the complexities of the white majority, the group that had to be moved to act.

Brown's politics was the fanaticism of the slaveholder's brother, not the anger of the slave. Frederick Douglass thought the raid on Harper's Ferry was a suicide mission and counterproductive.[137] The genius of Lincoln stems from his relationships: belonging to the dominant party, white America, and to the dominant language of American culture. That's not a blank defense of Lincoln over Brown, or of corrupt moderation over radical action. Both played their part. But any complex defense of either of them, including the possibility that Brown's last raid was a suicide mission, with the intent of driving the nation

towards a final civil war, would have to be among other things, a defense of their self-awareness and of their political art and gamesmanship.

But discussing suicide missions as art, even the art of politics and war, is not the same as Karlheinz Stockhausen calling the attacks on New York in 2001 were a work of art as such.[138] It was a spectacle that killed thousands and led nowhere, anti-political, a "fuck you", *"Epater le bourgeois!".* And it's precisely the old avant-garde fascination with revolutionary violence that led to Stockhausen's claim. The act of flying two passenger jets into two of the tallest buildings in the world as diabolical *Gesamtkunstwerk*: there's nothing new in that. And it was only a matter of time before someone would write a article on 9-11 and "the unsettling question of the sublime"[139]. The author of the article, an academic and literary critic, was as earnest as Stockhausen, and just as silly. It's a truism that the mushroom clouds at the end of *Dr. Strangelove* are beautiful. If they weren't the ending would make no sense. The voice of Vera Lynn –"We'll meet again, / Don't know where, don't know when"– allows us to enjoy the beauty while knowing what it represents. The horrifying bombast of the images and cheap sentiment of the music combine to become something more. This is once again the disjunction seen in modern art in all its forms: the reminder of artifice. It a truism also that press photographers of the destruction after 9-11 framed their shots to make them pleasing to the eye, and also that cheapness is almost always the only result. This is the lie of Modernism: the elision of artifice. You can argue that Genet was a romantic and a nihilist. But John Brown was not. Fatah, and now Hamas, funded originally by Israel to help undermine Fatah[140], are not nihilists.[141] Genet was the nihilist.

The transformation of Palestinians in the western imagination is a change in our normative experience and language, a cultural change, to which political philosophers are professionally indifferent, and to which political scientists, following Weber and Jean-Leon Gerome, were oblivious. And if non-white political scientists had a different perspective it was not a matter of *science*. Over sixty years Palestinians, and Arabs and Islam, have moved in our culture from absence to distance to presence. Immigration and mass communication have changed our understanding of Zionism in ways reason could not. In 1980 the fact that "liberal Zionism" as liberal ethnic nationalism was contradictory was beyond thinking in western mainstream and mainstream intellectual conversation. Now it's almost acceptable. The logic itself has not changed.

Culture functions through relations of proximity. Palestinian absence in the west was literal, but for Israel like other colonial states the parallel is less the unacknowledged presence of minorities in the US and Europe (at *home*) than of women. The original shock and continuing ambiguity of Manet's *Olympia* was the central figure, staring back at her audience. Her boredom was shocking. Fifty years later what was shocking was not boredom but male fear. Duchamp's *Fountain* was a step backward from *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*; his irony, and literal refusal to look at a woman in the face, reduced everything to all-controlling sexual mechanism. And twenty years on again we see the boredom of *Olympia* in Marlene Dietrich; all of this, the history of feminism through male eyes.

The Palestinian problem, after of the *Jewish problem* and the *Negro problem* is now "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict", and intellectuals haven't led the way any more than they did in the past. The claim that they have, and do, is the lie of the professionalization of intellectual and political life, the greatest lie of Modernism.

> …when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -judiciously, as you will- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors…and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.[142]

Most of the liberals who mocked Karl Rove were liberals only by the definition of Clinton era; sitting on the port side of a boat that had been drifting to starboard for thirty years. The claim that they represented a "reality-based community" could only be seen by people elsewhere in the world as risible.

There's no way to work outside of time, to bypass the process of assimilation of new information, by imagining as philosophers do, an aperspectival reason. After Thomas Kuhn and post-structuralism and the rest –all the earnest attempts to theorize what had once been taken for granted– ambiguity is still a basic fact. In a world where we communicate by way of language and form it's politics all the way down. And politics is a game, not a science. Rationalist philosophers didn't fight for civil rights before railway porters did, and feminist theorists owe their careers to housewives who divorced their husbands and learned to live on their own. Liberal Zionists are more responsible than any other party, Jewish or Palestinian for the current mess in Palestine. They've refused to recognize that ethnic nationalism and liberalism are contradictory; and it's impossible to negotiate with people who don't know what they stand for. But with all this, philosophers critical of positivism and scientism continue to defend no more than a chastened, but still self-absorbed, collaborative form of reason. Stephen Toulmin argues for a kinder gentler rationalism.

> As things stand, we can neither cling to Modernity in its historic form, nor reject it totally -least of all despise it. The task is, rather, to reform, and even reclaim, our inherited modernity, by humanizing it. [143]

And Richard Rorty separates knowledge from interpretation: "Hermeneutics… is what we get when we are no longer epistemological."

> [T]he conclusion I wish to draw is that the "grid" which emerged in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not there to be appealed to in the early seventeenth century, at the time that Galileo was on trial. No conceivable epistemology, no study of the nature of human knowledge, could have "discovered" it before it was hammered out. The notion of what it was to be "scientific" was in the process of being formed. If one endorses the values -or, perhaps, the ranking of competing values- common to Galileo and Kant, then indeed Bellarmine was being "unscientific." But, of course, almost all of us (including Kuhn, though perhaps not including Feyerabend) are happy to endorse them. We are the heirs of three hundred years of rhetoric about the importance of distinguishing sharply between science and religion, science and politics, science and art, science and philosophy, and so on. This rhetoric has formed the culture of Europe. It made us what we are today. We are fortunate that no little perplexity within epistemology, or within the historiography of science, is enough to defeat it. But to proclaim our loyalty to these distinctions is not to say that there are "objective" and "rational" standards for adopting them.[144]

There's no line separating epistemology from hermeneutics. Quine was right about that, though everyone including Quine seems to have forgotten he said it. Philosophers can never really allow themselves to be pragmatists.

Zionists and anti-Zionists share the same "grid". Liberal defenders of the Jewish state never bothered to imagine and were not asked how they would respond to a proposed *German state for a German people*. Likudniks could be relied on at least to give an honest answer. To make such questions was considered rude, asked only by Palestinians and their defenders. If you want to understand the furious irrationalism of the weak, look to the calm and collected irrationalism of the powerful. Rationality is technical, it's calculation, but if you don't want to imagine simple parallels that might undermine your own self-image you tend not to do so.

Philosophy is communication in words, of words, founded on a fantasy of semantic stability. As the biologist Richard Lewontin pointed out, trying to explain to philosophers the beginnings of their disagreement, "No one in my tradition believes that the words are very important."[145] Rorty begins *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* by describing philosophy "as a discipline thus sees itself as the attempt to underwrite or debunk claims to knowledge made by science, morality, art, or religion." Philosophy claims to underwrite or debunk the claims of science, and therefore of everything else. This holds for the "pragmatists", Quine, Kuhn, Rorty, Derrida, and the rest, of all stripes, before and after. But contra Gilles Deleuze, the last thing science needs is metaphysics. And –again– this means metaphysics as subject as opposed to fact: "that self-evident *religio* without which there is no desire for knowledge".[146] And curiosity does not "debunk" its lack.

Philosophers are all concerned with pride of place, for words, for concepts and propositions and therefore for their own. It all goes back to the Bible. "I'm a liberal" is an absurd statement, meaningful only as formalism. Self-reporting can only be confirmed or not by actions as observed by others, including amateurs, the meanings to be judged by them confirming the statement as representative of behavior, or ironic performance or as overwhelmed by subtext. An Israeli philosopher and defender of moral realism will be judged both as a defender of metaphysical speculation concerning absolutes and as a defender of conquest. There's no way as a person in the world, concerned with both language and the world, to concern yourself with the first question without concerning yourself with the second. Since all of our statements and actions end up contextualized by history, there's no reason not to start now. But an Israel aircraft engineer, unlike the moral philosopher, will be judged as a defender of Israel and on whether or not -and how well- his planes get off the ground. There's no need to see one as informing the other. You can write a book about his brilliant designs and leave discussions of politics to others.

Epistemology is a term applying to technics. There's no hermeneutical gap dividing engineers and mathematicians of different eras in the sense that there is one for moral philosophers. But where there is moral commitment -where there is desire- even in the present there can be near total blindness. This is the stuff of comedy and tragedy. Philosophers don't touch it because they have no answer for it. Kant refers to it in a footnote and throws up his hands: "Deficiency in judgement is properly that which is called stupidity; and for such a failing we know no remedy."[147] Elsewhere he sounds like Rove, defending not action but thought.

> There are scholarly men, to whom the history of philosophy (both ancient and modern) is philosophy itself;

> for these the present Prolegomena are not written. They must wait till those who endeavor to draw from the fountain of reason itself have completed their work; it will then be the historian's turn to inform the world of what has been done.[148]

The arrogance was inappropriate; Duchamp was right: posterity is the final judge. Kant's works may have aged well, but not as well as he would have wanted, and certainly not for the reasons he would have preferred.

A practicing scientist can accept without conflict the propositions that there is no universal view, and that the world itself is not entirely subjective; that we can say rocks exist without saying that we can see rocks from every angle simultaneously or that my experience of rocks is the same as yours. To discount the experience of rocks is to see rocks not as absolute but as generalization. The Reason feared by Marcuse and Adorno and celebrated by technocrats is bureaucratic not Platonic. And the political decision to discount our experience of rocks ends only in discounting the experience of rocks for the majority, since the rule of reason is the rule of an elite minority, and the elite will indulge the experience of rocks, and champagne, and caviar, as elites do. To value the experience of rocks is not to say that rocks are nothing but subjective, but to value the multiplicity of subjective experience of universally available things.

Philosophy as rationalism claims recently to have discovered multiplicity, but only in the hope of seeing it somehow concrete and conceivable in an absolute sense by an individual. Philosophers want the god's eye view; for a while they collapsed god into the technical, and now they've separated it again and rediscovered god. Others have stayed with the technical, ignoring the fact of multiplicity, and therefore ignoring the fact of politics, with predictable but irrational, unscientific -because unempirical- politically reactionary results.

Originalism in the sense referred to in conservative theories of constitutional interpretation is the foundation of contemporary academic literature. That's simply a given. People read Nietzsche or Rawls and claim to speak for one or the other of them when they argue through their own readings of them. And they write as if others, now and in the future, will read their own writings as they want to be read. And they won't. When I realized that Clark was using Picasso's conversations from 1955 as a reliable source for his interests in 1920, I was left scratching my head. When I first read that David Enoch, "the leading legal philosopher in Israel"[149] defended "Robust Moral Realism" [150] I almost spit out my beer. Alex Rosenberg, a defender of hard determinism, denying free will, argues that this should lead to changes in prison policy[151], while ignoring that by his own logic, both *understanding* and policy *decisions* are meaningless terms, and that he has no more choice and deserves no more credit than Lady Gaga for being what he is. Scott Soames, analytic philosopher and historian of analytic philosophy (the contradictions begin there) has tried his hand at legal philosophy and again predictably comes to the defense of originalism. The best response I can think of is from Jack Balkin. From the abstract to a paper from 2014, *Why Are Americans Originalist?*

> This brief essay, addressed to scholars outside the United States, attempts to explain why originalism is popular in debates over the American federal Constitution. If as its advocates sometimes maintain,

> originalism is the most legitimate method of interpretation in a democracy, one would expect advocates in every constitutional democracy in the world to demand that judges use it. Yet although originalism has made inroads in Australia and a few other countries, it is largely ignored elsewhere in the world. [152]

Originalism, the "epistemological" as opposed to “hermeneutic” reading of the Canadian constitution is forbidden in Canadian courts. The “Living Tree Doctrine” has been the law of the land since 1929.

> The British North America Act planted in Canada a living tree capable of growth and expansion within its natural limits. The object of the Act was to grant a Constitution to Canada. …
> Their Lordships do not conceive it to he the duty of this Board—it is certainly not their desire— to cut down the provisions of the Act by a narrow and technical construction, but rather to give it a large and liberal interpretation so that the Dominion to a great extent, but within certain fixed limits, may be mistress in her own house, as the provinces to a great extent, but within certain fixed limits. are mistresses in theirs.[153]

The little spot on your chest x-ray, is it something to worry about? And is the radiologist who’s reading it, engaged in epistemology or hermeneutics? Again, these are just words. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison end their history of the idea of objectivity[154] with what they would say was an answer. Though they don’t refer to hermeneutics -the don’t use the word- they see the modern role of scientists not as mechanical observers but as ideal interpreters of the world. Objectivity itself is romance, and described as such, but they add to that an equally romantic and equally individualist transcendence of it.

> This is the reason for the ferociously reflexive character of objectivity, the will pitted against the will, the self against the self. This explains the power of objectivity, an epistemological therapy more radical than any other because the malady it treats is literally, the root of both knowledge and error. The paradoxical aspirations of objectivity explain both its strangeness and its stranglehold on the epistemological imagination. It is epistemology taken to the limit. Objectivity is to epistemology what extreme asceticism is to morality. Other epistemological therapies were rigorous: Plato's rejection of the senses, for example, or Descartes's radical doubt. But objectivity goes beyond rigor. The demands it makes on the knower outstrip even the most strenuous forms of self-cultivation, to the brink of self-destruction. Objectivity is not just one intellectual discipline among many. It is a sacrifice. [p. 374]

Daston and Galison posit a reciprocal adversarial relation between objectivity and “trained judgment”, the first originating in the 19th century and the other in the 20th. Both are products of their times, but it’s “a misconception, albeit an entrenched one, that historicism and relativism stride hand in hand” [p.376]; “both objectivity and judgment are efficacious and consequential in shaping how workaday science is done.” [p.378]

> By the mid-twentieth century, objectivity and subjectivity no longer appeared like opposite poles; rather, like strands of DNA, they executed, they executed the complementary pairing that underlay understanding

of the working objects of science. [p 361]

"Aufbau Bauhaus", deals with the relation of philosophy to the Bauhaus. *Objectivity*, is a history of scientific illustration. Bourdieu took Flaubert at his word when he dreamt of a literary method akin to mathematics; Daston and Galison tack in the opposite direction and quote Henry James.

> The subjectivity that nineteenth-century scientists attempted to deny was, in other contexts, cultivated and celebrated. In notable contrast to earlier views held from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment about the close analogies between artistic and scientific work, the public personas of artist and scientist polarized during this period. Artists were exhorted to express, even flaunt, their subjectivity, at the same time that scientists were admonished to restrain theirs. In order to qualify as art, paintings were required to show the visible trace of the artist's "personality"- a certain breach of faithfulness to what is simply seen. Henry James went so far as to strike the word "sincerity" from the art critic's vocabulary: praising the paintings of Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps in 1873, he observed that "he painted, not the thing regarded, but the thing remembered, imagined, desired in some degree or other intellectualized." Conversely, when James himself self-consciously tried to write with "objectivity," he described it as a "special sacrifice" of the novelist's art. The scientists, for their part, returned the favor. For example, in l866, the Paris Académie des Sciences praised the geologist Aimé Civiale's panoramic photographs of the Alps for "faithful representations of the accidents" of the earth's surface, which would he "deplorable" in art, but which "on the contrary must be [the goal] towards which the reproduction of scientific objects tends" The scientific self of the mid-nineteenth century was perceived by contemporaries as diametrically opposed to the artistic self, just as scientific images were routinely contrasted to artistic ones. [p. 37]

The meanings of words are fluid, changing over time and from one social and professional circle to another, but here we're not that far away. James was an observer of subjectivity; he didn't flaunt his own. The question of how much he suppressed is still debated, by some at least. But here we're back where we started, with Eliot.

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.[155]

Eliot as I said was torn between aestheticism and high morality. Unlike Huysmans he didn't go from one extreme to another. His work documents his struggles. His attack on Walter Pater in 1930 in *Arnold and Pater,* is as much a sham as Flaubert's wish for a scientific practice of literature, but more sincere. "*Artistes. Tous farceurs*." "Artists. All charlatans." Bourdieu quotes Flaubert but misses the point. Following the rationalist's need for the "selfconscious, rational, single self", he takes the artist at his word even as he contradicts himself. But the history of art, and of everything human, is the history of conflicting desires. On the dreams of science and art earlier in the century Linda Nochlin in her essay on Orientalism is blunt.

She quotes Leo Bersani: “The 'seriousness' of realist art is based on the absence of any reminder of the fact that it is really is a question of art". The failure of Gerome is that there really wasn’t much art at all, just empty mechanics. This fits perfectly with Galison’s ideological romantic misreading of artists of the Bauhaus, or his acceptance of their misreading of themselves. But it’s more than a misreading, because later, Galison and Daston, having ignored the history in the arts of the pseudoscientific distance they champion, and indeed the history of the disasters of the 20th century, develop a “steampunk” model of the mad scientist as hero. Late in the book they discuss nanotechnology and their ideal model/hero who (quoting language accompanying a graph) “combines ethos of late twentieth-century scientist with device orientation of industrial engineer and authorial ambition of artist”, who is capable of “simultaneity of making and seeing”, and who produces “‘nanofactured’ goods straddling the divide between natural and artifactual”. [p.414] Never mind von Neumann as Strangelove, we’re almost back with Mary Shelly. There are hints of this kind much earlier on.

> Yet the tone of exhortation and admonition that permeates the literature of scientific instruction, biography, and autobiography from the seventeenth century to the present is hardly that of a pragmatic how-to manual. The language of these exhortations is often frankly religious, albeit in different registers the humility of the seeker, the wonder of the psalmist who praises creation, the asceticism of the saint. Much of epistemology seems to be parasitic upon religious impulses to discipline and sacrifice, just as much of metaphysics seems to be parasitic upon theology. But even if religious overtones are absent or missed as so much window dressing, there remains a core of ethical imperative in the literature on how to do science and become a scientist. The mastery of is inevitably linked to a certain kind of self-mastery, the assiduous cultivation of a certain kind of self. And where the self-is enlisted as both sculptor and sculpture, ethos enters willy-nilly. It is useful for our purposes to distinguish between the ethical and the moral: *ethical* refers to normative codes of conduct that are bound up with a way of being in the world, an ethos in the sense of the habitual disposition of an individual or group, while moral, while *moral* refers to specific normative rules that may be upheld or transgressed and which one may be held to account. [p.39]

There’s no mention of artificial intelligence in the text, but the imagery of mad scientists, of self-punishment and self-sacrifice, of the risk being “held to account” and the engineering of the natural and artificial, it’s hard to avoid the implication of what’s coming further down the line. Galison began his career indulging the romance of mechanical objectivity, of ideological technocracy, ending in the desperate formalism of the Vienna Circle; now he and Daston have gone back in time to a model of romance from the mid 19th century: *The New Prometheus* as painted by Rosetti, science writing for *Goths.*

At the very end of the book Daston and Galison refer to two people who they see as epitomizing the model of scientist/artist: Marie Farge, a mathematician and physicist at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and Eric Heller, a physicist and theoretical chemist at Harvard who has a second career of sorts as an artist and speaker on aesthetics. As examples of an art that combines romanticism and mechanism their images document natural or mathematical processes, the motion of particles, illustrations of the beauty of determinism. The authors are enthusiastic.

> There are now conferences of science and art organized by fluid dynamicists - and, in the domain of the

> nanotechnological, hundreds of sites (read and virtual) that explore the boundary between art and science. [p.407]

After all the huffing and puffing it's a bit of a downer to end up on the last page of the book with the cover illustration for the March 8th 2001 issue of *Nature*.

Conspicuous in its absence is the grandest image we have combining nature and artifice and pure physical determinism. There's one reference to a book published in 1947, *Nuclear Physics in Photographs: Tracks of Charged Particles in Photographic Emulsions,* but no images of Hiroshima, Nagasaki or Bikini Atoll, and certainly no discussion of "the unsettling question of the sublime".

As to determinism as a subject, it's ubiquitous, the collapsing of self into machines or the mass; think of photography and the index, Marxism, Fordism, Max Weber, and Chaplin's *Modern Times*; think of Duchamp, Hitchcock and Warhol, August Sander and Gerhard Richter. The "beautiful" and "aesthetic" images Daston and Galison celebrate are meant to be meaningless, amoral but pleasing to the eye. They're simple and spineless; they're shallow; they tell us nothing about their makers, or why they made them. Remember Broch: "…the ethical demand made of the artist is, as always, to produce "good" works, and only the dilettante and the producer of kitsch (whom we meet here for the first time) focus their work on beauty."

FOUR

It used to be a standard criticism of Stanley Kubrick that he made aestheticized images of systems, stripped of human agency, that his work was cold, too perfect, meaning that rather than trying to describe nihilism he just indulged it, with brilliant technique and intellectual laziness. No one makes the same complaint now about Gursky, but the parallel holds going back to their earliest work. *Paths of Glory* has an empathy and a sense of tragedy Kubrick abandoned in his later films, and there's an early photograph by Gursky, the earliest work included in his retrospective at MoMA in 2001, that stuck me immediately as the only work of his I'd seen where viewers and subjects share the same space. The small photograph from 1985 shows people by a gate at the end of a road, watching planes take off from Dusseldorf airport. They're all looking away from the camera, and all of us are looking into the distance. His most famous works reduce people to the level of ants or termites in the great architecture of the hive. The beauty they describe is the amoral beauty of nature and the mushroom cloud. Our view is godlike, indifferent.

Testaments to determinism take different forms. Gursky's photographs respond to the history of spectacle that includes Riefenstahl, Speer, and Zhang Yimou's opening ceremony to the Beijing Olympics. But watching his films, and knowing his relation as an artist of the state, Zhang's works, even more than Kubrick's have layers of irony that Gursky's work can't match. And all of this is the art of the culture Daston and Gallison attempt to describe and end only in manifesting: exhibiting an enthusiasm while being unable to communicate anything about it to anyone who doesn't share it.

The sophistication of the arts in China and Iran lends support to the conservative understanding of the arts: one way or another to *conserve* the humane, even if in some cases that means only documenting its defeat. Iranian films are humanist in a way Zhang's films by requirement and also clearly by choice are not. Zhang's fondness for the Coen brothers' films, and his remake of *Blood Simple*, is fitting. As one reviewer wrote, "The Coens posit a universe without order or meaning," and Zhang "treats it less as a cosmic joke than as a grim folk tale.[156] Zhang's conservatism is anti-humanist in its description of power and the state, but humanist in its sense of tragedy.

Kubrick, the Coen brothers, Tarantino, von Trier: anti-humanist or nihilist art, as art, has to be seen as a response to senselessness. As senselessness no one would care. Tarantino's movies are as politically reactionary as Mel Gibson's, though Gibson is a tortured masochist and Tarantino turns sadism into comedy. They're both honest, which means describing their perceptions honestly. But honesty for the characters in *Kill Bill* is the following of one's true self. In the last scene Bill forces

Beatrix to accept the fact that she's a killer, and that her young daughter is as well. That's seen neither as moral nor immoral and whether determinism is physical or metaphysical is irrelevant. At the end of the movie Beatrix is both the hero and the victor. The best killer wins.

The aristocratic arts, and the arts in general as they exist now in a culture that more or less officially disdains art as entertainment or defends it as philosophy, don't represent or defend democracy, civil society, justice, or whatever else; they critique it or they mock it, if not always coldly or cruelly. That's true for Duchamp, Warhol, and The Rolling Stones; it's the foundation of all comedy.

The arts of grandeur are out of place in a democracy. That's why the American sense of the grandeur of the American landscape marks the contradictions of the American sensibility. The frontier is freedom, not democracy. But grandeur beyond the grandeur of nature is gilded, whether in Newport or Hollywood. Fantasy is thin, the grandeur of Star Wars. If real grandeur is returning now that says more about the fading of democracy than the independence of the arts. But when art becomes pedantic it fails, which is why philosophers have always had predictably bad taste in the arts of their own time. Again: art doesn't defend the shallow idealism of the technocratic elite or petty bourgeois, it uses them as material for an audience including those too rich or poor to care. Art's largest audience of course is those who laugh at themselves, including bureaucrats and philosophers with an ounce of self-awareness. This has always been admitted more readily in Europe where the aristocratic tradition still plays an open role, and where anti-capitalism, left and right, is part of history. There's also in Europe a sense of republicanism as opposed to American liberalism. A Berlusconi paper went so far as to publish a fake interview with Philip Roth discussing American politics and denouncing Obama as a weakling and a failure.[157] It's assumed that writers are intellectuals and have political opinions worth following.

The model of artists and intellectuals as something other than bourgeois has never had that strong a place in the US, where it's impossible to acknowledge yourself as a member of a group you didn't choose to join. If American Brahmins are intellectual and political, American rebels are anti-intellectual and anti-political. The one constant is individualism, methodological and rational or personal and irrational. The UK has a different relation to art and to irony, tied to the fact that the aristocracy seems so insecure of their status as to be almost incapable of it. The tradition of high or fine art in the UK is thin, more famous for what it bought or stole than what it made. And again this is less a cause of the bourgeois tradition than a result of it. British art is Chaucer and Shakespeare; the history doesn't begin with the Church, and there's a great emotional and intellectual attachment to the demotic. British pedantry has gone from the high Church to the high academy, and irony is anathema to the new technocratic aristocracy, who see their rule as logically unchecked. But unlike the US the common is still tied to community in the wider sense, of literature, theater and common law.

In most countries people laugh first at themselves. Americans find a way to exclude themselves from their appraisals, until the roof caves in and they blame themselves, even when they shouldn't. The irony of the aristocrat, the disinterest of the flaneur, the brilliant vulgarity of the street, are transformed by acceptance: everything becomes professionalized, cleaned up.

People who read Chomsky on politics read him for the same reason others read him on linguistics, as an expert, and neither Chomsky nor his followers understand the irony of their existence as his "fans".

D.H. Lawrence on James Fenimore Cooper.

> The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer. It has never yet melted.[158]

American art is anti-political because it exists as the mirror image of Puritan moralism – as anti-Puritan moralism. The disjunction between the optimism of American intellectual life and the tragedy of American life itself, the tragedy central to American art, goes unremarked. It's almost impossible to find a serious discussion of politics in America among those with a serious interest in art, and as a result it's almost impossible to find a serious discussion of politics. In the article on Roth and the fraudulent interview, the fictitious Roth and the fictitious John Grisham both sound more interesting than the real ones. The fictional Roth finds Obama a "disappointment"; the real Roth calls him "fantastic!" The fictional Grisham says "Last year's enthusiasm is remote now… People are angry with Obama for having done little or nothing and having promised too much.".

Lawrence on Hawthorne

> You must look through the surface of American art, and see the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning. Otherwise it is all mere childishness….
>
> Always the same. The deliberate consciousness of Americans so fair and smooth-spoken, and the under-consciousness so devilish. Destroy! destroy! destroy! hums the under-consciousness. Love and produce! Love and produce! cackles the upper consciousness. And the world hears only the Love-and-produce cackle. Refuses to hear the hum of destruction underneath. Until such time as it will have to hear.
>
> The American has got to destroy. It is his destiny[159].

Read that as a primer on Ford, Spielberg and Tarantino. Pynchon got the joke.

It's easy to make an image of determinism; point a camera at the clouds or a stream of water. Nihilism is simple, but it's hard to make something interesting out of it. All the art that indulges mechanism –the work we acknowledge as art and not as document or illustration– also tries to fight it, even if only by trying to affirm it as a choice. Nihilism in poetry is oxymoronic if only because poetry takes work. An old teacher of mine made what's still my favorite comment about Gursky and why he thought his work had gone downhill. "Gursky used to be a nihilist, but he sold out." He had once tried to describe nihilism, the desire for it, the reasons why it made sense, and the cost of accepting it; now he was just cranking out work for the money. And we're back to Baudelaire, a passage directly following the sentences quoted by Bourdieu.

> Is Art useful? Yes. Why? Because it is art. Is there such a thing as a pernicious form of art? Yes! The form that distorts the underlying conditions of life. Vice is alluring; then show it as alluring; but it brings with its train peculiar moral maladies and suffering; then describe them. Study all the sores, like a doctor in the course of his hospital duties, and the good-sense school, the school dedicated exclusively to morality, will find nothing to bite on. Is crime always punished, virtue always rewarded? No; and yet if your novel, if your play is well put together, no one will take it into his head to break the laws of nature. The first necessary condition for the creation of a vigorous art form is the belief in underlying unity. I defy anyone to find one single work of imagination that satisfies the conditions of beauty and is at the same time a pernicious work.[160]

Artists may be prescriptive in their intentions, but that's not why we read them or look or listen to their works. Philosophers as I've said again and again are another matter.

> If philosophy ever manifested itself as helpful, redeeming, or prophylactic. it was in a healthy culture. The sick, it made ever sicker.[161]

Nietzsche is read both as a philosopher, by philosophers in the Anglo-American academy, and elsewhere by readers including academics who spend less energy enforcing a distinction and false dichotomy between philosophy and literature. By the time I read Nietzsche I read him as I read Eliot: I read prescription as description of desire. In the 20th century under Modernism, art, or more importantly its defense, indulged prescription. I've described and defended art dispassionately, even or especially the art of honest decadence. But I don't want to be glib.

Hannah Arendt in Volume III of the Origins of Totalitarianism

> Since the bourgeoisie claimed to be the guardian of Western traditions and confounded all moral issues by parading publicly virtues which it not only did not possess in private and business life, but actually held in contempt, it seemed revolutionary to admit cruelty, disregard of human values, and general amorality, because this at least destroyed the duplicity upon which the existing society seemed to rest. What a temptation to flaunt extreme attitudes in the hypocritical twilight of double moral standards, to wear publicly the mask of cruelty if everybody was patently inconsiderate and pretended to be gentle, to parade wickedness in a world, not of wickedness, but of meanness! The intellectual elite of the twenties who knew little of the earlier connections between mob and bourgeoisie was certain that the old game of *epater le bourgeois* could be played to perfection if one started to shock society with an ironically exaggerated picture of its own behavior.

> At that time, nobody anticipated that the true victims of this irony would be the elite rather than the bourgeoisie. The avant-garde did not know they were running their heads not against walls but against open doors, that a unanimous success would belie their claim to being a revolutionary minority, and would prove that they were about to express a new mass spirit or the spirit of the time. Particularly significant in this respect was the reception given Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* in pre-Hitler Germany. The play presented gangsters as respectable businessmen and respectable businessmen as gangsters. The irony was somewhat lost when respectable businessmen in the audience considered this a deep insight into the ways of the world and when the mob welcomed it as an artistic sanction of gangsterism. The theme song in the play, "*Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral*," was greeted with frantic applause by exactly everybody, though for different reasons. The mob applauded because it took the statement literally; the bourgeoisie applauded because it had been fooled by its own hypocrisy for so long that it had grown tired of the tension and found deep wisdom in the expression of the banality by which it lived; the elite applauded because the unveiling of hypocrisy was such superior and wonderful fun. The effect of the work was exactly the opposite of what Brecht had sought by it. The bourgeoisie could no longer be shocked; it welcomed the exposure of its hidden philosophy, whose popularity proved they had been right all along, so that the only political result of Brecht's "revolution" was to encourage everyone to discard the uncomfortable mask of hypocrisy and to accept openly the standards of the mob. A reaction similar in its ambiguity was aroused some ten years later in France by Celine's *Bagatelles pour un Massacre*, in which he proposed to massacre all the Jews. Andre Gide was publicly delighted in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, not of course because he wanted to kill the Jews of France, but because he rejoiced in the blunt admission of such a desire and in the fascinating contradiction between Celine's bluntness and the hypocritical politeness which surrounded the Jewish question in all respectable quarters. How irresistible the desire for the unmasking of hypocrisy was among the elite can be gauged by the fact that such delight could not even be spoiled by Hitler's very real persecution of the Jews, which at the time of Celine's writing was already in full swing. Yet aversion against the philosemitism of the liberals had much more to do with this reaction than hatred of Jews. A similar frame of mind explains the remarkable fact that Hitler's and Stalin's widely publicized opinions about art and their persecution of modern artists have never been able to destroy the attraction which the totalitarian movements had for avant-garde artists; this shows the elite's lack of a sense of reality, together with its perverted selflessness, both of which resemble only too closely the fictitious world and the absence of self-interest among the masses. It was the great opportunity of the totalitarian movements, and the reason why a temporary alliance between the intellectual elite and the mob could come about, that in an elementary and undifferentiated way their problems had become the same and foreshadowed the problems and mentality of the masses.[162]

It didn’t occur to me when I was young that Brecht could be unaware of his own decadence; his work was too conflicted; simultaneously politics and pose, angry and mannered: narrative theater and formalist anti-theater[163]. But as I’ve said the

delusions were ubiquitous. Modernism has given us a culture both of moralism, and decadence is a form of moralism, and naiveté. Reading Fintan O'Toole on Harold Pinter I thought immediately of Brecht, and laughed.

> *Shakespeare dominated our lives at that time (I mean the lives of my friends and me) but the revelation which Joe Brearley brought with him was John Webster. On our walks, we would declare into the wind, at the passing trolley-buses or indeed to the passers-by, nuggets of Webster....*
>
> He goes on to quote, as if from memory, lines from The Duchess of Malfi and The White Devil like "What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut/ With diamonds?"; "There's a plumber laying pipes in my guts"; "My soul, like to a ship in a black storm/Is driven I know not whither"; "I have caught/ An everlasting cold. I have lost my voice/Most irrecoverably." And, of course, "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young." He adds, "That language made me dizzy."[164]

It brought back childhood memories, not of politics, but dizziness, of experiencing a contradiction so sharp it brought out moments of aphasia. Listening to The beginning of the 1956 recording of *Mahagonny*, on my parents' stereo, the giddiness and violence produced a sort of ecstasy. At the same time I was copying the drawings of George Grosz. This was in the early

70s. At 10 I understood, if that's the word, what others saw in *Performance* and *A Clockwork Orange*. A *Stendhal moment* is a moment when a work of artifice pulls you into a world of illusion, even while showing its hand as fakery, like a puppeteer who makes his puppet perform what you want to believe is a miracle even while you see the strings. And in fact if you didn't see the strings you won't feel the need so sharply. Art makes you work, even involuntarily, to imagine something, to desire something while reminding you simultaneously that what you want does not exist. That's why Flaubert called artists *farceurs.* But in the moment of being simultaneously blind drunk and cold sober, you learn something, about yourself, and about your desires, the artist and the artifice, as Baudelaire put it, "the object and the subject".

For Brecht and Pinter, like Webster, what's tempting is absolute amorality, barbarism described bluntly and enthusiastically, but simultaneously with a sensitivity that opposes it. It's a violence that freezes; time stops; the moment of destruction is also the moment of awareness that the destruction is absurd. That's the moment of aphasia, of dizziness, of neurological overload. That's why Baudelaire says that an art describing the pernicious can never be so itself. This is the art of violence and decadence *described*; it's not the art of identification, but again, it's on the curve, at its most extreme on the edge of kitsch, and on the edge of

moving from description to indulgence.

Susan Sontag divides her essay *Fascinating Fascism* into two parts, two 'exhibits', the first attacking Leni Riefenstahl for lying about her past, and the second defending the fascist theatricality of the 70s demimonde as merely aesthetic game-playing. The famous last sentence is intended to describe the theater.

> The color is black, the material is leather, the seduction is beauty, the justification is honesty, the aim is ecstasy, the fantasy is death.[165]

A few pages earlier she claimed "the message of fascism has been neutralized by an aesthetic view of life". In the first section she'd written "Fascist art glorifies surrender, it exalts mindlessness, it glamorizes death." Six years later she refers to one of the critics of her essay on Syberberg as "eager to promote his own thesis about Nazism—'this love of death…'"[166]
Her confusion gets the better of her throughout. She's a moralist about the bureaucratic issues, whether Riefenstahl lied, and for the rest she's an aesthete.

One of Brassai's most famous photographs of 1930s Paris is of Violette Morris, who became a Nazi collaborator and torturer for the Gestapo. Brassai doesn't celebrate her; he observes her, as a person. Romance and observation are different things. Romance is a form of rationalism, and many who indulged in the post-war era, didn't want to know what the were indulging, and their newly expanded audience even less so. The traumas of the 20th century and the bourgeoisification of the avant-garde made the fantasies of formalism and politics more confused than ever, with added naiveté.

Edward Mendelson in 1981, reviewing *After the Wake: An Essay on the Contemporary Avant-Garde*, by Christopher Butler.

> 'My plan,' he writes, 'has been to argue that in the 1950s radically new conventions for the language of art were developed by writers, musicians and painters who wished to break away from modernism.' This argument faces difficulties at the start, since the avant-garde has been proclaiming its radical newness longer than anyone can remember. The most time-honoured convention of the manifesto-writers is innovation: the formula for newness is handed down unchanged from generation to generation. Butler quotes an artist who wants nothing to do with 'all the structures, values, feelings, of the whole European tradition. It suits me fine if that's all down the drain.' This happens to be Frank [Donald] Judd speaking in the late 1960s, but all that distinguishes it from Futurist manifestos of fifty years before is its tone of lumpen disgruntlement. Allen Ginsberg, quoted in one of Butler's epigraphs, says: 'there is nothing to be learned from history any more. We're in science fiction now.' This remark, differing only in vocabulary from claims made early in this century for the new machine age, is proof in itself that Ginsberg's ignorance of history does not exempt him from repeating it.
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> more. We're in science fiction now.' This remark, differing only in vocabulary from claims made early in this century for the new machine age, is proof in itself that Ginsberg's ignorance of history does not exempt him from repeating it.
>
> A more vivid proof, not mentioned by Butler, may be found in Ginsberg's recent echoes of the totalitarian apologetics offered by some of the Modernists of the 1920s and 1930s. Ginsberg has placed his spiritual life in the care of a Tibetan guru (one consciously avoided by the Dalai Lama), the autocrat of a spiritual retreat and poetry workshop near Boulder, Colorado. Among the guru's activities are punching recalcitrant visiting faculty in the face and having them stripped naked by his goon squad. Ginsberg defends the guru's methods as an "experiment in monarchy", and insists that he must not be judged by the standards of lesser mortals.[167]

Nine years later: the public, the demimonde, and the curators of 1990.

> There were times when the Mapplethorpe trial in Cincinnati produced testimony worthy of the title attached to the museum exhibit: "The Perfect Moment."
> Perfect Moment No. 1: Prosecutor Frank Prouty holds up two photographs, one of a man with a bullwhip in his rectum. He asks the art director who chose these images for the show: "Would you call these sexual acts?"
> She answers: "I would call them figure studies."
> Perfect Moment No. 2: Prouty questions museum director Dennis Barrie: "This photograph of a man with his finger inserted in his penis, what is the artistic content of that?"
> He responds: "It's a striking photograph in terms of light and composition."[168]

The defense is that art doesn't really matter, because its only aesthetics. And if that's the case nothing matters short of crime, actual law-breaking, laws written by others to be applied by others, by the state and not by us. This is the result of a belief in freedom of speech linked more to freedom of property than freedom of debate. In an atomized society of voyeurs with no political responsibility art is reduced to exhibits of masturbation followed by applause, "self-expression", described without judgment, because judging is moralizing, and that's left for the law-makers.

Grace Glueck does better at least than the museum director in a review of the posthumous authorized biography. After referring the "brouhaha" of the obscenity trial, she turns to the book and the author

> Like these would-be censors, Patricia Morrisroe, a magazine journalist, does not engage in an informed discussion of her subject's work… instead she focuses on his progressively degenerate life style. Her book is long on gossipy detail (nearly a quarter of it is devoted to a ghoulishly clinical rundown of Mapplethorpe's

final days) but short on real engagement with the work. The photographs were the life and vice versa, she implies, but that's about all she offers in the way of elucidation.

Early in his restless adulthood, she tells us, Mapplethorpe formed a symbiotic bond with Patti Smith, who eventually became a punk-rock star; after that he had a long relationship with Samuel Wagstaff, a wealthy older curator and collector who helped orchestrate Mapplethorpe's career. But his rapacious sexual appetite led him to other, less stable and sometimes downright dangerous liaisons. According to Ms. Morrisroe, he had a penchant for sadomasochistic, coprophiliac encounters with well-muscled black men he picked up in bars. A racist (who also seemed to dislike Jews), he called them "nigger" in love play and exacted from them servitude as photographic models. "His photographs would serve as a diary of his sexual adventures," Ms. Morrisroe writes. He was convinced that he had acquired AIDS from a black man, although he boasted of having had sex with at least a thousand male partners.

"Mapplethorpe's loft had become a port of call for men with every conceivable sexual perversion," Ms. Morrisroe writes, "and they arrived with suitcases, and sometimes doctor's bags, filled with catheters, scalpels, syringes, needles, laxatives, hot water bottles, rope, handcuffs and pills. They dressed up as women, SS troopers and pigs."[169]

The final paragraphs of Glueck and Ellen Goodman, quoted above on the trial.

My own feeling is that those "bizarre aspects" -- the sadomasochistic images documenting a tribal culture that, like it or not, is part of the real world -- are Mapplethorpe's most original contribution.… Lightweight though he was, even Mapplethorpe deserves a better biography.

Goodman

I agree with the decision and with those who defended the museum's right to show these photographs. To leave the dark side out of a Mapplethorpe show would be like leaving the tortured black paintings out of a retrospective of Goya's work. It wouldn't be legitimate to pick and choose the sunny side of the work -- the Calla lilies and celebrities -- and show it as the whole….

But even in the moment of victory, there is still a warning here. This trial, and the funding woes of the NEA, are not just the fault of Jesse Helms on the rampage. They are the fault as well of an art community whose members prefer to live in a rarefied climate, talking to each other, subject only to "peer review" and scornful of those who translate the word "art" into "smut."

In many cities, there is still the knock of the policeman at the door. Having failed to make its case in public, the art community ends up making it in court. In the history of art, this is not a perfect moment.

Discussions of Mapplethorpe still largely miss the point. If the work is good, it's because he's described everything that's damaged in our relation to homosexuality. One of his childhood neighbors remembers Mapplethorpe telling him "There's this clock in Hell that chimes every hour, You will never get out . . . you will never get out . . . you will never get out." [170] His work is tragic or it's nothing. The cold beauty is defensive armoring, the dream of a shell as hard as steel, inured to pain. To take his work seriously is to admit that all obscenity trials are absurd. He saw himself as obscene and seeing no choice but to accept it dove in head first. The question is whether he described his sense of his own obscenity, his self-hatred, his need for self-annihilation well enough that an audience claiming at least to be without his fears and the desires that come from them, can feel their pull.

> "My wife is a saint. She's a much better person than I am. Honestly. She's, like, Episcopalian, Church of England. She prays, she believes in God, she knows Jesus, she believes in that stuff. And it's just not fair if she doesn't make it, she's better than I am. But that is a pronouncement from the chair. I go with it."[171]

Mel Gibson is a good filmmaker. His conflicts, intelligence and technical skill make him one. Art is a craft. It's a lie; it's seduction. If you're not tempted to go with it, it doesn't work. *Double Indemnity* doesn't work if you've never wanted to kill.

Nietzsche or Baudelaire: Is there a pernicious form of art? Is there a sick philosophy? Philosophy faces the bigger question: to see Nietzsche as a tragic figure, a moralist anti-moralist, an archetypical Christian apostate, caught in the false dichotomy of rationalism and irrationalism, to read him in context and for subtext, renders his philosophy into mere literature.

The arts are Burkean. Artists are revolutionary only by trying to make sense of a present that others haven't had the courage or honesty to face. You can't describe anything in detail without having intimate knowledge of it; intimate knowledge is attachment, and describing your perceptions of the world is more compelling than declaiming your fantasies. Milton as Blake says, was "of the Devil's party without knowing it."

Craft, again, is common form; the most radical craftsmen always see themselves as traditionalists, even if they see their relation to craft as to reinventing it. But the grand dialecticians of Modernism always wanted to pretend the dialectic ends with them. The reification of contradiction as 'immanent critique', by the bureaucrats of the Frankfurt School was as decadent in its origins as the formalism of the Vienna Circle. The art celebrated in its name as radical is in fact always the most honestly reactionary, the most 'pernicious', because the most attached to the present, the world that made it.

It's a contemporary pretense that art is individualist. Daston and Gallison indulge it and artists themselves working in any medium are willing to proclaim it, but as always it's a mistake to take artists at their word. Individualism as it's become now disdains judgment, in favor of passive description. "It's all good". But to be good at something presupposes a capacity to be bad at it, so presupposing also the existence of a universal measure, at least a measure beyond your own. Art is social in ways that individualism can't explain or justify. As I said before, whatever else I'm doing here, I'm trying to write *well*. I'm trying

to remain loyal to my own interests, and preferences, while writing for an audience: trying to strike a balance as I seen it. That understanding is foreign to academic philosophy, and now to most of what's still referred to as the humanist academy.

The modern definition of individualism expands out of the private realm that Arendt calls the 'social', as opposed to the public and political.[172] The individualism of the Greeks was public. Modern individualism includes the realm of business, private gain as public goal. And liberalism spawned libertarianism: Robert Nozick picked athletes as a model for individualist achievement since they're paid for public performance, not for games behind the scenes. He equated the two, and that's why philosophical liberals have such a hard time responding.[173] His "unpatterned" distributions are based on the behavior of idealized monads, logical sociopaths. It's 'just' for Wilt Chamberlain to make millions of dollars, because Nozick has a grand theory of justice, a formalism that answers all questions and solves all problems. But Chamberlain wasn't interested only in money—the private realm—but in money and fame and glory and respect. He needed his audience as they needed him. If he did something to really annoy them, they'd walk away, no matter how good he was. People didn't pay money to watch Evel Knievel jump over a row of trucks; they paid for the right to watch him die trying. Performance is a social activity, sometimes anti-social, but relationships are central. We're back to the distinction between law as idea and law as practice, between philosophers and lawyers, academics and actors, in politics or on the stage, between pedants and comedians.

The problem for programmatic liberalism as for radicalism is that both are fantasies sprung out of individualist imagination; both deny the fact of what Arendt called human "plurality". The truths of liberalism and radicalism are singular because they're generalizations; the truths of art are plural because specific. Brecht's decadence is far less problematic than Walter Benjamin's for the same reason Borges' decadence is more problematic than Billy Wilder's. But Modernism takes what it can use. Self-hatred is as appropriate a topic in discussing Borges and Philip Roth as Mapplethorpe, Fassbinder, Celine, Mishima, or Houellebecq. "Céline is my Proust!"[174] as Roth said. But the only people to refer openly to Roth's self-hatred use it to attack his work. And he's defended from the charge with the same loyalty as defenders of Borges, for reasons that have nothing to do with the work itself, but only with the role they're made to play, even though Borges deals in generalizations, and Roth in specifics.

Two Quotes, from Kant, and de Maistre.

> Thus we observe here as elsewhere in human affairs, in which almost everything is paradoxical, a surprising and unexpected course of events: a large degree of civic freedom appears to be of advantage to the intellectual freedom of the people, yet at the same time it establishes insurmountable barriers. A lesser degree of civic freedom, however, creates room to let that free spirit expand to the limits of its capacity.[175]

> Everything that constrains a man strengthens him[176]

The converse of the innate conservatism of the arts is that the arts describe society at its most complex, and this complexity is a threat to idealism of any form. Periods of stress, when societies are opening up or closing down, produce a flowering of culture, pushing against assumptions or demands. So Kant and de Maistre could be describing Athens and the Renaissance or fin de Siècle Vienna or Weimer, the founding of the United States, or the Iran of Kiarostami, Panahi, the Makmalbafs and Farhadi. And just as importantly, they could be describing the innate conservatism of academia: freedom only within the context of authority. I was taken aback years ago when the historian Eric Rauchway, on a blog post, excoriated the President of Columbia University for being unwilling to mount a robust defense of academic freedom as having preceded freedom of speech for the people at large, noting that perhaps he'd thought it "uncongenial… in this anti-elitist day and age."[177] More recently I was only amused when Bernd Hüppauf, who'd hired Avital Ronell at NYU and lived to regret it, commented on her skill at academic power politics: "The university belongs, like the church and the military, to the social institutions that are situated at a considerable distance from democracy and adhere to premodern power structures. Professor Ronell was unusually skilled at manipulating these."[178] I've never read a more blunt, and honest, description of the nature of academia.

American historian Jill Lepore in the *New Yorker* on "disruption"

> The word "innovate"—to make new—used to have chiefly negative connotations: it signified excessive novelty, without purpose or end. Edmund Burke called the French Revolution a "revolt of innovation"; Federalists declared themselves to be "enemies to innovation." George Washington, on his deathbed, was said to have uttered these words: "Beware of innovation in politics." Noah Webster warned in his dictionary, in 1828, "It is often dangerous to innovate on the customs of a nation."
>
> The redemption of innovation began in 1939, when the economist Joseph Schumpeter, in his landmark study of business cycles,…[179]

American liberal critics of the jargon of business school and Madison Avenue will make no reference to the longer history on the left—before its "redemption"—or its use in the *alt-left* and *Occupy,* or Rancière's "Disruptive Dissensus"[180]. Their peers who consider themselves leftists, and write for the same magazines, will lump Edmund Burke with Sarah Palin.[181] And none of them will have much to say about art, except those things that confirm their own idealisms, or that they twist to fit.

Back to Mendelson:

> The basic claim made by every avant-garde movement [is] that its artists offer real innovations, that they surpass the limits accepted by their predecessors.

Mendelson wrote as an outsider in the art world. I doubt he'd use the same level of derision responding to clams for the cultural significance of the mini skirt. But within the world that took Clement Greenberg's opinions seriously

these were serious issues.

Mendelson quotes Donald Judd, renaming him Frank out of a confusion with Stella.

> "…all the structures, values, feelings, of the whole European tradition. It suits me fine if that's all down the drain"

The quote is from "Questions to Stella and Judd", from 1966.[182] Read in full it's as dated as the fragment Mendelson includes. But in 2015 it was reposted on the webpage of the magazine where it first appeared, and called prescient—"their arguments feel remarkably contemporary"—debates repeating in an even smaller subculture.[183]

Mendelson is wrong though to say that Ginsberg, Judd and Stella didn't know history. They were still trying to escape it; they saw ideologies and made their own in response: another schism in the church, another splinter group. But art succeeds if it transcends intent, if it's more interesting than the chatter that surrounds it. The interview is worth reading to understand how much has changed, from the 20s to the 60s and to now.

> GLASER: Why do you want to avoid compositional effects?
> JUDD: Well, those effects tend to carry with them all the structures, values, feelings of the whole European tradition. It suits me fine if that's all down the drain. When Vasarely has optical effects within the squares, they're never enough, and he has to have at least three or four squares, slanted, tilted inside each other, and all arranged. That is about five times more composition and juggling than he needs.
> GLASER: It's too busy?
> JUDD: It is in terms of somebody like Larry Poons. Vasarely's composition has the effect of order and quality that traditional European painting had, which I find pretty objectionable.... The objection is not that Vasarely's busy, but that in his multiplicity there's a certain structure that has qualities I don't like.
> GLASER: What qualities?
> JUDD: The qualities of European art so far. They're innumerable and complex, but the main way of saying it is that they're linked up with a philosophy—rationalism, rationalistic philosophy
> GLASER: Descartes?
> JUDD: Yes.
> GLASER: And you mean to say that your work is apart from rationalism?
> JUDD: Yes. All that art is based on systems built beforehand, *a priori* systems; they express a certain type of thinking and logic that is pretty much discredited now as a way of finding out what the world's like.
> GLASER: Discredited by whom? By empiricists
> JUDD: Scientists, both philosophers and scientists.
> GLASER: What is the alternative to a rationalistic system in your method? It's often said that your work is preconceived, that you plan it out before you do it. Isn't that a rationalistic method?
> JUDD: Not necessarily. That's much smaller. When you think it out as you work on it, or you think it out

beforehand, it's a much smaller problem than the nature of the work. *What* you want to express is a much bigger thing than *how* you may go at it. Larry Poons works out the dots somewhat as he goes along; he figures out a scheme beforehand and also makes changes as he goes along. Obviously I can't make many changes, though I do what I can when I get stuck.

GLASER: In other words, you might be referring to an antirationalist position before you actually start making the work of art.

JUDD: I'm making it for a quality that I think is interesting and more or less true. And the quality involved in Vasarely's kind of composition isn't true to me.

GLASER: Could you be specific about how your own work reflects an antirationalistic point of view?

JUDD: The parts are unrelational.

GLASER: If there's nothing to relate, then you can't be rational about it because it's just there?

JUDD: Yes.

GLASER: Then it's almost an abdication of logical thinking.

JUDD: I don't have anything against using some sort of logic. That's simple. But when you start relating parts, in the first place, you're assuming you have a vague whole—the rectangle of the canvas— and definite parts, which is all screwed up, because you should have a definite *whole* and maybe no parts, or very few. The parts are always more important than the whole.

GLASER: And you want the whole to be more important than the parts?

JUDD: Yes. The whole's it. The big problem is to maintain the sense of the whole thing.

GLASER: Isn't it that there's no gestation, that there's just an idea?

JUDD: I do think about it, I'll change it if I can. I just want it to exist as a whole thing. And that's not especially unusual. Painting's been going toward that for a long time. A lot of people, like Oldenburg for instance, have a "whole" effect to their work.

Judd is talking about moral imperatives, founded in theological argument. He wants to see *things*, not arrangements, *facts*, not chatter. A woman I knew, who'd gone to grad school at Yale, and imbibed all the theory and whose own work was "transgressive' had always associated Judd with the "Enlightenment values" and art for bank lobbies. And then she met him, and realized that nominally an atheist he was a still a self-punishing Calvinist. He'd spoken at Yale and then two weeks later had recognized her in the street in Soho caught in a downpour without an umbrella. She said she saw someone waving madly from a block away and at first didn't know who it was though she knew whoever it was, was in front of Judd's building. He took her inside and upstairs to dry off and they talked for a few hours. She said she realized he was like a child, not the supposedly all powerful father figure but the son, not the punisher but the receiver of punishment. He wasn't the author of the imperatives he followed. She'd seen kink behind Puritan morality and now she loved the work.

Michael Fried was right to say that the focus on objects qua objects, as things which displace air or water, which change in our perceptions as we move around them brings us to the point of theater.

> …I want to make a claim that I cannot hope to prove or substantiate but that I believe nevertheless to be true: viz., that theatre and theatricality are at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such - and to the extent that the different arts can be described as modernist, with modernist sensibility as such. This claim can be broken down into three propositions or theses:
>
> 1. *The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre*…. …
> 2. *Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre*. …
>
> 3. *The concepts of quality and value-and to the extent that these are central to art, the concept of art itself-are meaningful, or wholly meaningful, only within the individual arts*. *What lies* between *the arts is theatre*.

The first paragraph of Mendelson's review

> Christopher Butler's survey of post-war literature, music and painting maintains a judicious critical distance from its subject. Readers who wish a more direct report from the front lines of the avant-garde should consult a new anthology, *Collective Consciousness: Art Performances in the Seventies*, edited by Jean Dupuy. This documents the work of almost two hundred avant-gardists from Europe and America who displayed their most advanced work at a gallery in New York and wrote explanatory statements for inclusion in the book. Despite the large number of participants, the level of inspiration and accomplishment is remarkably uniform. One artist, no better and no worse than the rest, supplied a colour film of a naked man scrabbling about in a forest. Another showed a videotape of himself bowing solemnly to the camera. A third tacked up a scrap of paper that read, 'Look in the mirror as I fuck you up the ass, the pain on your face is my freedom, your tears are the drops of my manhood,' and waited for angry women to tear it down. The established justification for this sort of thing is the thought it supposedly provokes in the audience. But the most thought-provoking sentence in the book was not written by any of the participating artists. It is the matter-of-fact statement printed in large type on the copyright page: 'Publication of this book was made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC, a federal agency.'

Mendelson's essay was published in 1981. The "NEA Four" case like the Mapplethorpe trial was in 1990. The Sex Pistols' *God Save the Queen* was banned by the BBC in 1977. If it were considered art not entertainment, people would have been debating why it was denied government funding, not after the fact as with Mapplethorpe, but for help making the album.

But "performance art" was more than shock. Remember Panofsky's description of the Florentine intermedio, "where the conclusion of *Plato's Republic* appeared on the stage". *Performance art* in the 16th century and the 20th developed for the same reasons: the need to reconcile idealism, eternal, deathless, with growing worldliness, economic and intellectual, and engagement with life as experienced, in time. It was a way for artists raised on idealism to come to terms with relativism,

using what they knew to practice a formalist including intellectually formalist scholasticism in abstract forms of narrative. Fried was right to say that it was "the negation of art", as he defined it. Theater is the death of art only for those who associate art with philosophy, and "truth". Avant-garde performance was a conflicted hybrid, an abstract theater against theater, against fiction, against storytelling. And the names in Dupuy's volume include groups and people active in New York theater until today, Mabou Mines, founded by Joanne Akalaitis, and David Warrilow, later known for work with Beckett, dancers and choreographers associated with the Judson Dance Theater, as well as Vito Acconci, Gordon Matta Clark, and Richard Serra. It's the scene where Kathryn Bigelow, director of *The Hurt Locker* and *Zero Dark Thirty*, got her start. And she's in the book. Acconci's early performance work, and plenty of works that follow it, partake –I won't say indulge– in a sort of monastic physical theater, in Acconci's case implicitly if not explicitly Catholic. It's easy to see him as the eccentric monk, Fra Vito, living in a hut in Brooklyn under the Manhattan bridge, with his books and his ideas, supported by the generosity of lords. And that's in fact pretty much how he lived. He used to tell a story of coming back from Europe and trudging up the stairs to his loft, and realizing something felt wrong. He left his bags at the door and took the subway to Manhattan and went to the Strand. He came back with bags full of books and then he unlocked the door to his home. He didn't come off as pretentious; it was told as a true story with a sincere irony. And in the last decade of his life his was supported by a gallerist and patron who married well, the son in law of the financier and fugitive Marc Rich.

In Belgrade in 1974 Marina Abramovic put on a performance that consisted of six hours of her own complete physical passivity. She'd put 72 items on a table, including a feather boa and a pair of scissors, olive oil, a bullet and a gun. At some point the gallerist had to wrestle the loaded gun away from someone and throw him out of the gallery, By the end she was mostly naked, and bleeding, and when she became herself again, after the six hours were up, everybody still there "ran away" she says, unable to face the return of a person out of what had been a body.[184] Was the performance 'art'? Of course. When Abramovic and her partner Ulay stood naked facing each other on opposite sides of a narrow doorway forcing people passing through to turn sideways, it was comic art, watching people choose which one of them to face. But in the context of 'art' as opposed to theater, this becomes an ascetic art, a mortification of the flesh, ironically though it's not referred to, often in the context of luxury boutiques. Chris Burden was shot, crucified, nailed to the roof of a car; he crawled through broken glass in his underwear with his hands tied behind his back. He lay on a triangular platform near the ceiling in the corner of a gallery for the 22 days, the duration of the show, not coming down, not eating. He did to himself in fact what Mel Gibson has done, as far as we know, only in fiction. It's got nothing to do with what now is called liberalism, and that's the point. It's not moralizing, and its not simply narcissism because it takes too much effort, to make and to watch.

As I've said, for art, meaning 'fine art' the environment was as always aristocratic, anti-bourgeois, the leftist aspects tagged on. But again as happened before, the aristocratic art of intellectuals and free-thinkers is transformed into the art of academics, scholastics and pedants. And this is where Mendelson, and Tom Wolfe, and critics of "post-modern" tenured radicalism in their various ways touch on a point. Few people noticed that the creator of the project from which the recent satirical film *The Square* gets its name is referred to as an "artist and sociologist". *The Square* won the *Palme d'Or*, showing just how much the art world has expanded that people get the jokes. The joke, cheap or not, is on academia as well.

The ‘performance theater of truth’ is the end of the line for Modernism, and it was inevitable. Fried was wrong only to argue against it. Performance art was a focus on performer as body, as person, as individual. The performances were basic, sometimes violent, polymorphous, infantile, sometimes explicitly even dogmatically prosaic, this last connected with Yvonne Rainer and the Judson Dance Theater, and the art of the discovery of time: time measured as a person or thing moving from point A to point B. It’s was in a sense children’s time, experience in the present, experience as phenomenology, not yet the fully narrative form that moves from beginning to end, with the knowledge that ‘end’ for us is death. John Rockwell in an essay on Robert Wilson refers to the early influence of Rainer’s “purposeful, task-oriented abstractions and childlike seriousness”, the formalism made of innocence.[185] But in Rainer’s pronouncements this becomes something nearer to the pseudoscientific art of events. Puritan simplicity ties to Puritan moralism. Rainer joined the faculty of the Whitney ISP in the early 70s at the same time she began moving away from choreography. Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” became in Rainer’s words a “loadstone”.[186] The greatest compliment you can give a Gordian knot is to pull it tighter, and *Film About A Woman Who…,* from 1974, is a testament to stifled rage, illustrating a point and pounding it home. But if you look at the film of Rainer dancing her most famous piece, the solo *Trio A*, from 1966, filmed in 1978, you see a series of plain gestures performed, compellingly, by a woman who in spite of her own ideology is still a dancer, a craftsperson, a master of a form. And the innocence is still there. We’re back to the separation of art and intent –*Trio A*, is a beautiful description of simplicity but it is the opposite of artless– and we’re back again with an *argument* for an impersonal, anti-humanist formalism, that can only be understood and sensed as through rich description as the desire for it. And this is also where Duchamp returns to the scene: Duchamp the phobic celebrant of the 19th century literary forms, narrative and anti-narrative; Duchamp, and Warhol, –boys not girls but still preadolescent at heart– not Puritan but Catholic moral conservatives.

Ernst Gombrich, on art and philosophy, truth and lies, and moralism.

> For the Egyptian, the newly discovered eternity of art may well have held out a promise that its power to arrest and to preserve in lucid images might be used to conquer this evanescence. Perhaps it was not only as the maker of “substitute heads” and other dwellings for the “ka” that the Egyptian sculptor could lay claim to the famous appellation of “one who keeps alive.” His images weave a spell to enforce eternity. Not our idea of eternity, to be sure, which stretches backward and forward in an infinite extension, but rather the ancient conception of recurrent time that a later tradition embodied in the famous “hieroglyph” of the serpent biting its own tail. Clearly an “impressionist” art could never have served this outlook. 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.
>
> There could be no more poignant contrast to this confidence in the spells of art than a passage from Plato's older contemporary Euripides that also deals with tomb sculpture. When Alcestis is going to die, her grieving husband Admetus speaks of the work he will commission for his solace:

And represented by the skillful hands
Of craftsmen, on the bed thy body shall
Be laid; whereon I shall fall in embrace
And clasp my hands around it, call thy name,
And fancy in my arms my darling wife
To hold, holding her not; perhaps, I grant,
Illusory delight, yet my soul's burden
Thus shall I lighten...

> What Ademtus seeks is not a spell, not even assurance, only a dream for those who are awake; in other words, precisely that state of mind to which Plato, the stern seeker after truth, objected.
> Plato, we know, looked back with nostalgia at the immobile schemata of Egyptian art[187]

Gombrich published *Art and Illusion* in 1960, when no one in the "artworld" to use the phrase coined by Arthur Danto only four years later, was about to put on a play by Euripides. Gombrich opposed 'historicism', but Panofsky was right, and Billy Wilder was right, and I'm sure both got the irony of *Alcestis* to which Gombrich seems to have been oblivious. Alcestis after all is dying to serve her husband's vanity.

I talked above about the Renaissance, Raphael and Michelangelo and physical form "simultaneously static and full of motion," a complexity unmatched since Athens. I described a *Stendhal moment*, as a moment of neurological overload, when an artwork "pulls you into a world of illusion… while showing its hand as fakery." The Parthenon marbles are simultaneously both dynamic/naturalistic and hieratic, describing this world as it exists and as idealized; they can appear for a moment at least as something out of a deathless world. The seduction worked by craft makes you want to imagine a utopia, the land of eternal life, and then just as quickly shuts the door, because the craft, in the same moment shows itself as unmistakably a trick. The stone is always stone; our minds are primed to do the work to create the waking dream. Drugs render the mind passive. Art makes the active mind render itself drunk, and then snaps it back out of the dream. The greatest art does this with a sense of generosity, where the audience is reminded to laugh or smile at themselves. The story of Alcestis as told by Euripides leaves us with the same question as Plato's *Euthyphro* –"is all which is just pious?"– without ever asking the question itself. The play builds irony on irony, and the only resolution, the formal resolution required of a plot, resolves nothing. No character in the play is above mockery –even Alcestis– except Death. Unlike Plato, there's not a trace of pedantry. Euripides in the end is only a craftsman not a would-be king. But again the irony is beyond Gombrich, whose positivism defined *assumption* as the unsupportable opinions of others, and for whom everything I've written here, which he would call historicism would be anathema.

But his description of the relation of Athenian to Egyptian art is apt. Gombrich's discussion begins with Riegl*, haptic and optic.

> ...Riegl's main argument is that ancient art was always concerned with the rendering of individual objects rather than with the infinite world as such. Egyptian art shows this attitude in its extreme form, for here vision is only allowed a very subsidiary part; things are rendered as they appear to the sense of touch, the more "objective" sense which reports on the permanent shape of things irrespective of the shifting viewpoint. Here, too is the reason why Egyptians shunned the rendering of the third dimension, because recession and foreshortening would have introduced a subjective element. An advance toward the third dimension, which grants the eye its share in the perception of modeling, was made in Greece.[188]

The subjective element: multiple viewpoints, perspectivism, objects and figures no longer as ideas or 'truths' but as things to be experienced. Experience by definition is incomplete. Panofsky quotes Cassirer

> Perception does not know the concept of infinity; from the very outset it is confined within certain spatial limits imposed by our faculty of perception. And in connection with perceptual space we can no more speak of homogeneity than of infinity. The ultimate basis of the homogeneity of geometric space is that all its elements, the "points" which are joined in it, are mere determinations of position, possessing no independent content of their own outside of this relation, this position which they occupy in relation to each other. Their reality is exhausted in their reciprocal relation: it is a purely functional and not a substantial reality. Because fundamentally these points are devoid of all content, because they have become mere expressions of ideal relations, they can raise no question of a diversity in content. Their homogeneity signifies nothing other than this similarity of structure, grounded in their common logical function, their common ideal purpose and meaning. Hence homogeneous space is never given space, but space produced by construction; and indeed the geometrical concept of homogeneity can be expressed by the postulate that from every point in space it must be possible to draw similar figures in all directions and magnitudes.1 Nowhere in the space of immediate perception can this postulate be fulfilled. Here there is no strict homogeneity of position and direction; each place has its own mode and its own value. Visual space and tactile space are both anisotropic and unhomogeneous in contrast to the metric space of Euclidean geometry: "the main directions of organization -before-behind, above-below, right-left- are dissimilar in both physiological spaces." [Ernst Mach][189]

We're returned to the fact of subjectivity, and again to Broch. "It is an almost mystical process, the setting of ethical values: Arising from the irrational, transforming the irrational to the rational, yet nonetheless it is the irrational that radiates from within the resulting form." The love of math is not a mathematical function; it's a function of the human. But we're also,

* The quote is from Gombrich's introduction, where he criticizes Riegl for indulging historicist determinism. When he repeats Riegl's argument later in the book, quoting Euripides, he doesn't cite him.

back to talking about people celebrating an authoritarianism they're not a part of, imagining complex realities as *ideas*. Plato's romance with Egypt tells us more about Plato than Egypt.

And we're talking also about official art. We have no idea about the doggerel of ancient Egypt, the trash talk and street comedy. But even the work we have is more varied than Plato, and Gombrich, make it to be. See the naturalism in this portrait of an official from 2500 BCE. Nonetheless, a thousand years forward the art of Athens –in word and material– matches the complexity of both official and civic culture, recording both life lived and the desire for more. Humanist art and culture, and as always I'm using the original sense of the word, are marked by self-awareness, statement that allows for error, a lie that calls itself a lie, a high art that includes the low, that both celebrates and mock authority and art itself, the irony that Gombrich recognizes in Euripides', "a dream for those who are awake" but also the irony he misses.

By this logic there is a sense of progress, beyond technical progress, in the arts and in culture, in the recording by individuals of their own perceptions, as perceptions. But art is formal; it's the game played using Eliot's "objective correlatives', tricks and tools to make us feel an emotion or a sense where we otherwise would not. Beyond that the richest and most complex art always mixes change and continuity, marking a time when formal systems and the social world they're made to represent are briefly in sync, and before the forms become rote or stale from repetition. The greatest art is born of tension but not panic. Athens marks a moment where the dream of balance, in the records left to us, even as illusion seems palpably real; the Renaissance brings out the same desire. The Renaissance was the beginning of the end of monarchy and the beginning of the rise of the middle class, and this generated the highpoint of two opposing forms: fresco and easel painting; the public art of state and church and the private art of commodity.

Gombrich from his essay "Evolution in the Arts", on Titian's *Averoldi Polyptych.*

> From the very year of this momentous competition in Rome, [between Raphael and Sebastino del Piombo, a protégé of Michelangelo], …which was muted by Raphael's death in 1520, another incident can be documented which illustrates even more sharply the emergence of the new function of the altar painting as a work of art in its own right. It involved the greatest of the Venetian masters, Titian, and one of his principal patrons, Duke Alfonso d'Este of Ferrara. Titian had been commissioned to paint an altar painting for the High Altar of the Church of St Nazaro and St Celso in the North Italian city of Brescia. it is still in that

church. Titian painted in the centre the risen Christ, and on the wings above, in half-length figures, the Annunciation, with the Angel on one side and the Virgin on the other. Below he painted the donor, the papal Legate Bishop Altobello Averoldo who is seen kneeling in prayer under the protection of the two saints to whom the Church is dedicated. One is St Celso, the soldier saint who points to the hope of salvation embodied in the risen Christ. On the wing opposite we see St Sebastian, a saint whose intercession was thought to be particularly powerful against the omnipresent perils of the plague.

Some nine years earlier Titian had also included St Sebastian in an altar painting specifically dedicated as a prayer against the plague. It shows St Mark, the patron saint of Venice, flanked by the two medical saints, Cosmas and Damian, holding medicine boxes, St Roch who points to the wound which is his emblem, and St. Sebastian having suffered martyrdom tied to a tree as a target for the arrows of his torturers. It goes without saying that here the arrows sticking in the body of the young man is indeed an attribute, a pictographic sign as in Giotto's picture of Stephen. Nor need I enlarge on the contrast between the way the martyrdom is visualized in the Brescia altar-piece. The Change from symbolic rendering to dramatic evocation was not lost on the Venetians. In fact the master's new version and new vision of the event caused an equally dramatic reaction. My final story starts with a letter of December 1520 from Venice to Ferrara addressed to Duke Alfonso by the duke's agent, one Tebaldi.

The agent had been to Titian's studio where he had seen the St Sebastian on an easel. He tells his master that all visitors praised it as the best thing Titian had ever done. And to give the duke an idea, he appended a description which is worth quoting in full, for we don't have many such opportunities of hearing what a sixteenth-century layman thought of a particular work of art:

> The aforementioned figure is attached to a column with one arm up and the other down and the whole body twists, in such a way that one can see the whole scene before one's eye, for his is shown to suffer in all parts of his person from an arrow which has lodged in the middle of the body. I have no judgement in these matters because I am not a connoisseur of art, but looking at all the features and muscles of the figure It seems to me that it resembles most closely to a real body created by Nature, which only lacks the life.

Nor did Tebaldi hide from us or the duke what conclusions he drew from this display of mastery. He reports that he waited till the crowd had left and then told the painter to send this painting not to Brescia but to the duke, because, as he candidly and significantly put it, 'that painting was thrown away if he gave it to the priest and to Brescia'. The original function, the purpose for which it was demanded and painted, to stand on an altar, was irrelevant in the eyes of the duke's agent. The days of the collector had arrived. It was simply too good for a liturgical role and should be treasured simply as a work of art.

The agent reinforced his plea with a strong economic argument. Titian had been promised 200 ducats for the whole altar, but the duke would pay 60 for the Sebastian alone.

Titian replied that to yield to this request would be an act of robbery, though there are indications that he was not altogether disinclined to commit this act. In the end it was the duke who got cold feet, for

he found it diplomatically inadvisable to offend a powerful bishop and legate of the Pope. The painting was left to serve its original function.[190]

Gombrich continues, saying less of interest, since he refers to art only as art, and to a new narrative form without asking why this should occur or the differences in how they describe the world. And though Tibaldi's request is a statement of change, the change itself is evident much earlier, in works where the religious imagery seems like secondary addition to experiments in perspective. The difference is less a transformation into what Gombrich calls "Art with a capital A" than a change from rationalist geometrical formalism, following the scholastics, to empiricism and phenomenology, the world not as idea but experience. And Titian's narrative is the far from the Florentine model of the Renaissance: it's proto-Baroque. Nothing in Titian is like stone come to life; the effect is not like Raphael of a moment of balance between material and dream, but the documenting *of* substance, *in* substance –of flesh, in paint– and of the eye's perception. When Panofsky writes that Titian, "like Henry James' Linda Pallant, 'knew the value of intervals'"[191] he's describing Titian's focus on the space between objects and people, and implicitly between viewer and canvas. The connecting line isn't a formal cue, an arrow or the edge of a table or the stripes on a piece of fabric; space is crossed often only by a line of sight. As in the theater, actors' success or failure isn't measured in inches or millimeters to match the perfect ratio of the sides of a triangle, but in faces and gestures directed at each other. And Titian makes sure the space isn't so cluttered that things get in the way. The sense of time as the our eyes move observing others' eyes, the fleeting sense of intimacy is beyond anything in Florence. It's an an art that doesn't even try to give us an illusion of perfection, except perhaps as a 'perfect' description of its lack.

I'll return to Titian, and to Mannerism and the Baroque, in detail, but my point now at the end of this digression is to make clear the distinction between pre-Humanist art, Egypt, pre-Columbian or European, and the anti-Humanism in the work of those who look back to it. On the left: a section of a relief, Egyptian (400-200 BC). Below: The exterior of a Late Mayan (670-750 AD) chocolate-drinking cup known as The Princeton Vase. The stylized impersonality of these works is not Mannerist. It does not efface the personal; it's not concerned with it, and that's something else entirely. They're examples of a purely public art, made nonetheless by individual craftsmen. This is why if enough works are available, we name their

anonymous makers: Greek vase painters- The Persephone Painter, Acheloos Painter, Amasis Painter; 1300 years later- The Master of Rimini, Master of the Magdalen, Master of the Codex of Saint George. Until recently artists from 13th to 15th century Europe were known collectively as "The Primitives". Modern individualism by comparison produces fantasies of public form. Nietzsche's superman is as skewed an idea as any fantasy of the noble savage. The same holds for the desperate universalism of Pollock and Coltrane. Plato's snobbery of course could not exist except as the product of a republican culture it's rebelling against. "Primitives and "barbarians" are not "reactionary", a word describing the rebellion of individualism against itself. Their cultures follow a normative not reactive ethos. Egyptian art isn't *decadent*; the designs aren't *over-determined*, both words used to describe indulgence opposing or aping a strict order. I inserted Gombrich's description above because it fits so well with one of the most important artists of the transitional, formalist, anti-narrative, anti-humanist, hieratic art of the late 60s and early 70s. I'd intended to segue from his comments to what appears below, but I realized I needed to make clear again the distinction between the rigorous formality of past cultures, as collectives, and the hypertrophied individualism of the modern era.

By the time Danto coined his phrase, the art world had shrunk in importance as much as it had grown in pretension. Like Lefebvre's aristocracy and leftist intelligentsia, it had become a club, but not just because pedants tried to define what serious art could or could not be. Fine art had become a conversation among a small group of people, talking, arguing, completing each other's sentences and one-upping each other, just as artists and intellectuals always have, but in this case pushing towards a inevitable dead end. Carl Andre's mantra, "A brick is a brick is a brick", is such a blunt statement of materialism, and the work itself such a final 'reply' in the conversation –*Equivalent VIII* is a brilliant evocation of the relations of parts and wholes, of scale; it's a thing to stare at and think with, as all successful art is–that the only viable retort is to start the game anew: "Well, this is a brick from the house my grandfather built". And that is precisely what happened. See Joel Shapiro's *Untitled (House on Field)* from 1975. Minimalism was followed in the 70s by a sculpture of architecture and explicit narrative, tacitly accepting its place as minor in the context of the culture at large.

But for now we're still in the hybrid, cultural half-world of forms based more on their relations to the past and past forms than to the world and the present. Andre's brilliance is the brilliance of the same small world of subjectivity in the shadow of positivism. In the US it's a Puritan moralism, with roots in Shaker simplicity as much as the Lutheran Bauhaus, but still the world that gave us Eliot and Kafka, Wittgenstein and Weininger, Duchamp, Borges, Robbe-Grillet et al. Minimalism, along with Performance Art, Conceptualism, and so called "Structural" Film, are a coda to Modernism. Minimalism is theatrical, physically personal, like the paintings of Matisse, but unlike Matisse's work incomplete without the viewer, sculptures already partially as *props*, or furniture. In Warhol and others' work, it's back to the beginning: the hard-fought elision of the personal that succeeds, knowingly or not, only in amplifying it. When the personal in eliminated, as positivist critics and some artists would prefer, it fails altogether. In the early 70s Jasper Johns glimpsed a pattern of slanting parallel lines on the

side of a car on the Long island Expressway. "I only saw it for a second, but knew immediately that I was going to use it. It had all the qualities that interest me – literalness, repetitiveness, an obsessive quality, order with dumbness, and the possibility of a complete lack of meaning."[192] That sentence is almost as well known as the work that resulted. Johns' relation to the personal is less disinterest than denial. But again, it fails, and we're left with the description of desire, and with art. Johns' paintings at their best are *interesting things*, meaning that someone with an open mind but knowing nothing about modern art can be engaged. The crosshatch paintings show a craft and a very private mind behind the craft. We're left to ask questions about both.

Yvonne Rainer became a filmmaker in the context of the artworld, the world that paid more attention to Vertov than to Eisenstein, to the film of ideas, against narrative, so also against time. And like everything else in the artworld, her films were made for limited distribution[193]. You won't find them streaming on Netflix or anywhere else. They're too serious, "against pleasure". But film is narrative by definition, even more than literature: until recently you couldn't push rewind, and you still can't in the theater. To dream of a non-narrative film is to dream of turning time into the timeless, a human being into an immortal one. Ideas feel no pain; they don't 'die'. An idealist working in narrative is always returning to the scene of a crime. That's why the narrative art of idealists is either formal, hieratic, distancing, or reduces to melodrama, the narrative form of kitsch, either way to forms of pre-humanism that that can only exist after the rise of humanism as *post* or *anti-humanism*. This is why critics and honest admirers of Fassbinder see the nihilism and reaction, recognize the "criticality" as honesty but not cure. The art of narrative against time begins in violence.

FIVE

Robert Smithson's sculpture was the first contemporary work that I felt an affinity with, while recognizing it as transitional, dependent for its existence too much on what preceded it, even while pulling away. In art as opposed to literature—I read Calvino and Borges as a teenager—Smithson's works were at the beginning for me of coming to terms with this conflict precisely because *I liked them*, even when Calvino began to annoy me and I hated Borges. Both Smithson and Tony Smith made works that were important to me in a way I couldn't write about. I'd thought about them and then put them away.

> Sirs:
> France has given us the anti-novel, now Michael Fried has given us the anti-theater. A production could be developed on a monstrous scale with the Seven Deadly Isms, verbose diatribes, scandalous refutations, a vindication of Stanley Cavell, shrill but brilliant disputes on "shapehood" vs. "objecthood," dark curses, infamous claims, etc. The stage should subdivide into millions of stages.
> The following is a "prologue" from an unwritten TV "spectacular" called The Tribulations of Michael Fried.
>
> > . . . there will be no end to this exquisite, horrible misery, when you look forward you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts.
> > Jonathan Edwards
>
> Michael Fried has in his article "Art and Objecthood" (Artforum, June 1967) declared a "war" on what he quixotically calls "theatricality." In a manner worthy of the most fanatical puritan, he provides the art world with a long-overdue spectacle-a kind of ready-made parody of the war between Renaissance classicism (modernity) versus Manneristic anti-classicism (theater) . Fried, without knowing it, has brought into being a schism complete with all the "mimic fury" (Thomas Carew) of a fictive inquisition. He becomes, I want to say, in effect the first truly manneristic critic of "modernity."[194]

Smithson submitted that to *Artform* and it was published in October 1967. And this from 1968.

> Peter Hutchinson, author of "Is There Life on Earth?" (*Art in America*, Fall 1966), uses the discards of last year's future in order to define today's present. His method is highly artificial and is composed of paralyzed quotes, listless theories, and bland irony. His abandoned planets maintain unthinkable "cultures," and have tasteless "tastes." In "Mannerism in the Abstract" (*Art and Artists*, September 1966) Hutchinson lets us know about "probabilities, contingencies, chances, and cosmic breakdown." "Scientism" is shown to be actually a kind of Mannerist science full of obvious disguises and false bottoms. "Topology surely mocks

plane geometry," says Hutchinson. But actually his language usage deliberately mocks his own meaning, so that nothing is left but a gratuitous syntactical device. His writing is marvelously "inauthentic." The complexity and richness of Hutchinson's method starts with science fiction cliches, and scientistic conservations and ends in an extraordinary esthetic structure. To paraphrase Nathalie Sarraute on Flaubert," Here Hutchinson's defects become virtues."

> The attraction of the world outside awakens so energetically in me the expansive force that I dilate without limit ... absorbed, lost in multiple curiosity, in the infinity of erudition and the inexhaustible detail of a peripheral world.
>
> Henri-Frederic Amiel,
>
> *Journal*, 1854[195]

That's from "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art". Smithson's description of others' mannerisms may as well refer to his own. He begins with this:

> In the illusory babels of language, an artist might advance specifically to get lost, and to intoxicate himself in dizzying syntaxes, seeking odd intersections of meaning, strange corridors of history, unexpected echoes, unknown humors, or voids of knowledge . . . but this quest is risky, full of bottomless fictions and endless architectures and counter-architectures ... at the end, if there is an end, are perhaps only meaningless reverberations.[196]

All the above are in Smithson's *Collected Writings*, edited by Jack Flam. From his introduction:

> In a way, Smithson saw and treated the world as an enormous text, reminiscent of the library in Borges's "Library of Babel," which is synonymous with the universe itself, "composed of an indefinite and perhaps an infinite number of hexagonal galleries"—which seem to prefigure the crystalline structures that Smithson himself favored. Borges's library, moreover, is defined as "a sphere whose exact center is any one of its hexagons and whose circumference is inaccessible," recalling Smithson's favorite quote from Pascal, that "Nature is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." Significantly, in a 1968 citation of Pascal's statement, Smithson added "or language becomes an infinite museum whose center is everywhere and whose limits are nowhere."[197]

Hutchinson's "Mannerism in the Abstract" was reprinted in Gregory Battcock's anthology[198]. I've owned a copy for 40 years. I read it. There was no reason not to mention it. I've had the earlier collection of Smithson's writings[199] for just as long. I think I dodged Hutchinson's piece because I wanted to make the job harder, but with Smithson it becomes something else. Smithson's work allowed me simultaneously to indulge and keep my distance. And when I was looking at Smithson I was reading Pynchon, who loved the Beats and Nabokov: the artless and desperate, and the artfully, desperately, overdetermined.

I always hated the Beats, and by the time I read Nabokov I'd read Pynchon, and I understood what Pynchon was doing was profoundly representational, that beneath the artifice was warmth. He was ahead of the game. But writing about any of this was too close to home.

Smithson on film, "A Cinematic Atopia"

> Going to the cinema results in an immobilization of the body. Not much gets in the way of one's perception. All one can do is look and listen. One forgets where one is sitting. The luminous screen spreads a murky light throughout the darkness. Making a film is one thing, viewing a film another. Impassive, mute, still the viewer sits. The outside world fades as the eyes probe the screen. Does it matter what film one is watching? Perhaps. One thing all films have in common is the power to take perception elsewhere. As I write this, I'm trying to remember a film I liked, or even one I didn't like. My memory becomes a wilderness of elsewheres.[200]

All the themes above match what I've written about earlier, and they'll reappear below. None of it concerns "aesthetics"; all record the moral imperatives that drive the artists' relation to their medium, and through it to the world.

And Smithson led me back to Tony Smith.

> It is important to mentally experience these projects as something distinctive and intelligible. By extracting from a site certain associations that have remained invisible within the old framework of rational language, by dealing directly with the appearance or what Roland Barthes calls "the simulacrum of the object," the aim is to reconstruct a new type of "building" into a whole that engenders new meanings. From the linguistic point of view, one establishes rules of structure based on a change in the semantics of building. Tony Smith seems conscious of this "simulacrum" when he speaks of an "abandoned airstrip" as an "artificial landscape." He speaks of an absence of "function" and "tradition."[201]

Smith

> When I was teaching at Cooper Union in the first year or two of the fifties, someone told me how I could get on to the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike. I took three students and drove from somewhere in the Meadows to New Brunswick. It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder markers, lines, railings, or anything at all except the dark pavement moving through the landscape of the flats, rimmed by hills in the distance, but punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes, and colored lights. This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and yet it couldn't be called a work of art. On the other hand, it did something for me that art had never done. At first I didn't know what it was, but

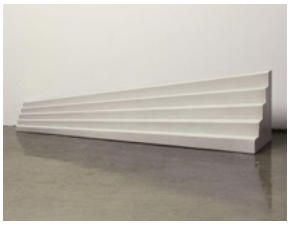
its effect was to liberate me from many of the views I had had about art. It seemed that there had been a reality there which had not had any expression in art.

The experience on the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized. I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art. Most painting looks pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it. Later I discovered some abandoned airstrips in Europe—abandoned works, Surrealist landscapes, something that had nothing to do with any function, created worlds without tradition. Artificial landscape without cultural precedent began to dawn on me. There is a drill ground in Nuremberg, large enough to accommodate two million men. The entire field is enclosed with high embankments and towers. The concrete approach is three sixteen-inch steps, one above the other, stretching for a mile or so. [202]

Smithson writes about this passage and this is what I came back to. Because Smith's imagery is cinematic. Never mind his saying you can't frame it; he already has. And it reminded me years later of the scene bracketing the storyline in *Twelve O'Clock High*, an ex-soldier remembering the war, and a new postwar sense of space in American film.

Smith and Smithson were still tied to Modernism. When Smith calls it "the end of art", he's anticipating Fried, but Smithson doesn't call him on it, because he knows he's implicated.

What interested me also about Smithson was his use of systems to construct his sculptures, and the sense that I thought of some of those pieces that resulted as *mistakes*, or *wrong*. And I returned to them because I wanted to understand why I would think that, and what it meant. Because I didn't think my response had anything to do with aesthetics. That's why his work was so central to the beginnings of all of this for me, everything I've written. It helped clarify my sense of my own interests or preoccupations, and what it meant to have preoccupations.



Smithson made a series of works with the title *Pointless Vanishing Point*, objects that direct the eye away from themselves, towards a spot on the ground a few feet away. The side expanding outward doesn't lead the eye: we look for a terminus. The works function as self-effacing signs. There's no reason to walk around them; we know what they do: they show us. Carl Andre's work is made for walking around, or on. They don't point us anywhere; they simply *are*, as objects in a space. They draw attention to themselves as sculpture always has. Smithson's *pointless* sculptures are pointless narratives. They act as illustrations, indexes, pointing to nothing. By their own logic, they *are* the end of art, or of sculpture, of meaningful objects, and from there, if you follow as far as

Smithson would have you: to the significance of individual human beings. This again is the universalism that annihilates the self. It's the art of the hive, or the hive-maker, which is again the contradiction of art as of philosophy: the author stands apart.

Remember Cassirer

> Perception does not know the concept of infinity; from the very outset it is confined within certain spatial limits imposed by our faculty of perception. And in connection with perceptual space we can no more speak of homogeneity than of infinity. The ultimate basis of the homogeneity of geometric space is that all its elements, the "points" which are joined in it, are mere determinations of position, possessing no independent content of their own outside of this relation, this position which they occupy in relation to each other. Their reality is exhausted in their reciprocal relation: it is a purely functional and not a substantial reality. Because fundamentally these points are devoid of all content, because they have become mere expressions of ideal relations, they can raise no question of a diversity in content.

Tony Smith's *Die* is a six-foot cube, the height and breadth of a man with arms extended. It's a take on da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, but with the title also a reference to the phrase "six feet under". In the 1966 interview quoted above, he brings us closer to Smithson, by way of Riegl.

"I'm not aware of how light and shadow falls on my pieces. I'm just aware of basic form. I'm interested in the thing, not in the effects—pyramids are only geometry, not an effect." [203]

Riegl:

> The architectual ideal of the ancient Egyptians is best expressed through the tomb-type of the pyramid. Any of the four sides permits the beholder's eye to observe an always unified plane of an isosceles triangle, the sharply rising sides of which by no means reveal the connecting space behind. In contrast to this well planned definition of the external material form within the dimension of the plane achieved with great acuteness here, the actual functional responsibility (the formation of space) is entirely reduced. It confines itself to the construction of a small tomb chamber with inconspicuous entrances which seem practically non-existent from the exterior. Therefore, the pyramid should be called a *Bildwerk* [sculpture]rather than a *Bauwerk*. [building] Here the material individuality in the strictest ancient Near Eastern sense could not find a more perfect expression.[204]

Smith had been around long before the minimalists. He began as an architect and he'd worked with Frank Lloyd Wright in the 30s. He'd been a friend of Pollock and had incorporated his designs in an (unrealized) project. Art was "something vast….

Art today is an art of postage stamps." That's the context for *Die.* Smith and Smithson shared an interest in the infinite, and in infinite geometric replications. Smith's later pieces were modular, imagined as sections of an endless lattice. He saw his work as an extension of surrealism and abstract expressionism, and Surrealism is perverse.

> "I would almost rather look at nothing than something If I were a town planner, I would knock down those buildings just the same as all the other town planners except for the fact that I wouldn't build anything else up on them; I would pave one of them. I mean not even greenery or anything like that just statement of some kind of fundamental humanity. That... It might be just be something about taking a 200 by 800 city block and paving it with granite, that might say something human too."[205]

> "I love the Secretariat Building of the U.N., placed like a salute. In terms of scale, we have less art per square mile, per capita, than any society ever had. We are puny. In an English village there was always the cathedral. There is nothing to look at between the Bennington Monument and the George Washington Bridge. We now have stylization. In Hackensack a huge gas tank is all underground. I think of art in a public context and not in terms of mobility of works of art. Art is just there. I'm temperamentally more inclined to mural painting, especially that of the Mexican, Orozco. I like the way a huge area holds on to a surface in the same way a state does on a map."[206]

There's plenty of artists' hyperbole in those statements, but "say something human" is reduced to the universal affirmation of all graffiti: "I was here!" Smithson goes further, offering both Shelly's Ozymandias and his traveler:
"Round the decay/ Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare/The lone and level sands stretch far away."

I have a hard time attacking the work, even if I criticize it. Smith and Smithson are both deadpan comedians. And their work is experiential, not pedantic. Smith built homes for his friends; if his designs were unlivable, they would have told him. And even Smithson's failed sculptures are sculptures about failure, part of the narrative that makes up his collective work. He fought a losing battle, but his work describes it well.

Borges.
"The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries."[207]

Manneristic art is often called pseudo, sick, perverse, false, phony and decadent by the naturalists or truth tellers, yet it seems to me that what the Mannerist esthetic does disclose or recover is a sense of primal evil. Both Eisenstein and Poe seem to have been acutely aware of such a malevolent condition. Parker Tyler in his *Classics of Foreign Films* [sic] has this to say, "Eisenstein knew perfectly well that 'Mephistofeles' and 'wild beast,' the labels he had given Ivan, also applied to *himself*, to the history of his career as man and film artist." Such an awareness not only locates him within the Mannerist esthetic, but also makes him an artist of the first order.

The Mannerist is not innocent of corruption. He casts a cold eye, and what he sees he treats with humor and terror. A great example of pictorial humor and terror is *The Allegory of Europe or the Beheading of John the Baptist* by an unknown Mannerist master (collection of the Prado). The very word "allegory" is enough to strike terror into the hearts of the expressive artist; there is perhaps no device as exhausted as allegory…. Jorge Luis Borges begins his *From Allegories to Novels* by saying, "For all of us, the allegory is an aesthetic error….

The "faces" in mannerist pictures are abstractions, because they do not call attention to "paint quality." The face in an expressionist painting is concerned with the "paint," but the face in a mannerist picture is a "conception." The mannerist face is a mask detached from the material fact of the pictorial surface. Roland Barthes tells us what constitutes the abstract mask, when he says "As a language, Garbo's [face] singularity was of a conceptual order; Bardot's [face] is of a substantial order. Garbo's face is an Idea, Bardot's a happening." (From *Mythologies*.) Or the Idea face is a *mannerist* picture while the Happening face is an *expressionist* painting.

In order to deal with the face as a "language," we must avoid the "formalist" trap of discussing "the painting" in terms of "framing supports" or "shaped canvases." I shall concern myself with the difference between expressive paintings and mannerist pictures. The substantiality of painting may be seen in Rembrandt's "Self-Portraits." The sensory and temporal roles of the artist are clearly defined by the following titles, *Rembrandt as a Young Man*, *Rembrandt Dressed as an Eastern Prince*, *Rembrandt as an Officer*, *Rembrandt as a Standard-Bearer*, *Rembrandt at the Age of 34*, etc. Rembrandt is putting us on, but in a very poor, honest, natural, and expressive way. The naturalist ethic responds to such degraded postures, but rejects the terrible "virgins" by Parmigianino. The naturalist ethic opposes the mannerist esthetic by preferring the "honest whore" to The Virgin of the Rose—rustic charm is preferred to celestial terror. One reason why Rembrandt's paintings fetch such high prices is that they give value to low ideas. Marcel Duchamp, the last fabricator of "virgins;' shows his contempt for Rembrandt by recommending that his

> paintings be used as "ironing-boards." Duchamp shares Shakespeare's disgust when it comes to the elevation of expressive naturalism over the rules of the game. To put it pictorially, when the painting is valued over and against the picture you can be sure philistines have taken over art.[208]

And earlier

> I guess I was always interested in origins and primordial beginnings, you know, the archetypal nature of things. And I guess this was always haunting me all the way until about 1959 and 1960 when I got interested in Catholicism through T. S. Eliot and through that range of thinking. T. E. Hulme sort of led me to an interest in the Byzantine and in notions of abstraction as a kind of counterpoint to the Humanism of the late Renaissance. I was interested I guess in a kind of iconic imagery that I felt was lurking or buried under a lot of abstractions at the time.
> CUMMINGS: In Pollock.
> SMITHSON: Yes.[209]

And elsewhere:

> [Frederick Law] Olmsted's view of the landscape was lost sight of around the first part of this century, what with the rise of the "antidemocratic intelligentsia" that included Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and T. E. Hulme. Although Pound and Eliot did maintain traces of the picturesque in their poetry, they theoretically scorned it. "Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel," wrote Eliot in *The Waste Land*, "There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home." But Eliot's picturesque was a nostalgia for church authority, it ceased to be the democratic dialectic between the sylvan and the industrial that Price and Olmsted worked toward. Instead they stressed a neoclassical formalism, and T. E. Hulme, who exerted great influence on all three, was drawn to the "abstract" philosophy of Wilhelm Worringer. After World War II, when fascistic motives were revealed, various liberal critics moved in to pick up the pieces-among them Clement Greenberg. He tried to graft a lame formalism to a fuzzy Marxist outlook.[210]

We're back to Pollock and my memories of Uccello. And Worringer expands on Riegl

> The illuminating fact emerges that the urge to empathy can become free only where a certain relationship of confidence between man and the external world has developed, as the result of innate disposition, evolution, climatic and other propitious circumstances. Amongst a people with such a predisposition, this sensuous assurance, this complete confidence in the external world, this unproblematic sense of being at home in the world, will lead, in a religious respect, to a naive anthropomorphic pantheism or polytheism, and in respect of art to a happy, world-revering naturalism. Neither in the former nor in the latter will any

> need for redemption be disclosed. It is men of this earthly world who find satisfaction in pantheism and naturalism. And just as strong as their faith in the reality of being, will also be their faith in the understanding, by means of which they take their external bearings in the world-picture. So that this sensualism on the one hand is coupled with a fresh rationalism on the other, with faith in the spirit, as long as it does not speculate, as long as it does not reach out into transcendence. As such a man of the earthly world, in whom sensuousness and intellect move likewise, full of confidence, within the world-picture and dam back all 'dread of space', we may imagine the pure Greek, that is to say, the ideal Greek as we think of him in the narrow margin in which he has finally shaken himself free from all the Oriental elements of his provenance, and has not yet been re-infected by Oriental-transcendental inclinations.
>
> With the Oriental, the profundity of his world-feeling, the instinct for the unfathomableness of being that mocks all intellectual mastery, is greater and human self-consciousness correspondingly smaller. Consequently the keynote of his nature is a need for redemption. As regards religion, this leads him to a sombre-toned religion of transcendence dominated by a dualistic principle; as regards art, it leads to an artistic volition directed entirely toward the abstract.[211]

Panofsky criticizes Worringer for misrepresenting Riegl's arguments—all art, both "organic" and "abstract" represents of the world of its maker[212]. But he was also distrustful of too much reading in. Gombrich, with his Popperian fears of historicism, chastised Panofsky, in a review written years after Panofsky's death, for falling for a form of determinism[213]. He criticizes Riegl in the introduction to *Art and Illusion*, and 80 pages later repeats Riegl's argument, as I noted above, without citing him.

Smithson's a smart critic. Earlier in the interview with Cummings he says, "I was just kind of interested in the facade of Catholicism." We're left to wonder if he saw the bullshitter in Eliot. Reading him made me remember an interview with Harold Bloom.[214] "Oh, he's a fake about that.... You can't educate people if they don't want to understand the truth about Eliot." I laughed then too.

And yet you see the same reactionary tendency. Watching Smithson and Borges condemn allegory is like watching closeted politicians attack the Gay Menace. Lumping Eisenstein in with mannerism says as much about Smithson's conflicts, and Parker Tyler's, as Eisenstein's: if *Ivan the Terrible* devolves to camp his work is no longer pulled as it once was, equally, and brilliantly, between the two poles of form and representation, and as *camp*, is sending up its own failure. And putting Duchamp with Shakespeare is absurd. It makes Smithson into a moralist who's now chosen the dark side. If the point is that things aren't so simple, then they aren't so simple.

Panofsky and Cassirer have both been criticized as defending a humanism that was unable to deal with irrational desire, and the real world. Defenders of "posthumanism" argue that humanist philosophers up to Cassirer whitewashed the past,[215] and

that Panofsky refused to ascribe *The Flaying of Marsyas* to Titian, because he was unwilling to countenance the depiction of barbarity.[216] I'll talk more about Titian later but for now here's Cassirer.

> If we were to judge the attitude towards life of the Florentine circle mainly by the hymns or by the *canti carnascialeschi* of Lorenzo the Magnificent, we should be badly misled indeed. To be sure, the cult of art and beauty became a cult of this-worldliness and of sensuality; joy in the 'here and now' expressed itself strongly and uninhibitedly. But soon, other notes were added to the expression of this sentiment. The dark shadow of Savonarola was, so to speak, discernible in this circle even before he himself appeared, even before his actual historical influence. The leading minds of the Florentine Academy finally succumbed to Savonarola and bowed before him almost without resistance. That they should do so is understandable only if we pay attention to the ascetic features that were present from the start in the Florentine Academy's view of the world....
>
> If the Platonic Academy had been nothing but a completely retrogressive movement, we could never explain the strong and immediate influence it exerted on all the great Florentines--an influence that even affected the sceptical and cold mind of Machiavelli for a while. It is true that religious and theological interests determined the whole attitude and development of philosophical thought in the Academy. But it is also true that the religious spirit itself entered into a new phase. The intellectual labours of the first half of the Quattrocento, out of which grew a new, 'modern' concept of religion, were not lost on the Florentine Academy. It is certainly difficult to distinguish and follow the individual threads connecting the Platonic Academy to these intellectual labours; but the general, the immediate connection is quite obvious. One important connection between the doctrines of Ficino and Cusanus is apparent in the way they both pose and solve the problem of knowledge. But even more clearly than in these basic logical matters, the connection becomes visible in questions concerning metaphysics and the philosophy of religion. The speculations of Cusanus had established a new relationship between God and the world—a relationship that gave these speculations their distinctive character.[217]

People raised with naïve idealism are having a hard time with its failure. As I said at the beginning, the renaissance humanists weren't optimists but humane pessimists. The word "optimism" was coined by Voltaire, in *Candide.* The renaissance in any strict sense was barbaric; but the world was expanding. At the turn of the 20th century things were teetering. We're back to the difference between Iran and Israel: hope and nihilism. And the introduction to the most recent edition of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* is by Hilton Kramer, founder and editor of *The New Criterion*, named for the magazine founded by Eliot.

Borges

> For all of us, the allegory is an aesthetic error. (My first impulse was to write "the allegory is nothing more than an error of aesthetics," but then I noticed that an allegory had crept into my sentence.)[218]

The problem of allegory is that it can become illustration. It can become an art of the index, Smithson's pointless pointer, like an essay where every statement is a reference to a famous name: authority by citation. A critic who writes about a work to write about himself and his own interests, or who puffs up a work to defend a line is performing the same function, cutting off the work itself from any serious analysis. These are a craven variant of the art of erudition, of Schoenberg and Babbitt, and the scholastic pedants that "humanistic writers, including Montaigne"— quoting Panofsky again—mocked as having "a head full of 'Barbara and Baroco'",[219] the formal complexity of "possible worlds", and Pound's cantos: complexity for complexity's sake.

I'm going to end this section with another long passage, describing formal, mathematical, and allegorical complexity embodied, as opposed to illustrated, in physical form: pulling away from the fact of materiality, it proclaims its grounding in it.

Dalibor Vesely, on Guarino Guarini's Chapel of the Holy Shroud (*Sacra Sindone*), one of the greatest building of the Baroque.

> The problem of infinity was not new. It was discussed in antiquity, during the Middle Ages, and throughout the Renaissance, but always with reference to the transcendental nature of divine reality. From the human point of view, infinity could be only potentially present in a world that was by definition finite. This situation had changed by the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, when, for the first time, infinity was thought of and experienced as a plausible actuality. The new appreciation of infinity has much to do with developments in mathematics and with the appropriative nature of introverted representation. The contrast between the introverted experience and the indeterminate beyond, which could not be grasped but could no longer be ignored, was probably the main source of the anxiety often expressed in seventeenth-century writing. The contemplation of infinity. Kepler writes "parries with it I don't know what secret hidden horror: indeed one finds oneself wandering in this immensity to which are denied limits and center and therefore all determinate places. His tone comes close to that of the famous fragment by Pascal: "the eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me."
>
> This fear of the infinite is not shared by Guarini, but it finds its place in his commitment to move beyond the uncertainties and ambiguities of the finite, sensible world and in his elaborate effort to come to terms with the problem of infinity. Guarini's commitment was based on a deep faith in the continuity between the finite human world and the infinity of the divine mind. This faith was combined with an awareness,

common in the Aristotelian tradition. that there is not a direct proportion between finite and infinite things or realities. However, if the traditional proportions are raised the level of universal proportions, the ratios can be generated toward infinity. This possibility is a key to Guarini's universal mathematics and metaphysics (*prima philosophia*), which rests on the assumption that geometrical proportion is both generic and universal in relation to all other proportions.

The important step that Guarini takes is to contemplate approaching the problem of infinity through the continuous progression of ratios in asymptotic approximation. As he himself acknowledges, "the boundary

of progression is the end of a series to which no progression can approach, even if it is contained in infinity[,]... but it approaches it in perpetuity." The progression of ratios to infinity closely corresponds to the principle of diminishing proportions in Renaissance perspective. But there is an important difference: the shift from the human to the divine point of view and from perspective to projection. This shift is readily apparent in the discussion of proportions in the *Euclides adauctus*, which leads to a consideration of the problem of continuity and culminates in the interpretation of the continuous geometrical proportion of surfaces and their projective relationships. Surface plays a unique role in Guarini's thinking because it is continuous and infinite, and generates geometrical proportions by its very nature--that is, by being a surface. This may explain why Guarini uses the planimetric figure of the hexagon as a primary element in the construction of the Sindone dome. The pyramidal stacking of the hexagons follows the rule of gnomonic difference, which is a proportional difference between individual figures….

The Trinitarian meaning of the triangle is preserved in its transformation into a hexagon. as well as in the twelve rays of the sun achieved by the hexagon's rotation. But the hexagon in the dome is open to more than one interpretation. We can see its meaning as a fulfillment of the primary theme of the chapel, the Passion culminating as a resurrection on the first day of the new creation (the day of sun) in other words, as a new expression of the cosmogonic role and meaning of light in the six days of creation (hexaemeron). Supporting this interpretation is another rather interesting, important fact: the dome is composed of six hexagons (six steps in the journey toward the sun[.][220]

SIX

Smithson on the films of Hollis Frampton

> After the "structural film" there is the sprawl of entropy. The monad of cinematic limits spills out into a state of stupefaction. We are faced with inventories of limbo.[221]

From objects to moving images, the experimental films that share the world of minimalism and postminimalism, and the period of transition when the intellectuals and the literate bourgeois who spent time talking about art began to switch their allegiance to film, when the class of people who once made causal references to Pollock and de Kooning, and then to Kubrick, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Antonioni and Godard, were talking about Bertolucci and Coppola and Woody Allen but now much less about "art". And as always I'm talking more about America than Europe, or even the rest of the world, where aristocratic and democratic forms and beliefs exist openly and side by side, where philosophy is a form of intellectual literature. My focus in all of this has been the specific forms of Anglo-American and specifically American pedantry that dreams of and ends of producing a world of binaries, of high and low, of rationalism and anti-rationalism, of intellectual and anti-intellectual, of science as opposed to art, of moralism that can only be opposed, or so it's argued, by anarchy, the vulgar, the common.

Hollis Frampton was a friend of Andre and Stella; he followed all the rules of Greenbergian or Borgesian, Modernism and applied them to film. Remember my mother's insistence–and she was only half a decade years older than any of them–that's Eliot's poetry was "about language". Frampton brought that understanding of art to a formalism supposedly bereft of meaning beyond the structure itself, so therefore as timeless as equations. But at this point craft has become concept, and the need for the impersonal, mimesis couched in evasion, has left us an art moving closer and closer to symptom: the manifestation and celebration of a reflex. Frampton's films are as academic as the paintings of the Salon, but also closer to early programmatic Wittgenstein.

Frampton was born in Ohio; he was the son of a coal miner. He rarely spoke when he was young and described himself as having been "borderline autistic"[222]. He was put in remedial education classes but read voraciously. At age 9 tests showed him at the mental age of an 18 year old and he was put in advanced classes. At 15 he wrote himself an application to Phillips Academy Andover, and was accepted at full scholarship. That's where he met Andre and Stella. He didn't graduate because he failed one American History course, either on purpose or because he lost a bet.[223] His Harvard scholarship was pulled. He moved back to Ohio and enrolled at Western Reserve (now Case Western). "I allowed myself

to be admitted on the condition, which indeed I have in writing, that I not be required to take any required courses if I felt them irrelevant. They agreed to that—I don't know why."

> Studies primarily Latin and Greek, also German, French, Russian, Sanskrit, Chinese, mathematics. Briefly has radio program at Oberlin College. Works for Republic Steel, then Jones and Laughlin Steel Company (in the open hearth). Considers himself a poet "...tentatively." Studies at the Institute of Design, Chicago, in summers of 1955 and 1956, and "sneaks" into lectures in classical Chinese at the University of Chicago. Becomes interested in literary generation of the 1880s. Begins correspondence with Ezra Pound in 1956. [224]

After 3 and a half years and 135 hours of credits, but missing requirements, he left without graduating. In 1957 he moved to Washington to be near Pound. "I visited Pound nearly every day during this time, while he was finishing that part of his *Cantos* called Section: Rock-Drill [85-95], commencing work on *Thrones* —and had undertaken, for the benefit of his visitors to read aloud . . . and to annotate, orally, the entirety of the epic poem. Thus I became privy to a most meaningful exposition of the poetic process by an authentic member of the "generation of the '80s." At the same time. I came to understand that I was not a poet. "[225]

J. Hoberman calls Frampton's film-cycle *Hapax Legomena* "crypto-autobiographical". At the same time he quotes Frampton referring to himself as a "a spectator of mathematics like others are spectators of soccer or pornography"[226] , again the same dichotomy of incorporeal formalism and base physicality. In 1977 responding to an interviewer in who referred to him being born "around here", in Boston, Frampton said, "No. I was programmed around here…. I was generated in Ohio" [227]

Zorn's Lemma begins with a black screen and a woman's voiceover, an unprofessional reading of the 24 couplets (without I or U, following custom derived from Latin,) of *The Bay State Primer*, from 1800.

> In *Adam*'s Fall/ We sinned all.
> Thy Life to Mend/ God's *Book* Attend.
> The *Cat* doth play/ And after slay.
> A *Dog* will bite/ A Thief at night.
> An *Eagle's* flight/ Is Out of sight.
> The Idle *Fool*/ Is Whipt at School.

The second section begins with the a montage, each shot lasting one second, -24 frames- of close-up images of the 24 letters of the Roman alphabet (without J or V- reversing/mirroring the above) in order, each formed by typing into a sheet

of tin foil. At the last letter the alphabet begins again, this time formed by footage of signs and lettering on Manhattan streets, again each for one second –24 frames. The first shot is a hand holding up a large plastic letter A. Shots continue to loop through the alphabet, the photographs for each letter changing with every repeat. Some of the shots are stable, some hand held, shaky, with camera motion. Gradually over repeated loops the words are replaced with wordless images. The first four substitutions are a bonfire at night (X), reversed footage of waves breaking on a beach (Z) a tracking shot of cattails in the wind (Y) steam from a street vent (Q), for the four classical elements: fire, water, earth and air. Some of the substituted shots are repeated on each loop, some, peeling and eating a tangerine, changing a tire, continue on each loop where they'd had left off. The second section ends when all the words have been replaced images, which coincides as well with the endings of the continuing shots.

The final section begins with an empty shot of a winter landscape with a tree line in the distance. A man and a woman walking with a dog pass the camera from behind and begin to move out into the distance. Six female voices in succession recite individual words, timed by a metronome at one second each, from a section of "On Light, or the Ingression of Forms", by Robert Grosseteste, a 13th century English prelate and scholastic philosopher. Frampton used his own translation[228] By the end of the reading, the figures have moved out of sight.

> The first bodily form I judge to be Light. For Light, of itself, diffuses itself in every direction, so that a sphere of Light as great as you please is born instantly from a point of Light.
> But Form cannot abandon Matter because Form is not separable and Matter cannot be emptied of Form. Form is Light itself or the doer of its work and the bringer of dimensions into Matter. But Light is of a more noble and more excellent essence than all bodily things.
> Since Light, which is the first Form created in first Matter, could not abandon Matter, in the beginning of Time it drew out Matter along with itself into a mass as great as the fabric of the world.
> When the first sphere has been completed in this way, it spreads out its daylight from every part of itself to the center of the whole. This daylight, in its passage, does not divide the body through which it passes, but assembles and disperses it. And this assembling which disperses proceeded in order, until the nine celestial spheres were perfected.
> Matter for the four Elements was assembled within the ninth sphere, which is the sphere of the moon. The ninth sphere, engendering daylight from itself, and assembling the Mass within itself, has brought forth Fire.
> Fire engendering Light has brought forth Air.
> Air engendering from itself a bodily spirit has brought forth Water and Earth….

> In *Zorn's Lemma* Frampton followed the tactics of his two elected literary masters Jorge Luis Borges and Ezra Pound. From Borges he learned the art of labyrinthine construction and the dialectic of presenting and obliterating the self. Following Pound, Frampton has incorporated in the end of his film a crucial indirect allusion; it is to the paradox of *Arnulf Rainer*'s reduction.* In Grosseteste's essay, materiality is the final dissolution, or the point of weakest articulation, of pure light. But in the graphic cinema that vector is reversed. In the quest for sheer materiality – for an image that would be, and not simply represent – the artist seeks endless refinement of light itself. As the choral text moves from Neo-Platonic source-light to the grosser impurities of objective reality, Frampton slowly opens the shutter, washing out his snowscape into the untinted whiteness of the screen.[229]

Zorn's Lemma manifests the same paradox we've seen before, depending of who we're talking about, of autism and the closet: the expressive and insistent denial of expression, of the self. Wanda Bershen, writing in Artforum in 1971, fittingly considering the date, sees this anti-Humanism as liberating.

> Having established itself as belonging to the generic category of "film," Zorns Lemma proceeds to totally ignore normal movie conventions. Not only does the structure lie bare, unclothed by any vestige of "content," but that structure is self-constructed. The film maker has provided a set of conditions and allowed them simply to take their course as if programmed by a calculating machine. A 24-letter alphabet at 24 f.p.s. provides the entire structural frame of the movie. The implication here, of course is that the artist is less "responsible" than usual for his work. Rather than an inventor or "maker" he is a kind of "engineer," a director of forces which already exist in his world.
>
> The 24-letter alphabet is man-made, while the 24-f.p.s. film speed is a requirement of film machinery. Philosophically this suggests a considerably less egocentric concept of the artist than has prevailed even in the earlier decades of our own century. And if the artist is not permitted full control of his creation, neither is the audience. Room is left for real interaction, for real discourse, in "real time" between the spectator and the thing observed. A work like Zorn's Lemma is incomplete without the viewer's participation. If the film is indeed a model for the general category of film-viewing, that fact has broad implications. What does it mean for an event to be "complete"? Does not each interaction of each viewer with each event (or object) produce a unique situation? Is not experience (and therefore knowledge) of every sort finally subjective, and personal, and beyond a certain point, incommunicable?[230]

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* *Arnulf Rainer*. 1960 film by the Austrian filmmaker Peter Kubelka, made up of cuts between black and white leader with changes so small, down to one or two frames, that the viewer is unable to register them. It's a film about film, made to be read about, and 'understood' but not experienced.

Rather than an inventor or "maker" he is a kind of "engineer," a director of forces which already exist in his world. Remember Daston and Galison. This is also a twist on Bourdieu's mocking of the "singularity of experience" in art, since it "elaborates no laws"[231], and therefore is merely a function of banal entertainment. And now we have an argument that rules and laws *promote* a singularity of experience because there is no author. Bourdieu's bureaucratic dehumanization becomes a celebration of atomization.

Allen S. Weiss, writing in *October* in 1985 is both more aware of the conflicts and more committed to radical esotericism, so even more committed to erudite denial. I'll begin where he does.

> Copulation and mirrors are abominable. For
> one of those gnostics, the visible universe was
> an illusion or (more Precisely) a sophism.
> Mirrors and fatherhood are abominable
> because they multiply and disseminate that
> universe.
> —Jorge Luis Borges
>
> I do not believe there is such a thing as a
> perfect appearance. Even an epiphany is not
> in the theological sense a perfect appearance.
> Appearance itself is imperfect,
> — Hollis Frampton
>
> To the abominations of copulation and mirrors one might add cinema. In a world where error, as Nietzsche teaches us, is the very precondition of thought, truth and beauty are always proximate to sophism and illusion, Cinema disposes of yet another set of codes which are available for ideological misappropriation. This disposition by means of seriality, exemplification, listing, and cataloguing operates within the limits of two antithetical functions. Either such listing is a subversive activity, destroying all taxonomic schemes, or lists serve as formal Imperatives, constituting structures and systems. In the former case, a hermeneutic schema entails a de-centering and de-totalizing logic of events, operating according to the aleatory conditions of' existence. In the latter, a hermeneutics entails a centering and totalizing logic of structures and formal systems, constituting a determinate axiomatics.
>
> Hollis Frampton's film *Zorn's Lemma* is structured according to a twofold axiomatic system. The first axiom is indicated by the film's title, which refers to mathematical set theory: "Zorn's lemma. The maximal

principle: If T is partially ordered and each linearly ordered subset has an upper bound in T, then T contains at least one maximal element." The second axiom derives from the mystical philosophy expounded by Robert Grosseteste in On Light, or the Ingression of Forms, which offers a combination of neo-Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy to express a theology, ontology, and cosmology of light. A section of this text is read in the third part of the film.

These two axioms are already figured within the text recited in the first part of the film, the eighteenth-century Massachusetts elementary school lesson book called *The Bay State Primer*. The production of the sets and subsets in the second part of the film is determined by a system of substitutions and progressions ordered by the (abridged) twenty-four-letter alphabet of the English language used in the primer. The mathematical axiom is operative in the alphabetical order of the text; the theological axiom is operative in the biblical content of the text. Thus the twofold axiomatic system is articulated according to a double coding: structural and ontological. [232]

Here he adds a footnote

> Thus Annette Michelson is correct to claim that in this film Frampton "translated the contradistinctions between lyric and analytic modes" (Annette Michelson, "About Snow," *October*, no, 8 [Spring 19791, p, 116), Here, the lyrical is an expression of the mystical praise of God, a poetic mode of knowledge; the analytic is an expression of the mathematization of sign systems, a "scientific" mode of knowledge. Both trades are expressed by Grosseteste's onto-theoÎogy,

All of this once again is reactionary, as intellectualism and as art. Frampton exhibits a high-brow variant of Mapplethorpe's self-destruction, like Borges through asceticism rather than orgasm, but still it's Arendt's *Vita Contemplativa* via nihilism and scholastic philosophy old and new, because the alternative, mere subjectivity, can never be and thus opposes *truth*. Frampton speaks about mathematics and irony, but the ending of *Zorn's Lemma* is sadness. "He aspired to recognition as a 'stoic comedian'"[233] The phrase comes from Hugh Kenner, writing about Flaubert, Joyce, and Beckett. And this from Kenner's 1962 article, "Art in a Closed Field"

> Let me put this as flatly as possible: the dominant intellectual analogy of the present age is drawn not from biology, not from psychology (though these are sciences we are knowing about), but from general number theory.[234]

Frampton's model was Flaubert, but again it was Flaubert's statements, the Flaubert of Bourdieu and pretensions to science,

not the novels themselves. Frampton's art aspires to the art of "Modernism" the art overshadowed by positivism, an art of impotence and failure.

The weakness in Frampton's films is the gap between the earnestness of his desire to make an art without subtext, and the subtext's insistent presence. The amateurish 'plainness' of the technique, from camera to voiceovers, combined with the rigor of the ideas, mean that the sadness is left to leak in around the edges. And it's almost shocking to me how much the sadness, the sense of loss, is ignored by critics. His hyper-rationality combined with his intellectualism –two distinct things– combine to undermine whatever instincts he had that might have allowed his subtexts have free rein, the advantage artists have by following their craft more than intellect so that their contradictions are allowed to flower. Being an ironic control freak doesn't make you any less a control freak. As Callie Angell said to me about Warhol, "People say Andy said he was a machine, but he didn't. He said he *wanted to be a machine*, and that's not the same thing at all." Warhol had a brilliant eye. His technique was mechanical, but the humanity of the people in his films pours out almost uncontrollably. Frampton's eye was mechanical. He made a scholastic art of citation, committed as idea, not as art. The art is there, but he undermines it undermining rather than using own subjectivity, needing to leave himself an out, as a conceptualist and critic. He was a brilliant man, with an IQ tested as a child at 187[235], and his fits the model of early 20th century allusive representation, of Eliot et al. to a T. He did everything to fit the bill, and not strategically. The falling out with Pound came with an argument over the color of Aphrodite's hair.[236] This could read as the debate of mad poets out of *The Horse's Mouth*, but it seems closer to debates among players of Dungeons and Dragons over Cthulhu.

Frampton wasn't like Borges; at heart he was earnest, hidden behind a wall of erudition. His last completed work was his most direct. The text below is from *Gloria!*, words scrolling up a computer screen as he typed.

> These propositions are offered numerically, in the order in which they presented themselves to me; and also alphabetically, according to the present state of my belief.
>
> 1. That we belonged to the same kinship group, sharing a tie of blood. [A]
> 2. That others belonged to the same kinship group, and partook of that tie. [Y]
> 3. That she kept pigs in the house, but never more than one at a time. Each such pig wore a green baize tinker's cap. [A]
> 4. That she convinced me, gradually, that the first person singular pronoun was, after all, grammatically feasible. [E]
> 5. That she was obese. [C]
> 6. That she taught me to read. [A]
> 7. That she read to me, when I was three years old, and for purposes of her own, William Shakespeare's "The Tempest". She admonished me for liking Caliban best. [B]
> 8. That she gave me her teeth, when she had them pulled, to play with. [A]

9. That she was nine times brought to bed with child, and for the last time in her fifty-fifth year, bearing on that occasion stillborn twin sons. No male child was born alive, but four daughters survive. [B]
10. That my mother, her eldest daughter, was born in her sixteenth year. [D]
11. That she was married on Christmas Day, 1909, a few weeks after her thirteenth birthday. [A]
12. That her connoisseurship of the erotic in the vegetable world was unerring. [A]
13. That she was a native of Tyler County, West Virginia, who never knew the exact year of her own birth till she was past sixty. [A]
14. That I deliberately perpetuate her speech, but have only fragmentary recollection of her pronunciation. [H]
15. That she remembered, to the last, a tune played at her wedding party by two young Irish coalminers who had brought guitar and pipes. She said it sounded like quacking ducks; she thought it was called "Lady Bonaparte". [A]
16. That her last request was for a bushel basket full of empty quart measures. [C]

This work, in its entirety, is given in loving memory of Fanny Elizabeth Catlett Cross, my maternal grandmother, who was born on November 6, 1896, and who died on November 24, 1973.

It's a deeply sad film, the sentences scrolling up like the words of a melancholy computer: the memories of Kubrick's HAL. The text is "bracketed by quotations" as Sitney describes them with unnecessary detail, of "two films from the Paper Print Collection of the Library of Congress", though unnamed by Frampton: *Murphy's Wake*, and *A Wake in Hell's Kitchen,* both from 1903, short silent comedies about dead men who aren't so dead after all and have fun at their own funerals at the expense of the mourners. Frampton's film is silent until the end of the 16 propositions, after which over the empty green screen we hear "an auditory quotation of 'Lady Bonaparte,' an Irish gig [sic]". In fact we hear the entire song, played by Finbar Furey. Then the second silent film cuts in, ending with the deceased, having scared off the last of his friends, left to dance and drink from an abandoned bottle of whisky. The film cuts to black over which the typing begins again, the last sentence not rising off the screen like the previous texts but only to the top, then fading to black.

4. That she convinced me, gradually, that the first-person singular pronoun was, after all, grammatically feasible. [E]

She helped him say "I". She helped him to learn to accept a self, a subjectivity, what it means to be human.

It's a beautiful film, but a small one. To say that it's more is to buy into a lie of a positivist art, an art of statements, and the lies that Frampton told himself and that his work undermines, but not strongly enough.

There are other examples both more extreme than Frampton's, and less. Paul Sharits' *T,O,U,C,H,N,G* restages Duchamp's

demispheres and *Anemic Cinema*, as desperation. The flickering image of a man with his tongue sticking out between the blades of a pair of scissors is such an obvious image of castration that it renders anything else secondary. Add to that the voice repeating the word "destroy-destroy-destroy-destroy…" –the auditory equivalent of a flicker– and you get an art of symptom described by the artist and appreciative critics as "structuralism".

> This has nothing to do with "pleasing an audience" – I mean to say that in my cinema flashes of projected light initiate neural transmission as much as they are analogues of such transmission systems and that the human retina is as much a "movie screen" as is the screen proper. At the risk of sounding immodest, by re-examining the basic mechanisms of motion pictures and by making these fundamentals explicitly concrete, I am working toward a completely new conception of cinema. Traditionally, "abstract films," because they are extensions of the aesthetics and pictorial principles of painting or are simply demonstrations of optics, are no more cinematic than narrative-dramatic films which squeeze literature and theatre onto a two-dimensional screen. I wish to abandon imitation and illusion and enter directly into the higher drama of: celluloid, two-dimensional strips; individual rectangular frames; the nature of sprockets and emulsion; projector operations; the three-dimensional light beam; environmental illumination; the two-dimensional reflective screen surface; the retinal screen; optic nerve and individual psycho-physical subjectivities and consciousness. In this cinematic drama, light is energy rather than a tool for the representation of non-filmic objects, shapes and textures. Given the fact of retinal inertia and the flickering shutter mechanism of film projection, one may generate virtual forms, create actual motion (rather than illustrate it), build actual color-space (rather than picture it), and be involved in actual time (immediate presence).[237]

This is the denial of representation in the presence of representation in its most blunt form. It's not the elision and denial of Eliot or James; it's *exhibitionism* and denial, more absurd than the earnest description of Mapplethorpe photographs, if only because Mapplethorpe himself didn't write them. *T,O,U,C,H,N,G, like* so much 20th century art –Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, like all philosophy is the theological literature of rationalism – is about the desire and refusal of contact, wanting and refusing to be touched. It didn't shock me or offend me the first time I saw it. I saw the antecedents. I'd never go out of my way to argue that it was 'bad'. But I was shocked to hear the film described as formal and not pathology and ritual.

> …Paul went to the piano and he sat down at the piano and he had a wine glass and he was out of his mind and he beat the wine glass on the piano and then he beat his hands on the glass until he was just bleeding and numb and dizzy. He started to get up and I happened to be at his elbow and I said "Whoa, whoa, Paul, wait, whoa wait a minute," because he was gushing blood everywhere, and I said, "Is anyone a doctor here? Is anyone a doctor?" And the place was completely packed shoulder to shoulder at this party, so one of the people near by was a doctor. Paul was just in a daze and I said, "Look at this—is this life-threatening?" And he said, "No, it's not life-threatening, it's O.K.," and I said "Paul, go for it, just hold your hands up and walk around." And Paul went around bleeding out of his hands with his hands held in front of him,

> almost like Frankenstein and created a swath of horror in front of him. It was a very startling moment, and there were other episodes that people will happily relate to you, in which Paul wrecks a car or climbs up on top of a roof and drops off and breaks his this or that. Paul went through a series of things where he acted out and finally what I began to notice about these things is that Paul would never hurt anybody else. He may have once or twice actually done something that was importune, but only secondarily, and it was mainly something that hurt Paul somehow, and always in a very flamboyant situation. He liked to live dangerously. Paul liked life. He seemed like he needed this kind of way of doing things. He really did.
>
> He lived on a special plane somehow that normal people can't touch.[238]

Sharits' behavior is less unnerving than the equally pathological response of his friend and fellow avant-gardist Tony Conrad. This is the hip, underground, American Modernist version of the American straight-world, Time-Life–CBS view of Warhol as a celebrant of style. But glamour is vanity. Warhol's *Jackies* and *Marilyns*, *Disasters* and *Electric Chairs,* his films with his *Superstars* were all equally memento mori. He watched people who were out of control and let them be, as Callie Angell put it[*], out of a Catholic understanding of free will, while Conrad is a voyeur blind to his own desires. "Paul, go for it, just hold your hands up and walk around." A medical professional would call it enabling. But Hawthorne and Lawrence, and Tarantino, Spielberg and Pynchon, novelists and filmmakers, are not 'artists', and Frampton and Sharits are. Their work is shown only in the context of the contemporary art world as defined by Arthur Danto, which American philosophy is optimistic.

The best recent parallel to Sharits is Aaron Swartz, the narcissist-hero-naïf of the tech world. Here's Swartz, eulogized by Rick Perstein.

> I remember a creature who seemed at first almost to be made up of pure data, disembodied—a millionaire, I had to have guessed, given his early success building a company sold to Condé Nast, but one who seemed to live on other people's couches. (Am I misremembering that someone told me he crashed in his apartment for a while, curling up to sleep under a sink?)
> Only slowly, it seems, did he come to learn that he possessed a body.[239]

This is the geek utopianism that connects Silicon Valley to The Grateful Dead, through John Perry Barlow, lyricist, "internet philosopher" co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and author of the absurd but still celebrated "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace". Technocrats will see connections to the otherworldliness of Erdős and Gödel, without noting that the latter starved himself to death.

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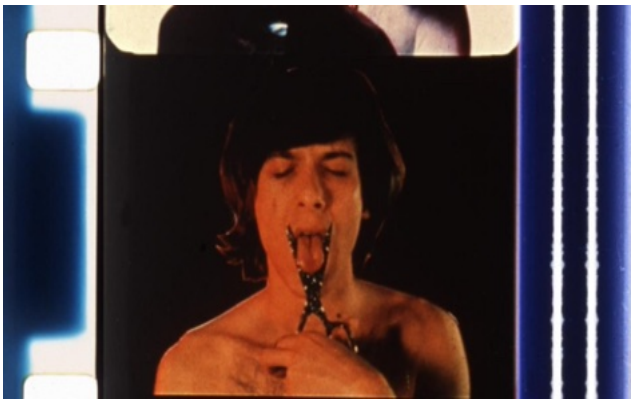
[*] Conversation with the author

The antidote to the hagiography of Swartz was written by Larissa MacFarquhar for *The New Yorker*, with the title "Requiem for a Dream".[240] It's appropriate to wonder how many of his fans would get the reference. Perlstein is a historian, and



historians at least should recognize the connection between self-abnegation and humility and the self-annihilation of self-hatred and self-love: of being *too good for this world*. Conrad made the first of his flicker films with inspiration from Jack Smith and Mario Montez while reading William Burroughs, his "structural" "experiments" as inseparable from the demimonde as the Bauhaus was from Brecht. But he's oblivious. The experience that removed finally my last innocent attachment to conceptualism –to ideas as apart from acts– was reading Pynchon's depiction of mass suicide, first by the Herero in Südwest as an act of humane refusal to be ruled, and then by the Schwarzkommando, as the ultimate fascist end. It was right there in black and white: the obliteration of the binary. I laughed out loud. Again: the mix of idealism and narrative that isn't openly and honestly conservative, is openly or secretly reactionary.

It's telling that Michael Fried makes an exception for film, which he refers as "the movies", ignoring the avant-garde entirely.

> It is the overcoming of theatre that modernist sensibility finds most exalting and that it experiences as the hallmark of high art in our time. There is, however, one art that, by its very nature, *escapes* theatre entirely—the movies.* This helps explain why movies in general, including frankly appalling ones, are acceptable to modernist sensibility whereas all but the most successful painting, sculpture, music, and poetry is not. Because cinema escapes theatre— automatically, as it were—it provides a welcome and absorbing refuge to sensibilities at war with theatre and theatricality. At the same time, the automatic, guaranteed character of the refuge—more accurately, the fact that what is provided is a refuge from theatre and not a triumph over it, absorption not conviction—means that the cinema, even at its most experimental, is not a modernist art.
>
> *Exactly how the movies escape theatre is a beautiful question, and there is no doubt but that a phenomenology of the cinema that concentrated on the similarities and differences between it and the theatre—e.g., that in the movies the actors are mot physically present, the film itself is projected away from us, the screen is mot experienced as a kind of object existing, so to speak, in a specific physical relation to us, etc. –would be extremely rewarding. Cavell, again, has called attention, in conversation, to the sort of remembering that goes into giving an account of a movie, and more generally to the nature of the difficulties that are involved in giving such an account.[241]

The footnote is taken from the essay as published in *Artforum* and later in Battcock's anthology. Reprinted in 1998, *beautiful* is replaced with *difficult*; *rewarding* has been stripped on its modifier, and the last sentence with the reference to Cavell and memory has been removed.[242]

The last paragraph

> This essay will be read as an attack on certain artists (and critics) and as a defense of others. And of course it is true that the desire to distinguish between what is to me the authentic art of our time and other work, which, whatever the dedication, passion, and intelligence of its creators, seems to me to share certain characteristics associated here with the concepts of literalism and theatre,' has largely motivated what I have written. In these last sentences, how ever, I want to call attention to the utter pervasiveness—the virtual universality—of the sensibility or mode of being that I have characterized as corrupted or perverted by theatre. We are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace.

The final sentence almost makes me laugh… Sharits' "immediate presence".

—

Anti-narrative film, going against the central fact of film itself, couldn't be anything but pedantic, could only go against narrative as philosophy opposes literature, but it's impossible to make an anti-narrative theater. Dance is formal, but so is music, and musical ekphrasis is modern. Robert Wilson tried to square the circle, as Yvonne Rainer did, and like her failed, and his work describes the failure This is made more complex by the fact his first experience with performance, as a teenager, as therapy for a speech disorder, was the beginning of his move away from his childhood isolation, the autistic absolute, to the world of multiplicity and subjectivity, and subjectivities (the plural) as a self among others. His theater charts a course that began as a pantomime of Egyptian relief as described by Gombrich, of images that "weave a spell to enforce eternity", to operas by Verdi and Puccini, Euripides and the Comédie-Française.

Wilson is the creator of the greatest of the intermedios of the late 20th century, a "theater of images". Stefan Brecht called it a "theater of visions", again part of a history of modern mimetic art supposedly separate from or against representational authority, the formalisms of Duchamp and Borges and Robbe-Grillet, the elisions of Eliot and James, through the decadence of Huysmans, the aestheticism of Pater, etc. As I've said, this isn't modernism of an ideal, but of denial. Interestingly by this point, the denial wasn't always necessary. No one has ever seen Georges Perec's literary puzzles as conceptualism absent their role in turning tragic experience into melancholic art. But still the change of perception in artist and audience is slow.

John Rockwell, in 1984

> My own first experience of Wilson's work came with *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* of 1973. Fortunately for my role here of chronicler, this amounted to a compendium of Wilson works dating back to 1969: *The King of Spain*, *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* and *Deafman Glance*. *Stalin* wasn't just a compendium. There was new material, and some of the effects were different (a Wilson favorite, a set of giant cat's legs that suddenly and silently strode in and out of the proscenium arch, was missing, for instance).
>
> This twelve-hour spectacle was the apex of Wilson's first phase and a still-unequalled experience in my own life in the theater. The *religious* intensity of those stage-pictures will remain in my mind forever, as in the scene in which shadowy apes emerged through a forest of trees carrying apples, then watched in awe as the apples mysteriously ascended into the flies (on wires, of course, but even the visible explanation of the miracle seemed miraculous), just as an elegant human couple in 18th century formal dress emerged from the wings, the woman carrying a white parasol that was on fire.
>
> But there were still other images going on while what I have just described was happening. and this small nexus of images was just one short moment in an evening full of thousands just as potent. And this description can't begin to convey the lyrical flow of the twelve hours, the mystical clarity with which most of the audience stayed awake and perceived the stage-wonders, and the sweet sadness when one realized that one was seeing something that could never be experienced again, by anybody.[243]

The clearest writer on Wilson was Jill Johnston, in one article from 1986. I referred to it in the piece I published a year later. She describes things that by that this point have become hidden in plain sight*:* Theater is narrative and mimetic, but *art* is *formal*, and Wilson was treated an *artist*.

> Just a cursory reading of the literature about Robert Wilson's work, along with remarks by Wilson himself, reveals one striking, ever repeated, disclaimer: he doesn't mean anything by it. I use that phrase to invoke the cliché whereby people apologize for something they did, hoping they have not offended: "I didn't mean anything by it."[244]

She riffs on Sontag. "I had not accepted his work at 'face value.' I was not 'against interpretation.' 1 had failed to choose or construe my own meanings, The "pure, untranslatable, sensuous immediacy of [the] images" had left me cold."

Wilson is another man who had an awkward unhappy childhood. Until he was 17 he had great difficulty speaking. He had a stutter. He was cured not by a speech therapist but by a dance teacher and therapist who taught him how to relax, to move

slowly. But his imagination remained directed inward. "…spending his time alone and staying up all night in his room on his various 'projects'—stuffing the opening between door and floor to hide the light." He created theater for an audience of one. Many writer refer to Louis Aragon's open letter to the dead André Breton after seeing the Paris production of *Deafman Glance,* but Johnston points readers to a "charming and sad passage", a sadness that Aragon himself seems to want to ignore.

> If I wanted to, how could I? It's impossible, even calling on the help of Raymond Roussel and Lewis Carroll, to give an idea, if I absolutely wanted to find some precedent for this spectacle, I'd have to transcribe a text, Andre, which you used once. It's a passage from *My Life*, by Jerome Cardan, in which the great mathematician tells about his childhood dreams, when his father forced him to stay in bed until the third hour of the day and he perceived some very little lambs making a semi-circle from the right corner of his bed only to disappear on the left. "But," said Cardan, "I had time to notice cities, horses, animals, horses with their cavaliers, grass, trees, musical instruments, theatres, individuals of different aspects dressed in strange clothes, but mostly I saw trumpeters; the trumpets seemed to sound, yet I heard nothing. I also noticed soldiers, crowds, forms I'd never seen, prairies, mountains, forests and lots of other things I don't remember any more...".[245]

And of course that world has a single creator and a ruler. Wilson's work begins here. But rather than Borges and his gauchos Wilson's protagonists were children that he saw as like himself, isolated and silent. In Texas and later in New York he worked with children's theater and with children with brain damage and disabilities, and like his teacher he taught them with motion.

His teacher Byrd Hoffman, had developed a regimen of exercised for brain damaged children. Brecht includes long passages transcriptions, from 1970 (including hmm's and aa-aah's) and Wilson describes one 5 year old he worked with who had almost no spoken language at all. The cells in the language center of his brain were dead. Wilson had the boy repeatedly crawl around the perimeter of the room and through a tunnel Wilson made. The transition from light to dark to light, activity confirming agency, demonstrating categories, recognizing, activating and repurposing brain cells. After 9 months of working with Wilson and others Wilson says the boy had developed a vocabulary almost at age level. Wilson worked at public and private schools, with the NY Board of Education, with disturbed children, with the elderly and terminally ill, in hospitals. Calvin Tomkins interviewed a woman who worked at a hospital who later became a member of Wilson's informal group of performers who described her own amazement at his "ability to get through to aged patients who had not spoken to anyone for months or years."[246] These are people he identified with.

One of the most important influences on his work after Hoffman were the films of Daniel Stern, and his now famous studies of mothers and infants. Stern filmed mothers reaching down to pick up their crying babies and slowed them down in projection, showing the details of the expressions and exchanges unnoticeable in real time. The mothers' immediate reaction is annoyance and the infants' reaction is fear. Watching themselves the mothers were horrified. As Wilson said years later, describing the films: "The body moves faster than the mind, and the body doesn't lie. The body says things that have nothing to do with what the tongue is saying." Wilson and Stern became lifelong friends, and Stern's influence may was stronger than most people realize, in Wilson's move from an anti-theater of stasis to a theater of time.

Wilson's earliest works is fully committed to silent spectacle. *Deafman Glance* at full length is 7 hours of almost total silence; the most famous section is the glacially slow depiction of murder, the reenactment of trauma transposed, overlapping the before and after into the timelessness of an eternal present. It's not "meaningless", but it's also not "formalism" .

> The spectacle, for what else can I call it'? It is neither ballet, nor mime drama, nor opera (although it is perhaps a deaf man's opera, a deaf opera, as if we were at this moment in a world like sixteenth century Italy which had seen Cardan and watched the birth from Caccini to Monteverdi, l'opera serio, baroque of the ear, passing from the vocal counterpart of religious chants to this new form of art, profane in its essence) [247]. . .

Deafman Glance is a collaboration with and a description of the mind of a deaf mute teenage boy. *A Letter to Queen Victoria,* his first piece with sound, was a collaboration with a 14 year old, who had been institutionalized for most of his life. His texts are central to *Einstein on the Beach*.

Wilson seeks out intelligence without labeling it. His sensibility is anti-utilitarian, very much in the tradition of court entertainer, apolitical, so non-threatening to powers that be, but also deeply sensitive in a way that needs protection to flourish, the kind of sensitivity that the greedy have no patience for but that the rich often do. His work is a "non commercial" art Wilson is always happy to remind people that his early projects involved hundreds of volunteers, from factory workers and bus drivers to "people living in townhouses on Park Avenue". Brecht quotes Johnston in a review she wrote of an early Wilson performance in a loft in SoHo in 1968 "The older lady, by the way, was quite fantastic. She said she flew in from Ohio especially for the event. She's a chicken farmer who never left home before." Wilson first met his adopted son, Raymond Andrews, when he saw a cop harassing him on the street and refused to leave. The cop didn't care enough to recognize a 13 year old black boy was a deaf mute. This was a world where the only politics is personal. It's not democratic, but it's also not technocratic. It's fitting that Yves Saint-Laurent's business partner, lover and protector, Pierre Bergé became one of Wilson's life long patrons, when Pierre Cardin brought *Deafman Glance* to Paris after seeing it when Jack Lang brought it the festival at Nancy. And yes that's quite a list. The story is that Bergé sat through the whole 7 hours more than once. French readers were incredulous that an editor for *Elle* could be the author of The *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. I'd be more surprised if the author were American or British.

But Wilson clearly wasn't interested in the progress towards 'normalcy', even though he's followed that route himself, at least a bit. You can watch the change in Wilson, from the 70s and 80s to now, via youtube. It's an absolute transformation, not from unknown to public figure but from android to human. And this fits the change in Wilson's work, from static shadow plays in the eternal present, and repetition, to the tragedies by Verdi and Puccini, *La traviata* and *Madama Butterfly*, and the irony of Euripides.

But the later Johnston article is from 1986 and Johnston notices what others still refused to, at least in this country.

> In Heiner Müller it seems Wilson has found a collaborator as important to him and his work as composer Philip Glass was to him in the '70s—or more significantly, perhaps, his two handicapped friends, even earlier—Raymond Andrews and Christopher Knowles. Müller was born in 1929 in what used to be Saxony to a working class father who was a political activist and small functionary in the Social Democrat Party during the Weimar Republic after World War I. Wilson says Müller has changed his life. In Cambridge, where I saw Wilson for another long evening, sans flowers and candy, he asked me several times enthusiastically what I thought of Müller. Act IV, Scene A, of the CIVIL wars, featuring Frederick the Great in vignettes from his life, contains words by Müller that give Wilson's disabled protagonist an emotional weight and substance he has perhaps never had before.[248]

I've included long passages of text and this is the longest. I think it's worth it to understand the argument, the person making it, and the subject. I'm concerned with all three.

> …Of all Wilson's mythic great men, Frederick the Great may offer the richest parallels to his own background and aspirations. A brief biography of Frederick was included in the Cambridge program for the *CIVIL warS*:
>
> > He despised the despotism of his predecessor, his father, but he imposed it throughout Europe with an iron will.... Frederick's youth was one of constant battle with his father.... Resentfully the boy learned his parade-ground drills, but against his father's will he learned Latin, cultivated his French, and assumed the manners of a dandy. His father abused him publicly, caning him, kicking him, forcing him to kiss his boots, calling him "a cringing coward, so effeminate ... that he can neither ride nor shoot." Frederick learned to play the flute and With his Sister Wilhelmina cultivated a love for plays, operas, and ballets which [his father] considered "godless things increasing the kingdom of the devil,"

In Act IV, Scene A, of *the CIVIL warS* the father/son violence at the heart of Frederick's story is much muted, and as is usual in Wilson's work, really tra
nscended by pictorial splendor. Frederick, who became a great tyrant like his father, is depicted in his glory, posing on his horse; with his cane in dramatic land. or waterscapes; attended by costumed courtiers at his death, etc. One small event clearly represents a father's humiliation of a son. The old man or grandfather knocks over a bunch of blue blocks that the "'child" had been playing with, Heiner Müller's text makes Wilson's father/son theme emotionally vivid. What is all allusion or reference or avoidance in Wilson's own text and imagery, becomes real in the words of Müller and his collaborative sources.

This may be because Müller aggressively or consciously connects his texts with his own father story. In 1958 he wrote that his father, in 1933, was arrested while still in his bed.

> I woke up, the sky outside the window black, noise of voices and footsteps. In the next room books were thrown onto the floor. I heard my father's voice.... Through the crack of the door I watched as a man hit my father in the face. Shivering, the blanket up to my chin, I lay in bed when the door to my room opened. My father was standing in the doorway, behind him the strangers, big, in brown uniforms. . . . I heard him softly my name, I didn't answer. Then my father said: "He is asleep." The door was closed. I heard how they took him away....

Müller has said, "That is my guilt. I pretended I was sleeping. *This really is the first scene of my theatre*" (my italics). His experience of "Fascist brutality" and of his first "treason" in the face of it became the trauma of his life and work Müller's father was eventually released from prison, and father and son became estranged. His text for Wilson's *the CIVIL warS*—spoken by actor No. 6, the bits of his story about his father: hearing him taken away by strangers in the night; later seeing his father through the wire mesh of the prison camp gate; later still, when his father was living in West Berlin and Müller had "defected" to East Berlin, seeing his father on either side of a glass door in a hospital. "We stood, the glass between us, looking at each other." Actor No. l, the "father" (played in Cambridge by a large black man), speaks the first lines in this act, taken from a letter to Frederick from his father, the king:

> Thy headstrong wicked will, which loves not thy father! For if one does all—if one loves one's father over all—then all is done to please him, not only when standing over you but when he turns his back Further• more, thou knowest well I cannot stomach an effeminate fellow without manly inclination, blushing like a girl, who cannot ride nor shoot, and at the same time cuts an awkward figure—hair brushed like a fool's, not properly groomed—and I have reprimanded you a thousand times the subject, but in vain, no improvement seems forthcoming....

The lines are spoken during the first part (of 12) while the family of seven is seated at table.

There are many dinner table scenes throughout Wilson's work. Wilson told me that when he was young his family had "formal" dinners three or four times a week and he would have to wear a coat and tie. Once, when he was about 15 and late for dinner (he says he was always late for everything—certainly he was late for our several appointments), his family was knocking on his door, and he crawled out a window and came in through a back door to a sitting room adjacent to the dining room; he had put a stocking over his head and had a flashlight (relating this, he giggled) shining on his face: "very theatrical." He slowly and carefully opened the door; his father was seated at the other end of the table. Here Wilson yelled, imitating his father's reaction. I asked him what his mother did. He said she turned around and said, 'Oh it's only Bob."

Especially affecting in Act IVI Scene A of *the CIVIL warS* is the part called "Frederick the Great," in which Frederick crawls downstage with his throne-chair on his back while the text of Franz Kafka's famous letter to his father is spoken by seven characters, together and in alternation.

> Very efficient, at least toward me, your never-failing rhetorical means of education: reprimands, threats, sarcasm, sneering and, curiously enough, self-accusation. I don't recall your directly hurling verbal abuse at me. It wasn't necessary; you had so many other means at your disposal. .. . I was almost numbed by it, thinking, of course, it was aimed at me. You even resorted to threatening violence—and it terrified me—for example: "I'll slash you open like a fish."

Wilson told me his father was "afraid to get close" to him. "It was a strange thing to me, Jill…I was a strange creature in the house." A critic [Tomkins] described the 1969 production of The King of Spain ending as the King of Spain "sings a little dirge and rises slowly from his chair grotesque, beastlike ... raising his huge and misshapen puppet head to confront the audience as the curtain falls." comfort In his Kafka letter text for *the CIVIL warS* Wilson incorporates a number of growls, "I (growl) recall your directly hurling verbal abuse (growl) me It wasn't necessary you had (growl) . . . ," and so on.

Wilson's tale of how his father died includes a wonderful, and as it turns out, specifically theatrical, growl. Incidentally, there is a dog in Frederick the Great's story. Part 10 of Act IV is called "Dog's Death," Frederick plays with a dog, and later shoots it. What's more a portion of part 5 calls for actor No. 2, the woman, to growl continuously. In any case, when Wilson was 25 and living briefly at home, he entered a mental hospital, which released him six months later. He'd been wearing a long robe, had let his hair go long, and, whenever his parents spoke to him, he had barked back at them like a dog. There had never been any significant contact between himself and the other family members. His mother, he says, never even touched him until he was leaving for college, when she kissed him on the cheek.

Anyway, Wilson was in Cologne in 1981 while his father was dying. He was about to do a performance to a sold-out theater at the opening of the World Theater Festival. "The mayor was there, the international press and I don't know who all…, and everyone was after me: they were supposed to start at

seven O'clock, the Germans are very punctual, I told them the show wouldn't be ready until nine, there was no way I could finish the technical work. I had five calls that day from Waco, Texas— emergencies, my father was dying of cancer—so finally at about five to nine I called him at the hospital. I said, 'Hi, Dad, how're you doin'?' He answered, 'Oh I'm doin' pretty good; how're you doin?' and I said, 'Well, you know, Dad, I wanna talk to you, but I've gotta do this performance now, I'm in Cologne, Germany,' I said, 'Listen to this.' I turned the loudspeaker up where you could hear the audience, I was in my dressing room (here Wilson made sounds like a pack of growling dogs, imitating the audience; then he laughed). 'I have to go out and perform for that German audience,' I said, 'I'm two hours late: And he said, 'You're two hours late? What the hell are you talkin' to me for. . ' And he died right then."

When Wilson walked out on stage after the phone call, the audience was furious. He just stood there. He'd told the stage manager not to start until he moved. He said to me, "... You know something, Jill? You have to *hate* the audience; if you don't *hate* 'em, you'll never win; you have to hate 'em, you say fuck you…. And I walked out, I just stood there, there were boos, they were throwing things, five minutes, all of it, I just stood there, they can wait an hour. I waited till it was very quiet, then I started." The piece was called *Man in the Raincoat*, and Wilson had slides of his father in it.

Possibly the most traumatic event in Frederick the Great's life was the execution of his friend and lover, Katte, by his father. This event is handled by Wilson and Müller in *the CIVIL warS*, Act IV, Scene A, by means of a curious superimposition of genders and characters. The part is called "Frederick and Katte." Frederick, already played by a female, now plays Phèdre; and Katte, also played by a woman, doubles as Hippolytus, both from Racine's tragedy, *Phèdre*. So the models for the story, two young men, played by women in disguise, are further removed or masked by having one play a woman, and the other play a man, Hippolytus. Müller's betrayal theme (Katte/Hippolytus is sacrificed by Frederick/Phèdre to the wrath of the father, Theseus) dovetails with Wilson's more hidden deception-and-mortification motifs, solved mythically, impersonally, grandiosely, by the hero's accession, accompanied by intimations of the hero's mortality. *a tree is best measured when it is down* is the sub-title, or epigraph, to *the CIVIL warS*. When Wilson was in second grade he was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up and he said the King of Spain. Wilson's father/betrayal theme (i.e., not following in his footsteps) is reflected in his successful rebellion and rise to preeminence in the theater.[249]

That passage has everything in theater.

In the most famous quote from his letter Aragon says that *Deafman Glance* "is not surrealism at all, however easy it is for people to call it that, but it is what we others, who fathered surrealism, what we dreamed it might become after us, beyond us." Surrealism was based on a schoolboyish immaturity and never quite left it behind, the sense of discordant images either tossed-off, random, or crudely illustrational. With the exception of Luis Buñuel it took others to craft a more mature magic realism, grounded enough in the world that it could pull us out of it against our will. Ben Brantley reviewing the production of the Fables of La Fontaine in the New York Times in 2007[250] refers to the "unlikely coming together of Mr. Wilson, a

Texas-born avant-gardist deluxe, and the Comédie-Française", which he nonetheless calls "revelatory", but he misses what the French understood in 1971, that Wilson has always been a classicist.

SEVEN

Minimalism maintained Modernist idealism about itself, as materialism, but not about experience. Fried quotes Greenberg on its beginnings.

> Objecthood has also become an issue for modernist sculpture. This is true despite the fact that sculpture, being three-dimensional, resembles both ordinary objects and literalist work in a way that painting does not. Almost ten years ago Clement Greenberg summed up what he saw as the emergence of a new sculptural 'style,' whose master is undoubtedly David Smith, in the following terms:
>
> > To render substance entirely optical, and form, whether pictorial, sculptural, or architectural, as an integral part of ambient space - this brings anti-illusionism full circle. Instead of the illusion of things, we are now offered the illusion of modalities: namely, that matter is incorporeal, weightless, and exists only optically like a mirage.

Fried tries to pull back from the implications, resisting the change that Smith's work described. Smith's sculptures aren't modernist; they're Baroque. The Minimalists were faced with the dilemma of object-makers in a world where interrelations are more important than things; to be loyal to their calling and limit it to what it could do best, they became puritans. In this context it's important to remember that Puritans were furniture makers.

Panofsky called the Baroque a return to the openness of the Renaissance, but transposed. The Counter-Reformation had faded. Late Mannerism had been seen in the forms and facial expressions of sitters for Bronzino. "It is as though the life of these people had gone frozen, or hides itself behind a motionless mask, melancholy and cool, shy and supercilious at the same time."[251] That imagery of curdled utopianism is ubiquitous now; nihilism is everywhere. But all these things are mixed: openness and authoritarian dystopia, humanism and anti-humanism. The Reagan years were floods of human warmth compared to now; the decadence of the 70s is looked back on with nostalgia as an age of innocence.

In the 80s Stella managed to turn what had devolved into formalist kitsch into something American and grand: the grandeur of the American landscape meeting the formalism of the pedantic American imagination. He rationalized his way over decades and made the result into a baroque amalgam of Walt Disney and Herman Melville, and he made it work.

> *Moby Dick, or the White Whale*.
>
> A hunt. The last great hunt.
>
> For what?
>
> For Moby Dick, the huge white sperm whale: who is old, hoary, monstrous, and swims alone; who is unspeakably terrible in his wrath, having so often been attacked; and snow- white.
>
> Of course he is a symbol.

> Of what?
> I doubt if even Melville knew exactly. That's the best of it.[252]

I quoted Lawrence earlier not just as someone critical of America but as a great critic of American art. His essay on Moby Dick is brilliant

> At first you are put off by the style. It reads like journalism. It seems spurious. You feel Melville is trying to put something over you. It won't do.
>
> And Melville really is a bit sententious: aware of himself, self-conscious, putting something over even himself. But then it's not easy to get into the swing of a piece of deep mysticism when you just set out with dfgdfga story.
>
> Nobody can be more clownish, more clumsy and sententiously in bad taste, than Herman Melville, even in a great book like *Moby Dick*. He preaches and holds forth because he's not sure of himself And he holds forth, often, so amateurishly.
>
> The artist was so *much* greater than the man. The man is rather a tiresome New Englander of the ethical mystical- transcendentalist sort: Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne, etc. So unrelieved, the solemn ass even in humour. So hopelessly *au grand serieux*, you feel like saying: Good God, what does it matter? If life is a tragedy, or a farce, or a disaster, or any- thing else, what do I care! Let life be what it likes. Give me a drink, that's what I want just now.
>
> For my part, life is so many things I don't care what it is. It's not my affair to sum it up. Just now it's a cup of tea. This morning it was wormwood and gall. Hand me the sugar.
>
> One wearies of the *grand serieux*. There's something false about it. And that's Melville. Oh dear, when the solemn ass brays! brays! brays!
>
> But he was a deep, great artist, even if he was rather a sententious man. He was a real American in that he always felt his audience in front of him. But when he ceases to be American, when he forgets all audience, and gives us his sheer apprehension of the world, then he is wonderful, his book commands a stillness in the soul, an awe.

The one mistake is to say that Melville ceases to be an American when he lets go: without the repression you can't have the escape. But I'm not going to go off on an excursus on Stella. He's succeeded in making complex things, bright and dark, pop and sophisticated, with an optimism suited for the era of Reagan and Thatcher. I'm not going to quibble about politics. The baroque is conservative; it's big money without guilt; it ignores things.

The 80s were the beginnings of art's move into commercial culture, not the use of its imagery, but the desire to be part of it. 80s art is full of people who wanted to make movies, who were trying to escape the contempt for film –for pictorialism and for narrative– that they were raised with. It's hard to explain the hold of Greenberg's moralizing puritanism on the imaginations of people in that world, of Greenberg's formalism but also the moralizing and intellectual snobbery of conceptualism. I'll deal in a later section with the artists from what's now called "The Pictures Generation", artists torn between jealousy and snobbish contempt for film, a few of whom later after they were successful as artists tried and bombed in Hollywood. Stella found a way out. In 1983 he was asked to deliver the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard. His subject was Caravaggio and the future of painting. *Working Space*[253] is a testament to the results of years of rationalization and slow transformation. Stella the fundamentalist worked through all the logical arguments he'd grown up with and while still claiming the same faith, he ended up a liberal. If Stella were a brilliant writer it would be a brilliant book. But Stella is one of the most important artists of the post war era; the book is ancillary, doing awkwardly what the work describes brilliantly.

Deleuze claimed that philosophers create concepts. They don't. To repeat what I wrote above: "By the time anything becomes known as an *idea*, it's been around for a while. *Concepts* come late to the game. Sensibilities predate their clear articulation." Nihilism came with Modernism. De Sade was a creature of the Enlightenment, exhibiting a negative idealism that scoffed at but couldn't escape mirroring utopian claptrap: to rationalists the first answer to rationalism is irrationalism. But then slowly they begin to adapt. From *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production*, by the architectural historian Dalibor Vesely.

> The critical turning point in the formation of modern aesthetics was the contribution of Leibniz, who opposed the Cartesian autonomy of clear and distinct ideas that deprived human senses of any claim to understanding and truth. He firmly believed that our senses do, in their own way, reveal the nature and truth of the world. Unlike ideas, however, the senses are not clear and distinct but only clear and confused, and for that reason inferior. Somewhat poetically he compares them to the murmur of the sea:
>
> "Although our senses relate to everything, it is not possible for our soul to attend to all individually, and that is why our confused sensations are the result of a variety, altogether infinite, of perceptions. It is almost like the confused murmur heard by those approaching the shores of the sea that arises from the accumulation of the reverberations of the innumerable waves." Leibniz's understanding of the senses is still based on the integrity of the scholastic world in which the sensible or visible is a manifestation of the universal order. This manifestation is also our main encounter with beauty, in which the perfection of the order is revealed. What is new in Leibniz is the shift toward individualizing such experiences, which coincides with his notion of the individual soul as monad. As he sees it,
>
> > the beauty of the universe could be learned in each soul, could one unravel all its folds which develop perceptibly only with time. But as each distinct perception of the soul includes an infinity of confused perceptions which embrace all the universe, the soul itself does not know the things which

> it perceives, except in so far as it has perceptions of them which are distinct and heightened and it has perceptions in proportion to its distinct form. Each soul knows the infinite, knows everything, but confusedly.
>
> Such confusion arose, Leibniz and his contemporaries thought, because perceptions could not account for their own reason, because their origins and meaning remained hidden. For Leibniz himself and others who believed in providence, this obscurity was not a significant problem, because the unknown, inexplicable, and mysterious was seen as part of the divine plan of things. However, for those who believed in the transparency of the world, in reason, the inexplicable was very troubling. It was difficult to accept that whole areas of reality, such as works of art or the landscape, stirred strong feelings and a sense of beauty that could not be ignored yet could not be explained. This experience was described already in the seventeenth century as the "*je ne sais quoi*—I know not what."
>
> Dominique Bouhours, who devoted a whole treatise to the issue, declares: "One can say with certainty that 'je ne sais quoi' is one of the greatest wonders and one of the greatest mysteries of nature." Montesquieu, some eighty years later, writes: "There is something in people and in things, an invisible charm, a natural grace, which cannot be defined and which one is forced to name je ne sais quoi.' It seems to me that this is an effect based primarily on surprise." The self-sufficiency of the Leibnizian monad was what brought the inexplicable into the domain of subjectivity, "each mind being as it were a little divinity in its own department."
>
> With Leibniz, we stand on the threshold of a new epoch, in which the harmony and beauty of the world, revealed gradually in a dialectical process, became a field of aesthetic experience dependent on the cultivation of taste and on the role of the genius. The new experience created a distance from things and events, thereby contributing to the formation of modern aestheticism and historicism. Aestheticization itself is closely linked with the relativity of taste and the formalization of experience. [254]

The translator of Deleuze' book on Leibniz and the Baroque is a philologist. His forward is titled "A Plea for Leibniz"[255]. I'm not sure why a historian would make such a plea, though a philosopher might. A history of rationalism is an act of empiricism. Philosophers don't create concepts any more than the first man, or woman, to say "*je ne sais quoi"* was the first to smile in silent appreciation. Aesthetics begins when things in the world no longer give a direct relation to universals, when objects as *things* become the *experience of things*. Experience is individual, a danger to authority. It's a danger to eternal truths, and thus to the King, as history is a danger to philosophy. Leibniz and Deleuze, as philosophers and conservatives, struggle to reconcile the multiform with the ideal. They're creatures of their time, no more or less than Caravaggio and Stella.

Stella defends a spatial formalism, including illusion, in effect defending what is now a cinematic eye, cinematic rather than photographic because the eye is moving. The lectures and book caused a ruckus at the time, but what struck me was less the discovery of Caravaggio than the denial of the worldliness that came with it. This was the 80's of Schnabel and Salle, the rise

of big money in big art, the time when the darkness of Warhol became the common theme. It was a time of crisis, a crisis that only faded because the fights in any real sense were given up. But Stella cruised along unfazed, now like a Hollywood filmmaker who'd never bucked the system to make the work he wanted to make. He was successful young; he'd never had to. He never claimed to be a leftist, a maker of "radical art". He was only a painter who'd rationalized himself into a corner when he was young and rationalized himself out of it as he grew older. There's honesty in that.

Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* is one of the founding texts of modern art history. When I read it, a bit late, I thought of Stella and it made me laugh. It was all there, even the evasion of the political in favor of the formal. And then more recently I found the paper quoted below and it made me laugh again. Irving Lavin was a friend of Panofsky, the editor of the book of Panofsky's essays that I've quoted, and his successor at the Institute of Advanced Study. He was a central figure in the revival of interest in Bernini. Lavin, from a lecture presented at a symposium at the University of Jena to coincide with a Stella exhibit.

> Wölfflin defined five categories of human perception between the extreme poles of which all artistic development must inevitably oscillate. He illustrated his principles by the contrast between the historical periods of the Renaissance and Baroque, but the categories have been also been applied to French painting of the nineteenth century and to the development from Classical to Hellenistic in ancient Greece. And, *mirabile dictu*, Wölfflin's categories fit Frank Stella's development like a finely tailored Italian suit of clothes: linear to painterly, planarity to spatiality, closed to open form, multiplicity to unity, clarity to unclarity … Consider even the subcategories Wölfflin includes under Closed versus Open Form: Geometric versus Organic structure, Symmetry versus Asymmetry; frame controls composition versus "accidental" relationship between composition and frame. The "flat," rectilinear, parallel lines of the early stripe paintings reappear in the recent "smoke ring" motifs, transformed into looping skeins that remain parallel but now define intricate, looping, transparent planes. The graphic system uncannily recalls that of Mellan, except that Mellan models form by varying the thickness of the line, whereas Stella's computer-generated filaments are uniform and modulate space by expansions and contractions of the intervening distances. You would think that Stella had read Wölfflin; I never asked him, and I don't want to know. [256]

The only problem with this is that it reduces Stella's work to formalism. Later in the essay Lavin falls back into the hyperbole of the artist as a god-like creator of worlds, boilerplate that works only if you add that it means good artists are great liars, and that great artists tell lies so well they affect you against your will. Lies are formal constructions; their forms are the manifestation of an ethos, a "value system", and we read and interpret them in relation to each other. Donald Judd's "unrelational" objects exist in relation to their environments and also, obviously, since he says so specifically, to art and ideas that he thought were wrong or "messed up". Stella's best works are bright and poppy, graceful and blunt, dark and violent. You can use them to think about the late 20th century, about America, about "art", about the individual and society, about capitalism, about Caravaggio and Disney World, Clement Greenberg, Herman Melville and Steven Spielberg. Like all philosophy, his is best read for context

Stella interviewed in 1969

> I wrote my thesis on Celtic, Carolingian and Ottoman manuscript illumination. And it was ostensibly involved with historical problems, about problems in kingship and political issues, and how the ideas of the political leaders of the time were represented by the representations of the God or king figures in the manuscript illumination. But more than a third of it is devoted to a kind of pseudo-aesthetic appreciation of the problems of sort of[sic] interweave and interlace mainly in Celtic work, with a long aside which should have been a footnote. But since I had to pad the thesis to make it acceptable I actually included it in the thing on Pollock and the basic problem of decoration and what actually constitutes decoration and how decoration becomes art and when it ceases to be just decoration. And my argument essentially was that both Pollock and Celtic illumination were both art. One happened to be painting and one was manuscript illumination, but they both reached the category of art and left the lower category of simple repetitive design or pedestrian decoration far behind. It doesn't sound very radical in a way. [257]

1983

> The question we must ask ourselves is: Can we find a mode of pictorial expression that will do for abstraction now what Caravaggio's pictorial genius did for sixteenth-century naturalism and its magnificent successors? The expectation is that the answer is yes, but first we have to try to understand what Caravaggio actually did in order to see if his accomplishment can help us. …
>
> But, after all, the aim of art is to create space — space that is not compromised by decoration or illustration, space in which the subjects of painting can live. This is what painting has always been about. Sadly, however, the current prospects for abstraction seem terribly narrowed; its sense of space appears shallow and constricted. This seems ironic when we remember that painting had to work so hard to create its own space, or perhaps more accurately, had to work so hard to free itself from architecture. [258]

Neither Stella nor Judd began with the Enlightenment. Neither began with humanism. Stella changed; Judd stayed loyal to his original preoccupations. He collaborated with dancers; he let choreographers supply an organic element; Stella does it all himself. You see how the ambiguities build. But both are in the space between philosophical absolutes and relativism, relativism which can also mean no more than the description of subjective experience, as in theater, literature, film. For Judd and Stella, that's still not enough.

Aristotle and Montesquieu on virtue ethics.

Aristotle:

> The distribution of offices according to merit is a special characteristic of aristocracy, for the principle of an aristocracy is virtue, as wealth is of an oligarchy, and freedom of a democracy.[259]

Montesquieu:

> We have just seen that the laws of education should have a relation to the principle of each government. It is the same for the laws the legislator gives to the society as a whole. This relation between the laws and the principle tightens all the springs of the government, and the principle in turn receives a new force from the laws. Thus, in physical motion, an action is always followed by a reaction. We shall examine this relation in each government, and we shall begin with the republican state, which has virtue for its principle.[260]

The Baroque period was seen for a long time as decadent, and Mannerism justifiably still is. The Baroque is stylish without fear of condemnation, sensuous but no longer prurient. In the most common art historical definition, this refers to the Rome of Borromini and Bernini, but also Rubens, and the Flemish Baroque. In the broader sense that Panofsky uses it refers also to Cervantes and Shakespeare. In both the central theme is the experience of time. For Bernini as for Leibniz, time is abstract and material. As Vesely says "Leibniz's understanding of the senses is still based on the integrity of the scholastic world in which the sensible or visible is a manifestation of the universal order. This manifestation is also our main encounter with beauty, in which the perfection of the order is revealed." The unity is stretched, twisted, folded; our experience changes as we move around it but the unity does not. This is the birth of what became the secularized idea of *aesthetics*, *je ne sais quoi*, and also of what we now call *glamour*, a mode of aristocratic individual performance, judged not just by how closely it hews to custom, but how *well*, how gracefully, with how much charm or style. But who judges the performance? That's the unresolved question at the heart of the Baroque in its standard definition, as a renewed but vibrant Catholic conservatism. Beauty as such, a new ideal no longer in a direct relation to justice or truth, is a byproduct of the rise of science, as Vesely puts it in a new age of *divided representation.* The Baroque is a flowering, and flowers mark an end, not a beginning. The wider age of the Baroque is the age of theater and literature, the age of the comedians and ironists who mock scholastics and philosophers, as Aristophanes had. It's the rise, or return, to democracy, the idea of virtue ethics according to Montesquieu, and only briefly of virtue ethics as defined by Aristotle.

There's another Baroque, another form of the final flowering of aristocratic art, not as dynamic, but visceral and more purely visual in its realism and use of illusion, and more conflicted. The Spanish Baroque comes down to us as the source for Warhol, through Manet and Degas, through the photography of Nadar, to the French discovery only after Napoleon's looting of Spain, of Velázquez and the Spanish Golden Age. The Italian Baroque of Caravaggio and Bernini was the product of a new understanding of time and individual experience, focusing on idealized figures as actors in motion. The emotionalism is the controlled emotionalism of performance. Spanish painting by comparison, was static or florid. El Greco rendered that floridity substantial, with a toughness that made it more than eccentric, more than mannerist. But the new ambiguities largely

lay elsewhere. The central figure of course is Velázquez.

Velázquez's early life made him an anomaly in Spain. He grew up in a literate household; his family claimed descent from minor nobility, but his father wasn't put out by the thought of apprenticing his son to a tradesman.

> Unlike in Italy, where by 1600 the connection between the arts and letters had become well established, in Spain the two had never been joined. The consequences of this failure were profound, because it was through the identification of painting with poetry that the former gained the status of a liberal art, as opposed to a craft. In practical terms, this meant that painters were regarded by the ruling class of Spanish society as the social equals of blacksmiths, coopers, and carpenters. The reasons for the existence of this attitude are complex, but there can be no doubt that the most important was the deeply-ingrained aristocratic prejudice against commerce and manual labor. Painting in Spain was considered to be a handicraft and painters were therefore artisans whose work was essentially characterized by physical rather than mental activity. [261]

His master Francisco Pacheco was an anomaly as well; orphaned and put in the care of an uncle, he'd grown up in a community of humanists and had joined his uncle in an informal academy founded by Juan de Mal Lara, a playwright and poet and follower, and cribber, of Erasmus. Other than being Velázquez' teacher and father-in-law, Pacheco is remembered now mostly as the author of a treatise and defense of painting, *Arte de la pintura,*, including biographies of Spanish artists. He spent more than 40 years on it and it was only published posthumously. It's the first major source we have on Velázquez.

> Pacheco was the supreme embodiment of a type common during the Spanish Counter-Reformation: a faithful servant of a Church defending itself against Protestant reform with closed and intransigent dogmatism, but also a person who, with a bow to moral allegory, demonstrated an evident familiarity with classical tradition and the gods and goddesses of pagan Olympus.[262]

Pacheco was the official censor for Seville's Inquisition. Mal Lara had been arrested and detained in 1561 on rumours he'd written anti-clerical poetry, but later anti-clerical elements in his *Filosofia vulgar* (Common Philosophy) were ignored, or maybe the examiners didn't even bother to read them.[263] In 1566 he moved to Madrid to join the court of Philip II. This is the confusion where Velázquez begins in Spain and even more, in provincial Seville.

> The professional horizons that lay before the twenty-year-old Velázquez, the possibilities for work that awaited him, were no different from those his father-in-law had known or from those open to Zurbaran, his contemporary: religious painting, devotional canvases, monastic cycles and portraits, and an occasional ruggedly intense portrait or rigidly arranged still life.[264]

Briefly back to Titian, and the new 'friendship' of artists and kings.

Panofsky describes Titian's relation with Charles V "extending to his whole family and entourage… [as] almost unique in

the annals of art". He dismisses the story that Charles, "to the pained surprise of his courtiers" once stooped down to pick up Titian's dropped brush, but says he treated Titian as "an equal in spirit if not in rank… their correspondence occasionally reads like that of two great and equal powers."[265] He also writes about Titian's "best friend", Pietro Aretino "the scourge of princes", blackmailer, and pornographer. With Aretino and Jacopo Sansovino "Titian contracted, almost immediately, a life-long friendship. A formidable alliance of the "Three Arts of Design" with literature, this "Triumvirate" wielded an enormous influence and its members were united by genuine affection as well as self-interest." Sansovino immortalized the three of them on the doors of the Sacristy of St. Mark's. Aretino died in 1556

> …allegedly at a dinner party in his own house: when one of the guests had told a particularly funny and indecent story, it was said, Aretino roared with laughter and threw himself back in his chair with such violence that the chair tipped over and he broke his head. There is no shred of evidence for this story… but it throws light on Aretino's reputation — a reputation summarized in a famous "epitaph"…
> "Questo è Pietro Aretino, poeta Tosco,
> Che d'ogni un disse male, eccetto the di Dio;
> Scusandosi con dir 'non lo conosco' "
> ("Here Aretino lies, a Tuscan poet; Evil he spoke of all, except of God; When questioned why, he said 'Him I don't know' ")…
>
> Aretino was perhaps the first publicist to make a living by misrepresentation and extortion; and — in return for praise or, no less often, for silence — he received honors, presents and huge sums of money from nearly all the princes of his time — including the two eternal adversaries, Charles V and Francis I of France. He led a loose life. He wrote indecent sonnets and equally indecent, often extremely amusing comedies while posing as a fervent believer and even aspiring to a Cardinal's hat….
>
> It was indeed only in Venice, governed with an extraordinary combination of discipline and permissiveness… where life was strictly regulated in theory but very free in practice, and where political action was rigorously controlled while the liberty of thought, the liberty of speech and the liberty of the press were protected even against the Inquisition, that a man like Aretino could flourish. [266]

Jonathan Brown writes that "the itinerant style of kingship practiced by Charles V gave his court an international scope and allowed him to choose his artists from an exceptional range of talent in Italy and Flanders."[267] It also means he dealt willingly with a wide range of characters. Panofsky notes his "wry sense of humor". When he renounced his crown in 1555, retiring to a monastery he took nine of Titian's paintings with him, including the monumental 'Triumph of Faith", La Gloria", "and he is said to have looked at it in his dying days with such persistence and intensity of feeling that his doctors took fright." [268]


Charles V was a polyglot and European ruler. Philip II had been raised and thought of himself as a Spaniard. Titian worked for the son as he had for the father, but though Philip requested that he come to Madrid he never did. Veronese and Tintoretto turned him down as well.[269] Philip created massive projects, and brought new and major works and more and minor artists, but even they brought new ideas. This was the beginning of the process that produced the great art in the Spanish 17th century. But after all this I'm still only interested in one artist, and not because he's the best of them, but why; because his work is the perfect *illustration* (and that's the word for my purposes) as Bernini's is, of a moment and a place, in the wider culture and politics of its time. I can't separate my love of art from my interest in culture. I can't separate sadness from the blues, or art from politics. If philosophy doesn't interest me as anything more than a kind of literature, a kind of art, then art has to match it. Leibniz outside of mathematics is no more important than Bernini, no more or less of a product of his time, no more or less a brilliant mind. So what's Velázquez?

Baroque art is the art of perception, the space between what *is,* in an ideal sense, and what we experience. Velázquez is the first painter to paint the world as it appears to the eye; the other way to put it is to say he was the first painter of illusions. Jonathan Brown on the portrait of the *bufón*, jester and actor, Pablo de Valladolid

> The figure, clad in a black velvet suit and wrapped in a cloak, stands with both feet planted firmly on the ground, his right arm dramatically thrust into space. The marvelous economy of the pose is intensified by the handling of the surrounding space. Pablo is set against a light-colored ground, which is almost completely undefined except in the upper right corner, where the color turns darker, and the shadow at his feet, trails inconsequentially off to the right. The juncture between floor and wall, the key to imparting a sense of space, has simply been omitted. And the figure does not float or appear to be unduly flat. Indeed, the absence distracting elements of any kind brings the jester to life with startling directness. Implicit in this painting is a remarkable challenge to the rules and procedures of Renaissance painting. Through the exercise of his powerful creative mind, Velázquez appears to arrived at a conclusion which, to us, seems obvious – conventional rules of painting produce conventional pictures of the world. Put another way, Velázquez had come to understand that paintings executed by following the classical produced a view different from what the eye sees. Works of art governed by rules were almost by definition a mental fiction, and Velázquez was interested in perceptible fact. *Pablo de Valladolid* is based on a simple optical phenomenon—it is impossible for the eye to focus simultaneously on different planes of depth. Thus, the background of a portrait can be treated almost as a blur without any loss of verisimilitude, if one or two cognitive accents are given the viewer. In fact, the illusion of reality gains immeasurably from but far-

> reaching change of approach. In *Pablo de Valladolid*, as in the Portrait of Philip IV in Brown and Silver, Velazquez begins to experiment with a novel approach to the art of representation which would eventually redefine the relationship between art and nature.[270]

What's ignored is that Velázquez is a loyal and committed servant of the most reactionary, absolutist monarchy in Europe, and has given his king a life sized image (the painting itself is 209 x123 cm) of another, lower, servant represented in a fully realized psychologically astute portrait of another human being, a picture that at the same time has a hieratic classicism, almost the distancing of a still life. Manet called to it "possibly the most extraordinary piece of painting that has ever been done."[271] To us it's almost Brechtian.

There's no inherent contradiction between political absolutism and the materiality in Titian's paintings, in the literary classicism of Poussin and Claude or the physical grace of Baroque sculpture. Tensions are resolved one way or another, or awkward subjects are avoided. Velázquez' paintings are defined by paradox. To sense this fully you need to look at -and ideally of course to stand in front of- the portraits of the people he served, his superiors, not his equals or below. Here's Brown's description of *Philip IV in Brown and Silver*.

> [I]t is here the first time that see the remarkable and original technique which sets Velazquez apart from almost every other artist of his day. In this portrait, Philip wears a costume comprised of a tunic and breeches decorated with silver brocade, under which is an ornate blouse of silvery white and black. On his shoulders there is a black cape also embroidered with silver thread. The challenge of depicting an ornate

> costume of this kind lies in reproducing the dazzling play of light on the surface without sacrificing the intricacy of the design. The artist who concentrates on the pattern is inevitably forced to imitate the dull geometry of needlework, as dozens of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century court portraits show. But Velazquez' approach, which aims at capturing the fleeting effects of light as it glances off the silver threads, is not only difficult, but runs the risk of minimizing the intricate workmanship of the garment and thus displeasing the wearer [a note shows that a portrait had been rejected for this reason]. His solution to the dilemma is a brushstroke of genius. Realizing that a high degree of finish was fatal to rendering spontaneous effects, he resorted to using a sketch-like technique in a formal, official work of art.
>
> From our perspective, this seems like a logical and not especially innovative idea. But in the context of the seventeenth century, it was virtually unprecedented. A sketchy technique is of course not unknown in the work of other great seventeenth-century painters, but there is a difference of degree which is crucial. In the Portrait of Philip in Brown and Silver, Velazquez abandons the fluid technique of sketching in oil used, for example, by Rubens, and instead utilizes short, succinct, impastoed strokes of infinite shape and size which

> are applied so that they appear to hover above the brown ground. Seen at close range* this busy tangle of brushwork appears almost random and formless, But at a distance, it reproduces the glittering surface of a richly brocaded costume with remarkable fidelity.[272]

The passage is confused. There's no reason to think that Velazquez, once the issue became clear, was ever not interested in the duality that's visible in the painting here. After all he had begun with solidity, not the reverse. The question more likely is how much practice it took to get the result he wanted: paint as light, implying structure. And Brown is confused again writing about Las Meninas, or rather he refuses to accept the contradictions that lay behind in.

> Las Meninas is the culmination of a lifelong examination of the relationship between art and nature. Velázquez seems to have tried to create art without apparent artifice and thus to reduce the gap between what the eye sees in nature and what the eye sees in art. The desire to attain greater naturalism in painting was widely felt in the seventeenth century, but no one went further in achieving it than Velázquez. The proof of his success is Las Meninas, a painting in which his new type of artistry is used to produce an intense encounter with reality.
>
> In planning the calculated approximation of art to nature, Velazquez had to redefine the traditional relationship between painting and reality. 64 Renaissance theory placed the intellect at the center of artistic activity; the painter's mind was required to mediate between the haphazard world of appearances and the ordered, harmonious world of art. If the idea of beauty changed according to time and circumstances, the value of an accepted canon of beauty was never challenged. Works of painting which merely recorded natural appearances, such as still life and portraiture, were assigned a lower place in the hierarchy of art than were those which aspired to express universal truths about man, nature, and the divine in an ideal style. In Las Meninas, however, the illusion, not the improvement, of everyday reality is given primacy. For whatever the picture may be, it is a brilliant tour de force of illusionistic painting.

"…to create art without apparent artifice" . "…the illusion, not the improvement, of everyday reality is given primacy. "…a brilliant tour de force of illusionistic painting" But the artifice *is* apparent; illusion has replaced the ideal, and all this is in an art made to celebrate Catholic absolutism. You can see why Brown's head is spinning.

Velazquez' job was to project to the world the authority of the Spanish throne, to proclaim the divine right of kings, but as he matured, he became a master of tricks and illusion. Physical solidity gives way to flickers of light and the mere perception of solidity. He painted people of every rank with emotional directness and honesty, so we see weak and melancholy kings and noble dwarfs. He was a loyal both to the king and to his own perceptions, and for the first time in pictorial art we're presented not with an embodiment of ideal truth but images suffused with the need to believe. Velazquez was the first artist

* I've included an image that approximates the detail shown in the book

to depict the monarchy, and maybe even god, as a noble lie.

> In the inventory of his fine library one finds very few books of devotion in comparison to what was usual among people of good breeding and social position. There were, however, numerous books on mathematics, architecture, history, and Spanish and Italian poetry. If one excepts the years of Velázquez's youth in Seville, when as merely one more of the artists of his generation, he had to work for ecclesiastical patrons, religious themes occupy an insignificant position in his works and are always the response *(Christ on the Cross, The Coronation o the Virgin, Saint Anthony Abbot and Saint Paul the Hermit*) to specific royal assignments. Of course we cannot think of Velázquez as a religious skeptic (an attitude inconceivable and obviously unconfessable in the Spain of the time). In contrast to his contemporaries, however, he distanced himself from conventional religiosity; this absence of the religious is nevertheless accompanied by a dignified and serious tone of mercy toward all creatures, by a "modern" and lay humanism, that makes him unique. [273]

Panofsky dismisses the story of the Holy Roman Emperor picking a paintbrush off the floor, but the same story is told about Philip IV. Velazquez' royal portraits are tragic; they show the weaknesses of an insecure man, yet they show him great respect. Stripped of the obligatory pomp, it's the same respect Velazquez showed Pablo de Valladolid. Brown ends his book writing that Velazquez "…discovered a new way to transmute images of kings and queens and princes and princesses into a new form of art which continues to grow in power long after the memory of his protectors has faded nearly into oblivion." Brown, the defender of progress and art for art's sake, stripped of its full depth of meaning, can't see the obvious. Velazquez's "new way" and "new form of art" describe the end of monarchy. The maturation of his technique, the curiosity that drove it, and the obligations of his calling diverged, but the form of his obligation changed as well. The glorification of a master became the sympathy for a friend, in ways that neither king nor servant could admit. We're back to Baudelaire, and Renoir, von Rauffenstein, and de Boeldieu, the originating tragedy, later played as kitsch, (as farce).

Panofsky is very good on Mannerism and the Counter Reformation, on prurience and kink, but he doesn't telegraph his points, and though that's why I enjoy him the subtlety is lost on many people, though more on academics than people at large. Most high school students if they read him while looking at reproductions of the works he writes about would get the joke, would get the humor in his understatement. But contemporary academics don't. They conflate judgment with moralism. This applies to academics and critics writing about both fine art and film, but less so film or TV critics writing for a general audience. It would actually be an improvement if Bronzino's paintings were seen as fitting the formal, political and moral economy of Douglas Sirk and Tom Haynes. If I don't like his films I'd never deny Haynes that degree of honesty.

Art and plausible deniability: the first time I saw a reproduction of Bronzino's *Descent of Christ into Limbo* I renamed it *Christ at the Orgy*. It reminded me of the old Hollywood story of a director who beat the censor by asking him to explain what exactly he'd seen that was so inappropriate, since any answer would leave him open to accusations that his own mind was in the gutter.

> The twisted and constrained mentality of the Counter Reformation period shows in innumerable phenomena: for instance, in the frightful conflicts between religious dogma and scientific thought (a problem that had not existed for a man like Leonardo da Vinci), but the most illuminating fact is perhaps the reaction of the period upon the beautiful nude in general and the classical nude in particular. Invectives were hurled against Michelangelo's Last Judgement, which escaped destruction only by a thorough chastening, The church stated that classical marbles could be tolerated only if they were not exposed to public view; the sculptor Ammannati (at the age of seventy-one, it is true) repented in sackcloth and ashes for having made figures so scantily dressed, and the bronze fig leaf affixed to classical statues is a very characteristic invention of this period. On the other hand, both artist and art lovers were in reality no less susceptible to the beauty of classical nudes than were the Renaissance people, only their enthusiasm was marred—and sharpened—by a guilty conscience. What in the days of Raphael had been a matter of course now become a matter of either cool archaeological interest or sinful excitement, and often a mixture of both.

In Bronzino's *Descent into Limbo,* the Eve is a literal adaptation of the Venus of Knidos, much more archaeological than any work of Raphael; but just this combination of classic beauty with a bashful posture and a seeming intangibility makes the figure almost ambiguous. The beholder feels that beauty is looked upon as something dangerous or even prohibited, and for this very reason is struck by these frozen crystalline nudes as by something more voluptuous and intoxicating than the straightforwardness of High Renaissance art or the sensual brio of the Baroque.[274]

SJ Freedberg

> As early as 1541, perhaps even during 1540, Bronzino began the work in which he would mature a high Maniera in narrative and devotional art as he already had in portraiture: the fresco decoration in the Palazzo Vecchio of the chapel of the Duchess Eleonora of Toledo. In the ceiling fresco of the Chapel, with four Saints in a partial *sotto-in-su,* ['seen from below'] Bronzino seems not yet to be quite clear about the direction of style that this (relatively) large-scale and public work should take. It is highly polished, but in general lays an unexpected stress upon effects of naturalism, as if Bronzino might be deliberately making

a conservative counter-proposition to the extreme style of the recent Medicean decorations by Pontormo. This minimizing of the earlier Mannerist's distance between the image and the normative appearances of nature is carried into the style of the first wall fresco in the Chapel, the *Passage of the Red Sea* (1541-2). The proportions of figures and descriptions of anatomy and drapery appear as 'correct' as they might be in a naturalistic and classicizing canon. But on this basis that relates to nature and to classical precedent Bronzino imposes a repertory of devices for its stylization as aesthetically arbitrary as Pontormo's and

(perhaps because they work as sharper contradictions of the 'naturalness' beneath) more extreme in their effect of artificiality. Bronzino's stylizations here are not, as Pontormo's tend to be, emotionally infused distortions of the forms, but cool, excessive purifyings of them, making unreal smoothness and regularities and a temper of precisely moderated, but obtrusive, grace. The figures turn into equivocations between nature and a neo-classic statuary of improbable perfection, posturing in attitudes that are meant to tell us primarily about their beauty and only incidentally or not at all about their meaning in the scene. In this scene, potentially dramatic, drama is relegated to the distance and there expressed only by objectively illustrated incident or a conventional vocabulary of response. The prime sense of the picture is in its accumulation of aesthetically remade beings, as untroubled by imperfections of emotion as of form. The higher realm in which they must exist is emphasized by a pure, pale tonality of light and by colour that makes the subtlest distinctions in degree of glaciality. In the second wall fresco of this time, the *Brazen Serpent* (begun in mid 1542), there is a possible reference to Michelangelo's design, but it is difference, not similarity, that is notable. Along with episodes of naturalism more explicit than in the *Red Sea*, there are passages of statuary abstraction of still more transcendent and poetical effect, and a calligrapher's enlacements of design. It is the altarpiece of the *Pietà* (now Besançon Museum) that crowns Bronzino's progress into high Maniera. Bronzino imposes on the inescapable tragedy of the subject the discreet suppressions required by the high Maniera's code, muting grief until its tenor is diminished and acceptable and endowing its bearers With such beauty of countenance, attitude, and ornament that it irradiates their paled residue of feeling, and then stands before it in our contemplation like a mask. An absolute technique asserts at the same time the intense plastic presence of the scene and the aesthetic factors that transform it. Colour, cold and luminous as ice, symbolizes What has been made of passion. Both this form and colour, in the intensity of sheer aesthetic sensation they produce, transcend illustrative meaning and in part displace it. Art does not narrate the tragedy but replaces it. [275]

Panofsky and Freedberg are Jews decribing Christian ideas of sin and guilt, describing a twisted moralism, criticizing without mirroring it. You can see a lot of Modernism in what they're describing, a lot of 20th century culture: the desperation of Vienna and Wittgenstein; Eliot, and the cool humor of Duchamp; Weimar, fascism, the need for art, for something perfect of whatver sort, to replace life. At times, in the religious paintings this becomes close to kitsch. But the portraits have a cold Machiavellian honesty. And again, this is all the return to the rule of philosophy, of authoritarianism, of doctrines. The

Renaissance and Baroque by this definition were the rule of practice, of the acceptance of conflicts and contradictions.

The first time I saw a reproduction of Bronzino's *Descent of Christ into Limbo* I was reading Quine, and "To be is to be the value of a bound variable" fit so well I put it below the new title. Moralizing formalism, Protestant and Catholic, mid-century Mannerisms old and new, pedantry and secret kink. Milton Babbitt's rage: "You must look through the surface of American art, and see the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning.".

Quine lived in his cloister, but time is always moving and the academy moves with it. Analytic and Continental philosophy are circling the wagons, together, and the myths of radical academia, the licensed vanguard, have created perverse amalgams beyond far beyond anything by Rawls and G.A. Cohen. I'll preface the next few paragraphs by expanding a quote I've used before.

> A portrait attributed to Bronzino in the Frick Collection is a characteristic specimen of the second phase of mannerism, which. is the very style of the Counter Reformation. It sets in almost precisely with the beginning of the Council of Trent and outlasts it only by a few decades. Now things were settled, but freedom of life and thought, happiness, and even beauty had to be sacrificed on the altar of the dogma, now firmly reestablished but oppressive and tyrannical as long as its rule was still threatened - and the same was true of morals and customs (Spanish dress; Tasso). Thus such a portrait has in common with the Raphael portrait that the figure is again quiet and full of composure; but it differs from it in that the carriage and expression are emphatically uneasy and unhappy. While in the Raphael portraits the self-restriction revealed a complete freedom and self-sufficient harmony, it reveals here a constrained reserve deliberately secluding itself from the outer world. It is as though the life of these people had gone frozen, or hides itself behind a motionless mask, melancholy and cool, shy and supercilious at the same time.

Chris Lebron, a professor of philosophy now of Johns Hopkins

> This strand of perfectionism, as I interpret it goes something like this: there is no offense in saying that there are people who not only do some things better than others but that some people are better than others more generally; the real offense to my mind is when we are complacent about that fact or possibility, thus the person who can be better qua human potential, refuses to tax his or her own capacities, or – and this is actually important for my own brand of egalitarianism – those who are more advantageously positioned in this way withhold the resources (capaciously conceived) for others to more fully develop their skills. (I admit, little support for this last condition can be found in Nietzsche, but can be found in Mill.) I think some will find my position odd because on the one hand it affirms a position that most find inherently aristocratic but then tries to retrofit an egalitarian ideal over it. How does that work? I suppose it depends on an empirical hypothesis that could prove to be confused but in the absence of such proof I am supposing that each of us possesses a certain kind of genius to be better than merely competent moral agents.[276]

Lebron again

On any given sunny afternoon, or appropriately dusky early evening, when the air seems filled with possibility and release, you can hear me coming a block away. Depending on your socio-cultural background you might not like what you hear. See, my car has thirteen speakers, two of which are subwoofers, and I get a great deal of gratification playing my rap music loud. I won't reproduce any lyrics here, but suffice it to say, my preferred urban poets don't always say very 'respectable' things. I often get side-eye from the police (playing my music the way I do is practically an open invitation to law enforcement to harass me), and from time to time white mothers and fathers clutch their sons' and daughters' hands a bit more tightly as I approach, leaning my lean, smirking my smirk (not at them, mind you).

I'm also the guy with a PhD from M.I.T and a faculty position at Yale. I've written a book that has won an important award in my field of political theory, I've published academic articles in good journals, and I've written for the New York Times as well as Boston Review. This despite having been on welfare, having collected unemployment, having been raised mostly poor, by a father without a high school education and a mother who never set foot in a university. I was the first in my entire extended family to get a four-year degree, much less a PhD, much less a PhD from the likes of M.I.T. Despite the fact that I've accomplished and produced more than many white counterparts, I've got to work hard to get what they tend to acquire with relative ease, which I do.[277]

I'm used to academics playing at fascism, radical theorists in black leather, writing about Tom of Finland, de Sade, Borges, the poetics of the demimonde, the underground, the vanguard, but now we have Oxbridge pedantry dressed up to match the Nation of Islam and spouting gangsta rap opposed to both; the iron law of non-contradiction and its denial, fused into an energized unity, a purist antinomy, institutional anti-law, the definition of fascism. Not that Lebron would ever admit it. Also as in liberal Zionism the blindness of his white audience is based on guilt. But it's interesting to note that while defense of Israel has been weakening, we're seeing the mainstream acceptance of a newly bourgeoisified black nationalist chic.

Art as art always contains an ironic core; the loyalty is to craft. Philosophy as I've said, puts Truth above facts, rendering them and all of us secondary. Cohen's melancholic liberal passivity, the hypertrophied paradoxes of Zionism, of Lebron and others, is more of a threat to liberal democracy than de Sade, Celine, and Houellebecq. Bronzino's art is no more dangerous than Gursky's. Lebron at Johns Hopkins is more of a problem than the Afro-kitsch Black Panther at the multiplex, because philosophy –pedantry– is the problem. But all of it needs to and understood, described, judged, not for what it claims to be but as it appears, presents itself, for the role it plays.

In 2004 MIT press published *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s*. Chronophobia: the fear of time. The author calls it a neologism, but it isn't. It's also at the core to the author's own writing. Pamela M Lee, now at Yale has the title "historian and theorist of contemporary art". She's a historian of the present. *Forgetting the Art World,* came out in 2012, 48 years after Danto named it. Her most recent book is *The Glen Park Library*: *A Fairy Tale of Disruption*, "How Silicon Valley, the dark net, and digital culture have affected our relationship to knowledge, history, language, aesthetics, reading, and truth." The blurb at the MIT Press webpage:

> Art historian Pamela Lee reads this event as a fairy tale of disruption rather than an isolated episode in the history of the dark net, Silicon Valley, and the relationship between public libraries and digital culture. Lee argues that the notion of "disruptive" technology in contemporary culture has radically affected our relationship to knowledge, history, language, aesthetics, reading, and truth. Against the backdrop of her account of Ulbricht and his exploits, Lee provides original readings of five women artists—Gretchen Bender, Cecile B. Evans, Josephine Pryde, Carissa Rodriguez, and Martine Syms—who weigh in, either explicitly or inadvertently, on the nature of contemporary media and technology. Written as a work of experimental art criticism, *The Glen Park Library* is both a homage to the Bay Area and an excoriation of the ethos of Silicon Valley. As with all fairy tales, the book's ultimate subjects are much greater, however, and Lee casts a critical eye on collisions between privacy and publicity, knowledge and information, and the past and future that are enabled by the technocratic worldview.[278]

The foreword is written by a curator at MoMA. Again it's the aestheticization of politics, and the aesthetic shared by philosophy and luxury commodities, but also now an almost explicit combination of (ersatz) moralism and technocratic decadence. No longer even sincere hypocrisy or earnest contradiction, it's a blank obliviousness, the innocence of the children of the conflicted and hypocritical who've never had to even pretend to face real politics.

Chronophobia isn't wrong about the 60s any more than the curators of the Duchamp exhibition were wrong to mention David Lynch. But they ignored Hitchcock, and so does Lee. There's plenty of discussion here of "nuclear apocalypse and entertainment"; there's an interesting chapter on Tinguely and *Homage to New York*, but no mention of Kubrick and *Strangelove*. There's discussion of the Jonathan Edwards and Fried's earnest academic moralism –hard to ignore since Fried begins and ends with him– but none of the deeper because visceral puritanism in the work of Judd or Andre.

Lee ignores Hitchcock, but So does Barbara Rose. Lee has a chapter on Bridget Riley and on Op art, describing an art not of communication but effect. Remember de Duve writing about "trauma" and the end of art. Remember Nochlin quoting Leo Bersani: 'seriousness' of realist art is based on the absence of any reminder of the fact that it is really is a question of art". The connections by now should be clear.

> To what extent do we *see* this painting? In what lies its retinal appeal? To what extent do we not so much see it but *feel* it, experience the picture less as an abstraction than as a woozy sense of gravity visited on the body—a body endlessly subjected to the vagaries of *time?* Stand a little longer, look a little harder, and then what happens? In time, the surface begins to flicker, like a stroboscope; or wave, like a lenticular screen. Look longer still, and surprising colors—psychedelic phantoms—emanate from between the lines. Spangles of gold, pink, and green burst and flash, lining the eyelids, rattling the skull. The eye is enervated while the body feels something else: nausea, perhaps, or even a blinding headache.
>
> …Op's virtual fetish of visuality occasions a reading of the body under the conditions of a shifting technological culture and, more to the point, how the time of that body speaks to the repressive consequences of a burgeoning technocracy. The body, I want to argue, is the *blind spot* to Op's obsession with the technological; and it is its temporality that gives the lie to this. The body performs what Op's supporters insistently failed to see. More often than not, this body is a specifically gendered body, feminized and thus deemed impotent. [279]

Lee, following the logic of the academic culture that made her –she's now an editor at *October*– both condescends to Riley and defends her: critics' description of passivity and impotence is merely the dismissing of the female. We're back an art of the index, an art that can be read as an art of ideas, of intention, whether admitted or not. Somehow or other, art has to have a program, a "project" and a core of optimism.

> This notion is critical to the deepening suspicion, even paranoia, about Op. Nevertheless, Op was considered user-friendly stuff *in spite* of the aggression attributed to it, its eye-hurting glare, virtually hypnotic powers, and nausea-inducing effects. As Barbara Rose put it cynically: "Op is absolutely gratifying in this respect because you know that you have gotten the message once nausea or vertigo set in." [280]

The title of Rose's review is "Beyond Vertigo: Optical Art at The Modern". Lee makes one reference to Hitchcock elsewhere, mentioning him in his connection Saul Bass, "the graphic designer best known for his title sequences to Alfred Hitchcock", but no mention of their most famous collaboration. I dealt with this more than 30 years ago, linking Duchamp to Hitchcock to mechanically 'optical' abstraction:

> *Vertigo* is an early precedent here as it is to all later artistic use of psychedelic imagery, images of the subconscious, Op-Art patterning or illustrations of drug-induced states. Pynchon uses similar terms, central to the American romance –what it has become– and its relations with the physical world and the psychosis of modern life. These are images of the loss of the self, unable to define its surroundings, to distinguish itself from them, and thus being relegated to passive observation. [281]

I may as well add here that the original title of my essay when I submitted it was "Modernism Parody and the Denial of Narrative." The editor renamed it. My language is stilted but it makes the point. The illustration –graphic stimulus– of immediate sensorial effect is experience without effort, passive.* Much of the art of the 1960s *describes* that experience, because much of popular visual culture manifests it. Lee quotes a newspaper editorial responding to the show.

> And what is the point of this, someone will ask? Well the point is this, that art is the expression of the age. The pressures and upheavals of our time have the same effect on our observers: Now you see it, now you don't. Now the facts are clear, now the facts are muddled grey. The distortion of old values, and the crowding of new cultures, presents a peculiar aspect to the eye. It is painful.
> Who is to tell what are the facts in Viet Nam, for instance? The government of one day is not the government of the next; the actions of our own officials there are deliberately distorted, and friend slips into foe and back again. The alliances with Europe are not what they seem, and the image of the Communist world clashes with reality…. It is all painful. [282]

Lee adds, "One might forgive the authorless editorial its tired clichés about art ('art is the expression of the age')".
And what else is it?

And what else is she? Lee is roughly my age. After undergraduate years at Yale she went to The Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program, at the time a hotbed of artistic and political radicalism, where academic theory met luxury commodities. We have mutual acquaintances, people who are now curators at major US Museums, and the people who told me I couldn't be a leftist because I worked with my hands, who condescended to me even as I built their projects, who designed their art and were proudly manually incompetent. They dealt as she does with ideas and concepts, the idea of art and the of idea of politics, neither of which are synonyms for the things themselves. The aestheticization of politics is the politics of design. Immateriality is clean by definition. The curatorial and critical studies program at the ISP has been rebranded and students are now "Helena Rubinstein Fellows", joining vanguardism and fashion, which were always connected, and the "disruption" of Madison Avenue.

The weakness of *Chronophobia* becomes clear once you realize she needs to take "Art and Objecthood" seriously as anything more than a relic, her belief that it must be more than a product of its age, because it was written by an academic, about fine art.

> This book takes the oblique view of technology and art in the 1960s and it does so with a concept introduced at the outset: the matter of time. Time and technology, I want to argue, are twinned phenomena in that

* Saul Bass' only feature film as a director was *Phase IV*, an early and not unsympathetic depiction of the conquering hive mind.

> decade; and works of art provide special insight into this relationship as much as they model that relationship in turn. Time, we shall see, plays no small role in the richly diverse practices that constitute sixties art making. From performance to painting to sculpture to "new media," time becomes both a thematic and structural fixture, an obsession, for critics, artists, and audiences of that moment. It will come to signal something about technological change.

The "richly diverse practices that constitute sixties art making" includes The Rolling Stones, *Pierrot le Fou*, *The Armies of the Night, The Flintstones,* Albert Ayler, and *Woodstock*; that list is a joke because any list would be. Lee refers to *Slaughterhouse Five* and an article by Pynchon from 1984 but as with her discussion of C.P. Snow's *Two Cultures*, she focuses again on relics.

> Snow's position was critical in articulating the historical confluence of arts and sciences from the sixties forward: the lecture anticipated, in numerous ways, what would later be described as the phenomenon of interdisciplinarity within academia. [283]

This is the academia of "modernist projects", of Weber and von Neumann, of post war rationalism and the capitalism of the golden age, the technophilia of Daston and Gallison, and MIT, the home now of "The Futures of Entertainment"

> The Futures of Entertainment is an annual event which explores the current state and future of media properties, brands, and audiences and the way these groups interact and intersect with one another. By combining a mix of leading media studies scholars and cutting-edge media and marketing practitioners from a diverse range of locations and sectors--in conjunction with fans, activists, journalists, analysts, and other voices--in lengthy discussion, this two-day conference explores how the media industries are evolving, how storytelling is changing and the shifting dynamics in how people relate to media properties and brands.[284]

The tagline for these events is that they are "at the intersection of industry and academia". The only word missing is "disruption"

The positivist definition of art is illustration. If fine art has devolved into design, it still performs the function of art: the following of sensibility, responding to experiences, perceptions. But to ad men, like philosophers, art is successful communication as seen in metrics, and is designed as computer games are in the service of "fun". The MIT Media Lab model of creativity follows the enthusiasm of the designers of *Assassin's Creed*, and *Gears of War,* blind not even to subtext but to direct meaning, a blindness matching the enthusiasts of the "formalism" of the films of Paul Sharits. For all the discussion of the delivery of content, the content itself is seen as meaningless. This is the world of ideas, the academia that claims to

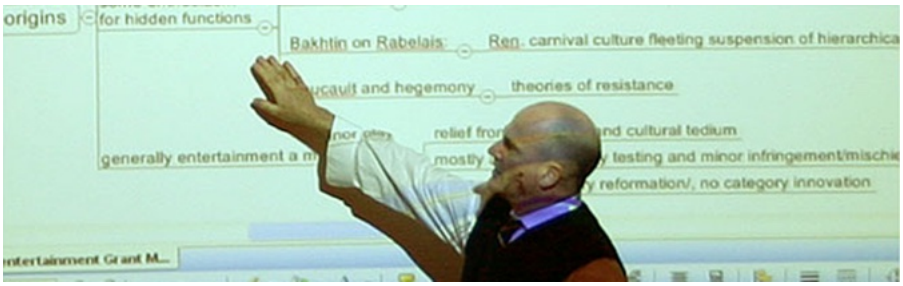
provide a philosophical foundation for capitalism and anti-capitalism, for liberalism, or revolution. But for all the empty pretension of the technocratic elite, most of life, one way or another, is craft.

> I remember once, long ago, I used to not do commercials and said I didn't believe in them. And then they said, "Ken Loach has done quite a few of them." So I phoned up Ken and he said, "If you don't take money out of those capitalist pockets, then someone else will, and you've got mouths to feed. Do it!"[285]

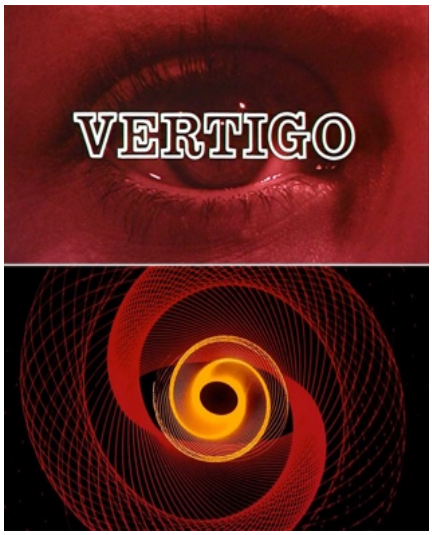
Mike Leigh, just like the biggest Hollywood directors, production designers and cinematographers, makes commercials. The money flows like water. You can have a lot of fun spending three million dollars for a 30 second spot. But as with cathedral ceilings, it's not the dogma that matters, but what you do with it. As I tried to explain to one of the leaders of the MIT symposia, Grant McCracken, an anthropologist with a PhD from the University of Chicago, see the photograph below, the interesting thing about ads now is that they've become almost independent of their function: a good spot can by no more than a 30 second movie with a name at the end; the actual "ad" is 2 seconds, now associated with the 28 second comedy that preceded it. Or it's tiny film with 'product placement'. The definition of art hasn't changed, because people haven't changed. And the men and women, the craftspeople, some with hand tools and paint who get their hands dirty, and some with electronics, who together make the ads that the intellectuals of Madison avenue dream up, laugh. And if the ads are remembered they'll be remembered as cathedral ceilings are, by people who have no particular interest in Jesus Christ or Alka Seltzer. Beyond that of course, all comparisons fall apart. Ads are art, but they're disposable, what jingles are to pop songs. But to the academics who study and serve Madison Avenue, corporate communication is art in the service of a cause. Instead of Church censors' stamp of approval, or Diderot's defense of Greuze' moralism, or the bromides of socialist realism, or the art of the "Modern Project" we get a new brand of philosophic art, the vanguardism of the marketplace.

> Grant McCracken is a research affiliate with the Program in Comparative Media Studies at MIT who has consulted widely in the corporate world, including the Coca-Cola Company, IKEA, Ford, Kraft, Kodak, and Kimberly Clark. He is a Futures of Entertainment Fellow and a member of the IBM Social Networking Advisory Board.
>
> He is author of the forthcoming book *Culturematic* from Harvard Business Review Press. Previously, he authored the 2009 book *Chief Culture Officer: How to Create a Living, Breathing Corporation*, the 2008 book *Transformations: Identity Construction in Contemporary Culture,* the 2006 book *Flock and Flow: Predicting and Managing Change in a Dynamic Marketplace*, the 2005 book *Culture and Consumption II: Markets, Meaning, and Brand Management*, the 1997 book *Plenitude: Culture by Commotion*, the 1996 book *Big Hair: A Journey into the Transformation of Self*, the 1990 book *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, and the 1988 book *The Long Interview*. For the Convergence Culture Consortium, he wrote "Assumption Hunters: A New Corporation in the Throes of Structural Change".

Grant has been the director of the Institute of Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum, a senior lecturer at the Harvard Business School, a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge, and an adjunct professor at McGill University. He holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Chicago.[286]



The central thing to understand about all of this is that once again art as craft has been separated from meaning, while the statements of academics are granted the authority of truths. But this time the false dichotomy of aestheticized politics and politicized aesthetics, central to Modernism since Benjamin –a distinction would have made Baudelaire howl– has become a unified positivist theory of capitalism. If the study of communication is akin to botany, or since this is MIT, akin to physics, it makes sense this is where Chomsky's rationalist formalism reaches its nadir, in the same place where 'theory' is now the theory of advertising as taught in business schools. An outsider might notice that MIT linguistics is akin to Chicago school economics, but technocracy is immune to subtexts.



This is the crude positivism that allows the crossover from Marxism to marketing. The shallowness is the same, and the pedantry, as mode or form, becomes more important than the subject matter. It's easy to say that Analytical Marxism has the same relation to Marx as the debates of scholastic theologians had to the teachings of Jesus, but both exist at the end of a tradition, and traditions can be full or empty, thick or thin, can function as part of a debate in the wider world, or decay into arguments between a few pedants. This is something else: a scholastic philosophy of market practice, a high theory of the practice of the low, the theology of confidence tricksterism, not as trade school in comic theater but within the scholastic tradition of the search for truth. In the logic of modern philosophy and theory, *Episteme* undermines and supplants *Techne,* then replaces it with an enlightened *Praxis*. That's been bad enough. But in America, following Tocqueville's description of the focus on the practical, every craft must have its own theology, so even Cornell University now offers degrees in "Hospitality Science", while not yet at least going beyond offering an MFA in creative writing. Some programs now offer PhDs.

All of this records the need to professionalize and to fit all aspects of organized life into a bureaucracy, and the ways in which that bureaucracy becomes a value in itself. It's an ethos, and thus an aesthetic, in my definition of the term: the sensibility that you exhibit without choosing, the craftless "valueless" value system of technocracy. And my point as always is not that it's wrong morally but that it's based on a fantasy. Technocracy is the fantasy of control, of free will and consciousness in the

sense of Simon Blackburn's *Oxford Dictionary.*

One of the many ironies of Lee's *Chronophobia*, one of the biggest lost opportunities is her blindness to the significance of Hitchcock and Saul Bass. I want to think Barbara Rose titled her review, "Beyond Vertigo" as a subtle reference, but that might have been the editor: *Vertigo* begins with an image of one-point perspective, the eye's view, into the mind, and out into the world. Remember *Psycho* and Warhol's Presley.

The important thing to understand about art in the 60s is that objects and illustrations, bricks, Brillo boxes, optical illusions, were remade and recontextualized as art, as focus points in our experience of daily life. The objects themselves became less important, as objects, then our experience of them, as points in a narrative. The most interesting works over time found an audience outside the art world, and all of it played some role however small outside of it. MTV wouldn't exist as we know it without the history of "video art". Warhol's the obvious example of crossover, but rightly or not he's seen as crossing into popular culture and not out of it. Film historians don't condescend to Charlie Chaplin or Howard Hawks as opposed to Eisenstein and Godard, but theoreticians and practitioners of "fine art" are torn. Art is or was a closed field. Nam June Paik was an artist; Ernie Kovacs was an entertainer.

EIGHT

“There’s no difference between art and fashion anymore.” David Zwirner said that to me in the summer of 1993 after another gallery had closed and was being replaced by a boutique.

The NY Times in 1994

> Has there been an exhibition that generated more noise before it opened than the Richard Avedon show that is now at the Whitney Museum of American Art? Not this season, anyway.
>
> First came the collective groan after David A. Ross, newly installed as the museum's director, proposed it as one of the largest retrospectives ever contemplated at the Whitney. Those who knew that Mr. Ross had enjoyed successes with two previous Avedon exhibitions at museums he headed, in Berkeley, Calif., and Boston, weren't surprised. But more than a few people were taken aback that his first move at an institution dogged by charges of trendiness was a gigantic display of the work of a master of fashion photography and celebrity portraiture. Since then, despite being scaled back, the show has caused an alarming buzz around the museum, like an approaching V-1.
>
> ...Ms. Livingston seems to have gone out of her way to comply with Mr. Avedon's desire that he be taken seriously as an artist, and not thought of as a fashion photographer: out of 200 photographs in the retrospective, 10 are fashion shots.
>
> …Because his fashion photographs are great, and the rest rarely are, despite their technical brilliance. [287]

In 2009

> Five years after Richard Avedon’s death at 81 the International Center of Photography is setting the record straight. Avedon was indeed a great artist, and his fashion photographs are his greatest work.
>
> This may not be quite the way Avedon wanted it. His own pursuit of greatness often involved playing down the half-century of fashion magazine work he did for Harper’s Bazaar and Vogue as little more than a day job and emphasizing his portraiture, which he produced voluminously. At least that’s how it seemed with his last big New York retrospective at the Whitney Museum in 1994; that 50-year survey included, shockingly, fewer than a dozen examples of the fashion work.

> "Avedon Fashion: 1944-2000" is the corrective, the first museum exhibition devoted exclusively to his fashion work. Its nearly 180 images and ephemera confirm Avedon's place in the history and the art of his time.
>
> Avedon's fashion photographs from the late 1940s to the early '60s are everything you want great art to be: exhilarating, startlingly new and rich enough with life and form to sustain repeated viewings. Their beauty is joy incarnate and contagious. The best of them are as perfect on their own terms as the best work of Jackson Pollock or Jasper Johns from that era, and as profoundly representative of it. [288]

Michael Kimmelman calls the fashion photographs brilliant without calling them art. Roberta Smith calls them both.

In 2012 again in the Times, Holland Cotter defends the portraits unequivocally. The huge group portraits that had been the subject of mockery in 20 years earlier now "stand as a kind of heaven-and-hell-on-earth equivalent of the Sistine Chapel."

> Michelangelo divided the cosmos into saints and sinners. In Avedon's morally complex and indeterminate vision, such opposite categories twisted together and mingled. They still do, as individual and collective histories captured on film 40 and more years ago continue to play out and change over time, into the present.[289]

In November 1994, when The New Yorker did their first fashion issue (every article) the editors were accused of slumming. In 2004, a decade after his blistering attack on Avedon's pretensions, Kimmelman is chatting with him about August Sander.

> We may notice what Richard Avedon described to me the other day as the curious effect of a subject staring at a person behind the lens, namely "an exchange that makes something beyond either of them.
>
> "Artists," he added, "take on projects to put themselves in a place where the inner self will come through. It's impossible to plan a picture like that one. But Sander was ready for it, in the sense of having in mind a tone, a surreal quality, a sensitivity and sympathy for people. The image triggered what he was looking for but didn't know he would find. In the course of things, sometimes magical pictures arrive."[290]

The Times section was once called Arts and Leisure is now Arts and Design. Styles of the Times premiered in 1992, became Sunday Styles, and expanded to Thursday. At same time the Fine Art coverage shrank and the film section grew.

The most interesting thing about the recent documentary on Vogue and Anna Wintour is how deeply insecure she is about her choice of career. She's the most powerful public face of the fashion world, but she's British and from an educated family, and she sees herself as slumming. Her expression talking to the camera is painful to watch. The transcriptions are mine.

> "My older brother is in charge of finding lower income housing in London for people that need it and my sister is involved in supporting farmers' rights in Latin-America. My younger brother is the political editor

> of The Guardian. He is very successful, very brilliant… And my two brothers and my sister… I think…they are very amused by what I do… they... they're amused."

Her father was the editor for the Evening Standard. She's feared by everyone who works for her, but even her teenage daughter laughs at her. Her daughter has no interest in fashion; she's going to law school. Wintour is driven to succeed at something she herself has contempt for. On the other hand listen to Grace Coddington, a stylist and at the time Wintour's de facto second in command.

> Anna saw the celebrity thing coming, way before everybody else jumped on that bandwagon, and whilst I hated it I'm afraid I have to admit she was right. You can't stay behind. You know, you have to go charging ahead, and she did and the magazine is very successful because of it. And... whilst I wouldn't really care if I never saw another celebrity, obviously if a magazine doesn't sell I don't have a job so it would be silly... You've got to have something to put your work in otherwise it's not valid.

Coddington is from the other side of the UK class system, a convent girl from Wales, rising up into sophistication rather than down. She makes the most of it. And she's attached to an older sense of fashion as she remembers it, as others are to an older sense of art, as "non-commercial", less about making money than sheltered from the need to make it. Playboys didn't buy polo ponies, or football teams, to make money off them, and heiresses collected expensive dresses. The point is the game for the game's sake, art for art's sake. Coddington is interested first and foremost in her art. Wintour is afraid the whole thing is beneath her, even if it's all she has, and Coddington thinks of Wintour, even if out of necessity, as *selling out*.

Couture was an art. The queen's dressmaker and the king's painter were kindred. That was the context in which Yves Saint Laurent was brilliant at his craft. But cultures are shifting. Miuccia Prada never trained as a dressmaker. She has a PhD in political science and she trained and performed as a mime for 5 years. But she took over the family business and made it bigger.

> Prada rolls her eyes at the mention of Saint Laurent's Mondrian dress or Louis Vuitton's Richard Prince handbags. She also used to like to say that fashion is fun but frivolous, and fundamentally commercial, while contemporary art is serious and intellectual. It's the mind-set of the 1968 generation: well-to-do, educated Europeans proving their modernity by prizing innovative art but disdaining fashion, notwithstanding that they were, and still are, as clothes-obsessed as anyone.[291]

> "Art is for expressing ideas and for expressing a vision. My job is to sell. And I like very much my job" [292]

Prada is closer to Wintour's family in their attitude towards fashion, but she knows what Coddington remembers. "In Schiaparelli's time there could be a group of friends and the collaboration could be natural…Today, -everything is so corporate." She and her husband are billionaires. They're still the anti-bourgeois-bourgeois.

> Prada smiles a lot and is able to laugh at herself. She spends a lot of time thinking about how to reconcile

her identity as a feminist and a supporter of leftist politics with her life in the world of high-end luxury goods. “Fashion,” she says, “is the first step out of poverty. You have nothing and then you put something on. It is one of the first things you do to elevate yourself.” She smiles. “Of course, I am in the section of the expensive ones.” Which makes it hard for her to imagine pursuing a career in politics, though many Italians think that maybe she should, and she has hinted in the past of her own political ambitions. “But I am a rich fashion designer,” she says. “I wouldn’t be accepted.”

… “Clothes have nothing to do with success. You can dress however you want and still be successful. Basically, clothes are a pleasure,” Prada says.

“And as a luxury item, clothes are the cheapest,” she continues. “Why are people scandalized by spending money on clothes? I think there is something against fashion in the world. Everybody is so passionate about this, there’s a resistance to fashion, an idea that to love fashion is to be stupid. I think this is for two reasons. One is because clothes are very intimate. When you get dressed, you are making public your idea about yourself, and I think that embarrasses people. And two, I think that fashion is seen as women’s work,” she says. “My conclusion is that because fashion touches your intimate life, it embarrasses people.”[293]

Prada speaks in a mixture of the self-serving and sophisticated. Michael Kimmelman writes that the Prada Foundation, exhibiting art, film, performance and funding large projects, “shares with American institutions like Dia in New York and the Menil in Houston the aura of being at once chic and slightly arcane”, but both Dia and the Menil were founded by members of the same family, wealthy immigrants from France, and they follow the older European model of patronage. Kimmelman could have added The Barnes Foundation and John Dewey’s friendship with its founder, to whom he dedicated *Art as Experience,* “in gratitude”, but when Prada talks about her old ambivalence towards business and ends by adding “Why be a fake moralist and say you don’t care about money - although to say I do it for money is crazy”, that’s a far cry from a philosopher talking about self-interest in the third person. It make’s sense that someone with Prada’s self-awareness would enjoy a Polanski film, and enjoy showing a few of them on a big screen for the public, for her own pleasure and for vanity. We’ve come a long way from Albert Barnes and John Dewey.

Kimmelman refers to Prada as being from the “1968 generation”. Agnès Troublé, of *agnès b,* was in Paris.

“I was with them,” she says. “We marched. There was the radio and we always knew where it was happening. I had the use of a car with no doors, a Mini Moke. So I took people who were hurt to the hospital.”[294]

She ran a sewing group at Felix Guatttari’s clinic, CERFI[295]. Like Prada she’s not interested in fashion as art. “Clothes are interesting, but not that interesting.” As a film producer she’s worked with some of the best filmmakers in Europe, as well as Jonas Mekas, the founder of Anthology Film Archives, in New York. This is the older culture of patronage and hanging out rather than of the marketplace, of non-commercial art funded by commercial success at other things. Before 1968 –using

Kimmelman's brackets– fashion was still part of that world. In the US now art patronage following fashion patronage has become tasteful, or most decorously decadent. The art at Dia may be "arcane" but always tastefully "Euro". Troublé began working in film by helping to finance Noé's, *I Stand Alone* and Denis' *Trouble Every Day*, not films in any way concerned with taste.[296] The equivalent in the US would be Carolina Herrera financing *Bad Lieutenant*.

It was popular until recently in art/intellectual circles to argue against "mastery", not only against mindless technique in favor of communicative skill—against *Weather Report* and for Charlie Parker or against *Yes* and for *The Clash*—but against craft as such in favor of the moral and intellectual mastery of ideas and the mind. Laura Mulvey's condemnation of pleasure is only one famous, and still prized, example, and this bookish authoritarianism still allies itself to the pretensions of the academy. In the acknowledgements of her intellectual biography of Clement Greenberg, aptly titled *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses'* Caroline A. Jones thanks Benjamin Buchloh, historian, critic, and theoretician of left-wing high seriousness in contemporary art, for his "stimulating aperçu regarding the 'administrative sensibility' of post-Greenbergian conceptual art."[297] It's left at that. We're back to Duchamp and his readymades, The irony of Pop included irony as the technique: all facility was cheap facility; if you indulge knowingly you get away with it. This applies to Pop as it applied to Manet, the honest failed *Pompier,* and Eliot with his mocking references to romanticism and his verbal *collages.*

> O O O O that Shakespeherian rag—
> It's so elegant
> So intelligent[298]

Sartre

> Let us consider this waiter in the café. His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he return, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton whale carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually reestablishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All his behavior seems to us a game. He applies himself to chaining his movements as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other; his gestures and even his voice seem to be mechanisms; he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things. He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at *being* a waiter in a cafe. There is nothing there to surprise us. The game is a kind of marking out and investigation. The child plays with his body in order to explore it, to take inventory of it; the waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to *realize* it. This obligation is not different from that which is imposed on all tradesmen. Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony; there is the dance of the grocer, of the tailor, of the auctioneer, by which they endeavour to persuade their clientele that they are nothing

> but a grocer, an auctioneer, a tailor. A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer. Society demands that he limit himself to his function as a grocer, just as the soldier at attention makes himself into a soldier-thing with a direct regard which does not see at all, which is no longer meant to see, since it is the rule and not the interest of the moment which determines the point he must fix his eyes on (the sight "fixed at ten paces"). There are indeed many precautions to imprison a man in what he to as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape from it, that he might break away and suddenly elude his condition.[299]

"A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer." Even if the buyer is a tailor? Sartre is a member of the class permitted to join art and leisure, and he pretends to be artless. He sees others living through their social roles and pretends -the French bourgeois leftist intellectual- that he's not doing the same. "The child plays with his body in order to explore it, to take inventory of it." So does a dancer. Lawyers play with their minds, and so do philosophers, and they get paid for it, but lawyers play in pairs. Philosophers' model of sport devolves to onanism.

The American readership for theory is barely more sophisticated than the readership for Quine and Donald Davidson. Americans are naïve about themselves, and our institutions institutionalize naiveté. Political commitment, where it exists, is still more applied than engaged. A mature politics deals in the conflict between desire and convention, freedom and responsibility. The rule of law originates in a conservative fear of reason unmoored, reason inevitably colored by desire. Law is convention because wise men are never wise enough, and in a democracy the convention is adversarial, founded in an understanding of the f*act* of politics. As I said above, workers led the fight for unionization, blacks led the civil rights movement, and women fought for feminism. Drag queens and hustlers, and soldiers and communists, fought for gay rights before college professors did, and certainly not professors in their role as professors; Palestinians lead Palestinians and Jews fought for Jews. The force of all these movements was generated before anything else by self-interest, and self-preservation. All of them show the weakness of academic universalism which as philosophy claims to precede and encompass the particular. The only valid universalism grows out from it. Zionism was Jewish Garveyism. Its acceptance as liberal is proof again that rationalism can rationalize anything.

European intellectuals aren't less conflicted or less bourgeois; they're more capable of admitting it, though of course limiting that to Europeans makes no sense. The blindness begins in an American culture of self-regard, denial and willed innocence, spreading now with the American model of individualism. But Americans enamored of French theory are no more French than Johnny Hallyday is Elvis. Middle class Europe took working class America and made it sophisticated, removing the vulgarity; American middle-class vulgarity takes European sophistication and replicates it in the schoolroom. American theory is bureaucratized and humorless, self-indulgent and childish. It's anti-cultural. Derrida was engaged as the product of culture. He was a priest. The argument against him, and its damning, is that he's trying to use the language of the temple to describe democratic responsibility: trying to reconcile a univocal God with a multivocal world. But the moral law of democracy says that meanings don't come from god or from above. The problem is to build—not *design*—a political sophistication from below. The answer is not in the rationalist, academic and elite theory of equality proffered by judges and

philosophers but in the sophisticated practice, the vulgar empiricism, of the theater, lawyers and laymen.

Monets sell high at auction because they're pretty not because they're important, which is not to say that they aren't both. Warhol sells now for glamour not for terror, though their relation was his theme. That's how the market for valuable commodities works. Historians may refer and critics may have once to desperation in Pollock and early Rauschenberg or melancholy in Johns, but dealers don't. And there's real tragedy in some of Picasso's last works, even if it's the tragic desperation of a childish old man. The market may be for one-of-a-kind objects claimed to be of cultural and historical importance, but unhappiness is still a hard sell to the well-off, especially to the well off in democracy. It's less so for the rest of us, who look but don't buy. The language of art criticism has always played a part in the market; art critics at their best are skeptical admirers of expensive goods, but also at their best they're aware of where they stand, not just where they'd wish to.

The contemporary art market sells the products of bourgeois anxiety and ambivalence to the rich, but they're not described in these terms because the art world is a small community, socially and financially, run now too much on false idealism and cheap cynicism, when such relations cry out for subtlety. Artists while following fashion still claim to be indifferent to taste, and gallerists claim to support artists' integrity and independence, while in fact being interested only in repeating last week's success. No other corner of the cultural arena is so founded on the tacit acknowledgment of an audience that's so loudly claimed to be ignored. Meanwhile everybody watches movies and TV, which at their best sell the products of bourgeois anxiety and ambivalence, including desperation and melancholy, to the bourgeois and the rest in an admittedly corrupt process, impure socially and economically, and from which the rich make a handsome profit, a bit of which they then spend on art. The curator of one of the first and at the time most controversial exhibitions to mix claims of high seriousness with financial speculation told a friend of mine that he'd "sold his soul with that one", a statement that would be absurd coming from a movie producer. Museum shows give an imprimatur. A museum opening guarantees an increase in the value of the work on show, you can pop open the champagne when you open the doors. A movie premiere by comparison is where the rubber meets the road, and investors cross their fingers.

But the art world is a much smaller economy, and more and more it's the playground for people who make their money in larger scale entertainment. Talking to my teenage niece in England she was able to reel off the names of British artists as if they were pop stars, which in fact they are, and realizing that even the worst of them became less annoying. Not many teenagers in the US have ever heard of Gilbert and George, so her exclamation that they were, "fucking awesome" isn't something I'd want to argue with, and not just out

of courtesy. Some pop stars are good artists and a few are better than that. The works in the show I mentioned above may or may not last, but it wasn't a bad show for its time. That's not to say there's not a better model, or that realism doesn't have its price, but the biggest problem is the hypocrisy of those who market an abstract idealism, even to themselves, while living something else. And that group includes people who fill up their resumes with articles on Deleuze and Guatari or Rawlsian liberalism while TiVoing *American Idol* and the NBA, without being able to articulate their own relation to either. Calling yourself *a Philosopher* as professors do these days, means nothing. Logic may have to follow the law of non-contradiction, but people don't. And where does that leave philosophy?

Entertainment culture, for the rich, the poor and everyone in between, is full of emotions that are off limits, or need to be hidden, in works made to be bought by the economic elite. This is a truism and there shouldn't be a need even to mention it. The fine arts are remnants of the Old Regime; the aristocracy was as contemptuous as the left of the middle class, and the art world has lived that ambiguity since the rise of the bourgeoisie itself. The idea of the avant-garde is predicated on it and predicated as well on generous patrons who flout normalcy as only the wealthy can with little risk.

Jeff Wall's photographic light boxes are treated in art/intellectual circles as a document of a kind of left criticality, when in fact like T.J. Clark Wall has a stronger attachment to the serious moral conservatism of the quasi-aristocratic high bourgeois. There's a relation to Eliot in their worldly academicism. Wall has made that relation clear in articles and interviews

> JW: [Referring to Delacroix] Violence is only a theme in this kind of art; the art itself isn't violent. That makes it very different from, even opposed to, the art of the avant-garde, which expresses aggression against the idea of art itself. This aggression is no longer viable. I don't think its necessary or possible to go beyond the idea of bourgeois art—that is of antonymous art—towards a fusion of art and its context. Or if its possible it isn't very desirable. We have learned how the aggression against autonomous art was consistent with aspects of totalitarianism, from the Stalinist period for example, and how state violence could benefit from that kind of aesthetic. The concept of art as autonomous, and therefore less amenable to that kind of instrumentalization, is a central concern of the modern, and I'm most sympathetic to that.
> A-MB/RM: Modernity and avant-garde, to you, are two separate things?
> JW: We can't confuse them anymore.[300]

Clark, in *The Painting of Modern Life*, in the context of a discussion of the Café Concerts and images of popular culture in Degas, quotes a long passage from T.S Eliot's 1922 obituary for the singer Marie Lloyd.

> Marie Lloyd was the greatest music-hall artist in England: she was also the most popular. And popularity in her case was not merely evidence of her accomplishment; it was something more than success. It is evidence of the extent to which she represented and expressed that part of the English nation which has perhaps the greatest vitality and interest.

> Among all of that small number of music-hall performers, whose names are familiar to what is called the lower class, Marie Lloyd had far the strongest hold on popular affection. She is known to many audiences in America. I have never seen her perform in America, but I cannot imagine that she would be seen there at her best; she was only seen at her best under the stimulus of those audiences in England, and especially in Cockney London, who had crowded to hear her for thirty years. The attitude of these audiences was different, toward Marie Lloyd, from what it was toward any other of their favourites, and this difference represents the difference in her art. Marie Lloyd's audiences were invariably sympathetic, and it was through this sympathy that she controlled them Among living music-hall artists none can so well control an audience as Nellie Wallace. I have seen Nellie Wallace interrupted by jeering or hostile comment from a boxful of East-Enders; I have seen her, hardly pausing in her act, make some quick retort that silenced her tormenters for the rest of the evening. But I have never known Marie Lloyd to be confronted by this kind of hostility; in any case the feeling of the vast majority of the audience was so manifestly on her side, that no objector would have dared to lift his voice. And the difference is this: that whereas other comedians amuse their audiences as much and sometimes more than Marie Lloyd, no other comedian succeeded so well in giving expression to the life of that audience, in raising it to a kind of art. It was, I think, this capacity for expressing the soul of the people that made Marie Lloyd unique and that made her audiences, even when they joined in the chorus, not so much hilarious as happy....
>
> Marie Lloyd's art will I hope be discussed by more competent critics of the theatre than I. My own chief point is that I consider her superiority over other performers to be in a way a moral superiority: it was her understanding of the people and sympathy for them, and the people's recognition of the fact that she embodied the virtues which they genuinely most respected in private life, that raised her to the position she occupied at her death. And her death is itself a significant moment in English history. I have called her the expressive figure of the lower classes. There has been no such expressive figure for any other class. The middle classes have no such idol: the middle classes are morally corrupt. That is to say, it is themselves and their own life which find no expression in such a person as Marie Lloyd: nor have they any independent virtues as a class which might give them as a conscious class any dignity.

Clark adds:

> This is not the kind of argument, particularly in its closing stages, that one associates with T. S. Eliot, though the piece was never dropped from the canon of his prose.[301]

I think it hasn't been dropped from the canon for the reason precisely that it fits. Eliot and Clark share the same near aristocratic sympathy for "the people", opposing the insecure snobbery of those just above them who would consider themselves their betters. Compare to Greenberg:

> One and the same civilization produces simultaneously two such different things as a poem by T. S. Eliot and a Tin Pan Alley song, or a painting by Braque and a *Saturday Evening Post* cover. All four are on the order of culture, and ostensibly, parts of the same culture and products of the same society. Here, however, their connection seems to end. A poem by Eliot and a poem by Eddie Guest—what perspective of culture is large enough to enable us to situate them in an enlightening relation to each other? Does the fact that a disparity such as this within the frame of a single cultural tradition, which is and has been taken for granted—does this fact indicate that the disparity is a part of the natural order of things? Or is it something entirely new, and particular to our age?[302]

The above is the first paragraph of "Avant-Garde and Kitsch". Clark again:

> It would be hard to argue, after all, that the lyrics of Marie Lloyd's "One of the Ruins that Cromwell Knocked Abaht a Bit," or the melody of "My Old man said Follow the Van," establish what Eliot was on about. It was Marie Lloyd's *way* with the songs that impressed him—her ability to invest them with detail and pathos, her sense of how they might be made to carry the inflections of genuine stoicism in the one instance, or comic self-knowledge in the other.

The art is less in the song than in the performance. The reactions of Clark and Wall to such narrative form is conflicted: one is a historian of expensive objects, the other a manufacturer, but the conflicts are fruitful. They're the conflicts of a high figurative art in a democracy. But they're also specifically the conflicts of Modernism in modernity. And fittingly, this is where Fried reenters the picture, as a supporter of a new more mature pictorial art.[303] Though as a fan of Wall but still a moralist, he comes to him through his earlier defense of Greuze.[304]

"If the anthropocentric civilization of the Renaissance is headed, as it seems to be, for a 'Middle Ages in reverse'..." Panofsky wrote those words in 1939, and republished as the introduction to *Meaning in the Visual Arts*.[305] "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline", is a resigned but damning criticism of the culture of instrumentalization, so it's fitting that his definition of humanism, the humanism of Erasmus and Montaigne, now seems largely forgotten. Looking over the literature on Pollock, from Greenberg on, the references to the "Gothic" aren't surprising. It's become clear to me where my childhood associations of Pollock and Uccello begin. But you have to look farther into the past or to historians not philosophers or theorists of the present to understand the implications. The reconstruction of humanism begins with a return to history and a focus not on how various forms are distinct, isolated from one another, but how they're related: tied together. I'll end this with another long passage, from Clark, in *Farewell to an Idea*. The beginning of the chapter on Pollock: on Flaubert and the fantasies of Modernism in modernity. Think of Borges. You'll hear echoes of Henry James on Eliot (in Clark) and of Bourdieu and Greenberg in their faithful taking of people at their word, following others' fantasies as ideas rather than as descriptions of desire (and as echoes of/in a closet). As a critique of Bourdieu, the passage is devastating.

Farai un vers de dreit nien:
non er de mi ni d'autra gen,
non er d'amor ni de joven,
ni de ren au,
qu'enans fo trobatz en durmen,
sus un chivau.

(I shall make a poem out of [about] nothing at all:/it will not speak of me or others, /of love or youth, or of anything else, /for it was composed while I was asleep/riding on horseback.)
William IX of Aquitaine

Once Upon a Time. When I first came across the lines by the duke of
Aquitaine some years ago, naturally I imagined them in Jackson Pollock's
mouth. They put me in mind of Modernism; or of one moment of Modernism which I realized I had been trying (and failing) to get in focus ever since I had read *Harmonium* or looked at *Le Bonheur de vivre*. Two things were clarified. Not just that modern artists often turned away from the detail of the world in order to revel in the work of art's "essential gaudiness," but that the turning away was very often associated with a class attitude or style not unlike Duke William's, or, at least, an attempt to mimic that style—its coldness, brightness. lordliness, and nonchalance. Its "balance, largeness, precision, enlightenment, contempt for nature in all its particularity."' Its pessimism of strength.

You might expect such an effort at aristocratic world-weariness on the part of bourgeois and even petty-bourgeois artists, operating in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not the eleventh and twelfth, to bear some strange fruit.

Largeness and lordliness, after all, were not likely to be these artists' forte. Take the novelist Gustave Flaubert, for (central) example, at the beginning of work on *Madame Bovary* in 1852: already chafing at the bit of reference that seemed to come with the form he had chosen and dreaming of "a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would he held together by the internal strength of its style ... a book which would have almost no subject or at least where the subject would be almost invisible, if such a thing is possible." What strikes me as truly strange in Flaubert's case is not so much the project he outlined for himself—though as an ambition for a novel rather than a sestina or a set of haiku it has its own pathos—as the distance between the book he imagined and the one he actually wrote. No book has ever been fuller than *Madame Bovary* of the everything external which *is* the bourgeois world. Fuller in its heart of hearts, I mean; fuller in its substance; in the weight it gives to words themselves. It is as if the

> more intense a bourgeois artist's wish to dispense with externals and visibilities, the stronger will be their hold an the work's pace, structure, and sense of its own objectivity. Or maybe we could say that what brings on the word "bourgeois" at all as a proper description of *Madame Bovary* is exactly the deadlock within it between a language so fine and cold that it hopes to annihilate the emotions it describes as it describes them, and an absolute subjugation to those emotions and the world of longing they conjure up. A deep sentimentality, not relieved but exacerbated by a further (ultimate) sentimentality about language—call it belief in the arbitrariness of the sign.[306]

Mannerism. Remember Weber, "a realm of diabolical grandeur, a realm of this world, and therefore, in its core, hostile to God and, in its innermost and aristocratic spirit". And think of the formalism of Seinfeld, an art about nothing.

Over the past 30 years, there's been a movement towards open conservatism in the fine arts, beginning with the return of an art of luxury, even if or especially of luxury and irony. Commenting to a friend in the mid 1980s, while walking through a show by Clemente or Schnabel, I said we were being reminded that good art could be made in a monarchy, if only an economic monarchy. That sense has become even stronger in much of the work that's made now, good and bad. Most of the art that's shown in galleries wears its political conservatism without guilt. And some still caters to an anti-bourgeois sensibility. At its best it engages contradiction, at worst it's merely symptomatic of it. But most contemporary art can't be read in the humanist tradition, or as more as an attempt to document humane desire in an anti-humanist age.

The aesthetic of the expensive and abject and or the fancifully pathetic is like drag in its role-reversing integrity. The vulgarity is an affront to bourgeois norms while being utterly reactionary in its sexual and political essentialism: the refusal to escape what it mocks. But the work doesn't succeed as poetry unless the essentialism is felt and articulated rather than simply understood as an idea. The conflict isn't something you can learn in art school in southern California. Mike Kelley's work was always personal, even at its most professional. And it's also deeply, perversely, reactionary. The Europeans who were first interested in his work understood this, as they understood both Fassbinder and Kippenberger and as they now understand Michel Houellebecq. But we've developed an industry that supplies us each fall with a fresh supply of drag queens whose main claim to our attention is that the last batch have been around for a year. And this market for knockoffs originates in the fact that the US only re-imported Kelley and other examples of our own *Entartete Kunst* after they'd gotten the European imprimatur as valuable, important, art. In this country "art is good for you," as Kazin said. So our art appreciation, again like our academic culture, is about ideas and concepts rather than the full force of an action and event, or art itself as representation. The result here is a naïve rather than a knowing decadence, the decadence of the children of the powerful rather than of the powerful themselves.

Before going on I want to add two quotes that exemplify the ironic doubleness that made me laugh watching the scene of de Boeldieu and von Rauffenstein, of art and commerce and the varieties of conservatism in the present. Both are from a review[307] of Tina Brown's memoir of her years at *Vanity Fair*. The first is from the book itself, quoting an unnamed Italian

art dealer, and the second is from the from the memoirs of Rupert Everett, used by the author of the review, Craig Brown, of *Private Eye*, as a better model of for an observant memoir of life among the jet set.

> You know,…it is easy in America to take a very tiny sum like five hundred thousand dollars and turn it into three hundred million! So easy! But you know what? I don't want to. Because eet means raping those poor fuckers the American public even more than they are already. You know what ees the difference between the European peasant and the American peasant? The American peasant eats sheet, wears sheet, watches sheet on TV, looks out of his window at sheet! How can we go on raping them and giving them more sheet to buy!
>
> ---
>
> Omygod, I think, this is the man who dragged Cambodia into the Vietnam War, but of course I say nothing, even when a waitress comes by to ask what we want to eat.
>
> "What's on the menu?" asks Kissinger, and I can barely restrain myself from shrieking, "What's on the menu, Henry? Would that be Operation Menu?"
>
> Instead I obsequiously offer to go and fetch some nibbles. With success comes compromise, and it's amazingly easy to forget two million massacred Cambodians as one is passing around the cheese straws.

Brown adds,

> There is nothing nearly as nimble in *The Vanity Fair Diaries*, nothing as ambivalent or funny or close to life. Instead, Brown makes the parties she throws and attends sound more like meat-processing plants, with herself as a senior foreman, present simply to deal with the assembled bodies, clipboard and bolt-pistol at the ready. A beady kind of joylessness abounds. "This party is for a thousand careful Cinderellas," wrote Everett, "and even if their coaches don't turn to taxis at midnight, their serene fascinated faces revert to witches' grimaces if the evening's longevity exceeds by a minute the schedule prescribed by their publicist."

Everett, like Gilbert and George[308], like Duchamp and Eliot, is a monarchist.[309] Craig Brown may be as well, or maybe like Stephen Frears, only a "Queenist".[310] I was surprised to read the review in the NYRB, but I'd be more surprised to find it even now in *Artforum*. Everett, Brown, and Frears, play to an audience critical of moralizing, hypocritical liberalism. But many film critics gave the ambiguity of Frears' film short shrift. Manohla Dargis whom I quoted on Jean-Pierre Melville's *Léon Morin Priest*, called *The Queen* "a sublimely nimble evisceration of that cult of celebrity known as the British royal family."[311] Graham Fuller, a British-born critic writing in *Film Comment*[312] noticed other things.

> When Elizabeth last appears, she's strolling in the gardens at the palace alongside the Labour Prime Minister (who has sardonically been dubbed "Mr. Savior of the Monarchy" by Cherie). That their values have meshed feels like a betrayal.

To Fuller, but not to Frears, or me. And I'm neither monarchist nor Queenist.

In 2004 at the Armory Show in New York, I asked a European dealer if he preferred the show in New York or Basel Miami. He said New York wasn't "intellectual anymore"; the old attitude was there but it was empty. In Miami at least they were curious. The man, in his 30s in a suit and tie, with a graduate degree in art history, proper in the European manner, stood in a booth with a clean display of objects and black and white photographs documenting some of the most violent performance art of the 1960s. The contradictions were less hidden in plain sight than taken for granted. It's the doubleness that separates art from design, not by a line but by degree. More recently a gallery director in NY who's stayed on the scene as he's watched it change, and fade, spotted me at an auction at Christie's. "What are you doing here?" he whispered to me. "This is evil!" He was smiling, but he was also serous. He felt it a bit himself. The contradictions of high art and money more than any other form of art were once tied to sin. But he was only there because one of his artists had work at auction, and if it stayed low, he might be forced to buy it to protect the market. He was there for work. Even 30 years ago, dealers who worked only in the secondary market in contemporary art were thought of as somewhat disreputable, because they were only in it for the money. Those days are gone, along with the separation of art and fashion, and of aristocrats and movie stars, the subject more than the Queen herself of Stephen Frears' film.

Warhol wasn't the first American artist whose work got cleaned up to make it palatable, and he wasn't the first to play both sides. As Rothko put it: "Pollock is a self contained and sustained advertising concern"[313] A salaryman's alienation was everywhere in Rauschenberg's greatest early combines; *Monogram* and *Bed* are so violently anarchic that they remain unrecoverable by any but the most sophisticated polite imagination. They come from the same world as *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar named Desire*, and are crueler than either. But Rauschenberg's process quickly became aestheticized, while Rothko's interests, like Pollock's, were in the "Tragic and Timeless" and grandeur's raison d'etre as Cecil Beaton understood, is reassurance. Pollock understood that too, better than Rothko. But Warhol's preoccupation with death and the politics of death is not only always implicit, in his best work and often even in his worst it's front and center. Warhol was also the first to have a second career as a filmmaker, and a career that in historical and cultural terms if not financial ones equals his position as an artist. Warhol's complexity breaks the curve, but we need to understand the curve. That takes us back both to high style and "pop" art and the fact that the public now understands Warhol and his work better than many who claim to champion him:

> "Andy is a precious, rare commodity, one of the great artists thrown up by a commercial democracy, …whose achievement we're going to continue to measure for a long time.[314]

I didn't see the film the pop documentarian Ric Burns made for PBS; the quote above is from an interview he did at the time which stuck in my head. Reading it became clear Burns saw the terror, not just the voyeurism or the glitz, in Warhol's work. I didn't have to judge his film itself, as art, to see Burns understands Warhol's importance as an artist, and as a popular artist. And Warhol will last, even if his days as a philosopher are nearly over, and even as Sotheby's continues to pitch his work as they pitch Monet's water lilies.

Warhol's work is in the tradition of committed high moral conservatism in the fine arts, but there are other forms. Richard Tuttle's sculpture is in the mode now of the shabby genteel, and it's charming in its dichotomies: solid and light, casual and precise, sloppy and controlled. But his work now would look fine installed in a boutique on Madison Avenue, and at this point that's not an insult. It would be more of an insult to our intelligence to say this weren't the case. His interests descend from those rigorously attuned to the physical world and rigorously indifferent to politics: Tuttle is a couturier or origami master in styrofoam and masking tape. But if his work doesn't recreate the world in a compelling fiction as Warhol's does, compelling enough to imagine ourselves as someone else—and *Broadway Boogie Woogie* does that too—it provides wry commentary, replacing stable assumptions with something just slightly off balance.

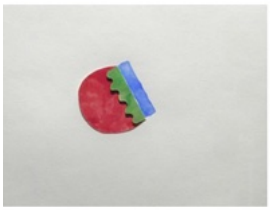
I've included three images of recent works by Tuttle and an installation shot of a gallery exhibit of dresses by Issey Miyake. You can call Miyake's work slick by comparison, but his dresses are fanciful not glib. They're more Gaudi than gaudy and if that's not hard to understand it's very hard to do. From a recent Op-Ed by Miyake in the NY Times.

> On Aug. 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on my hometown, Hiroshima. I was there, and only 7 years old. When I close my eyes, I still see things no one should ever experience: a bright red light, the black cloud soon after, people running in every direction trying desperately to escape—I remember it all. Within three years, my mother died from radiation exposure
>
> I have never chosen to share my memories or thoughts of that day. I have tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to put them behind me, preferring to think of things that can be created, not destroyed, and that bring beauty and joy. I gravitated toward the field of clothing design, partly because it is a creative format that is modern and optimistic.
>
> I tried never to be defined by my past. I did not want to be labeled "the designer who survived the atomic bomb," and therefore I have always avoided questions about Hiroshima. They made me uncomfortable.
>
> But now I realize it is a subject that must be discussed if we are ever to rid the world of nuclear weapons. There is a movement in Hiroshima to invite Mr. Obama to Universal Peace Day on Aug. 6—the annual commemoration of that fateful day. I hope he will accept. [315]

It's not reading too much into Miyake's work to say there's a difference between being optimistic and wanting to be, just as

there's a difference between wanting to make an art about nothing and actually doing it.

Richard Serra is another artist turning towards style as form, so much so that he's actually rewriting his own history to make the transformation less obvious. He's been having his older work returned to him and remade with new more durable materials.[316] The original *Prop* owned by the Whitney was made of lead. The new version—and that's what it is—is made of an amalgam more likely to keep its shape; the original piece was destroyed. Most of the oldest pieces in the MoMA retrospective were in fact the newest. I was told there were some protests at the Whitney, but the decision was treated as a fait accompli. He's been doing this over the past few years with both private and public collections. As far as I know, nobody's turned him down. Serra gets what he wants. And he's changed the way he wants his new (not replaced) works to be treated, and not just for reasons of audience safety and insurance. For years I'd walked through his shows getting my hands dirty, but many of his new pieces have a carefully manufactured and uniform coating of orange rust and you're not allowed to touch them. But this applies to the rougher, dirtier forged ones as well, while the compound curves that new technology has allowed him to make over the past 10 years are developing the grace again of haute couture. A couple of years ago a few of the pieces had the vulgarity of Broadway choreography, but that's gone.



Still, we follow Serra's work not because it leads but because it follows, mirroring the transformations of culture as a whole. And if it maintains its dynamism as it changes that allows us to imagine a thread of continuity. Serra and Stella now fit as alongside Frank Gehry in the new theatrical baroque. But Stella as I wrote started with Greenberg and Serra a more brute, materialism. Stella has gone a different route, moving towards a free-form and visually narrative abstraction closer to Gehry. When Stella's works are bad they're over-determined and immature, but it's enthusiastic not false; it's rare to see an 80 year old man make work so aggressively adolescent. But his best works run against intention. He still thinks of himself as a formalist, zipping and zooming now in three dimensions rather than two. But three-dimensional objects cast shadows, and shadows play a big role in the American imagination: they're always under the bed or on the horizon. And in Stella's best pieces the shadows do most of the work. That's where and why Stella is more interesting, and more important, than Tuttle or Miyake: the mixture of blind optimism and aggression, with hints of obsession and even rage that aren't really supposed to be there. We're back with Clark's Pollock and Flaubert, and D.H. Lawrence's America.

Aside from the open conservatism of makers of expensive objects, most of the artists who compete with modern mass culture, by reference, critique, or imitation, lose to it. Cultural hybrids are one thing generic hybrids another, and the age of video

projectors has made it even more obvious. A CRT monitor is a cube with images flashing over one of its faces and still strangely compelling as an object, even more so laying on its side. This was a common motif in the late 70s. But a short movie projected at theatrical scale on a gallery wall and for sale on DVD in an edition of 10 seems like a triumph of packaging. Spending large sums of money for luxury items is an indulgence, and more so for things that can be easily reproduced. There are a few pieces by Flavin and Andre that I've always wanted to make myself and live with, and a piece of paper with a date and signature doesn't change the experience of looking at and walking around an object. But there's a logic to the market for originals. My difficulty with the majority of film installations has more to do with the fact that as films they compete with other films but are kept apart from the world of people, film critics and others, who would see short films for what they are. Good or bad there's no reason they shouldn't be treated as films in other ways as well, and sold cheaply and in quantity. But this is the legacy of seeing *Man with a Movie Camera* as a major work of fine art rather than a minor film. There are exceptions, where the moving image on the wall has an architectural presence, where you need to walk around the room to get the point. Those works are still too rare. But I'd like to look forward to the day all of Warhol's films, more important than Vertov's in either category, are on DVD and the *Complete Screen Tests* are in a boxed set and streaming on Amazon and Netflix.

Art has successfully negotiated a place in contemporary culture as spectacle, background or as an alternative to modern media, sometimes co-opting it to its own ends. The photographs of Thomas Struth and Rineke Dijkstra maintain the *bourgeois critique* (referring both to subject and method), maintained otherwise in literature and film, as visual poetry in relation to more popular prose. Jeff Wall as I've said has a relation to art history and the old academy similar to that of T.J. Clark, who seems to have the relation to Marxism and Modernism that T.S. Eliot had to the Bible and the Anglo Catholic Church. That's a lovely switcheroo.

But in art world discussion, topics are limited. Pollock, to Gursky but not to Kubrick. Cindy Sherman's photographs are called feminist, and they're the most openly misogynist art made by any woman since Alice Neel. If Meryl Streep directed herself in a film, would it be referred to as Sherman's photographs are as a self-portrait?

Sherman is one of the artists who began as what's been called The Pictures Generation, who "used appropriationist strategies", copying art historical and popular imagery and "recontextualizing" it, reframing it, sometimes literally, in an act of distancing, ironic appreciation and inoculation. It's art as secondary text, both worshipful and condescending. And more importantly the inoculation didn't work. The greatness of Warhol is in the tension between his eye as a painter and as a filmmaker, between a vision of eternity and death. The other major influence as an artist on this younger group, John Baldessari, calls himself "a

closet formalist".[317] A native Californian *New York* artist in Hollywood, his sense of superiority begins with nothing older than Greenberg, as many younger artists now see history beginning with Warhol. But Sherman, David Salle and Robert Longo all ended up trying and failing to make films. Laurie Simmons ended up playing a version of herself in her daughter's, *Tiny Furniture,* the title referring to the subject matter of her own haute critical photography. At some point someone will write a comparison of the films of Lena Dunham and Sophia Coppola, as daughters of two different aspects of our cultural elite, and the worlds their films describe. It will become clear as well that although Sherman's early *Untitled Film Stills* made her famous, her later work got better. Her failure as a filmmaker and her return to older static pictorialism, not of photography but painting, allowed her to work less with ideas derived from Warhol than things they share.

Some artists work off an ironic academicism in paint rather than photography. But you have to have been raised into the academy to be able to use it in interesting ways, even if what you're doing is documenting your attempt at escape. I was in Dusseldorf twenty years ago and remember a former student of Gerhard Richter intoning in language more recently reserved for Eric Clapton, more or less that Andrea Pisano was God. One of the complaints I heard when I was in Beijing in 2007 was that painters had not found a way to reuse, and ironize, their own older traditions so the result too often is a generic post-communist Pop, in oil on canvas. But the older tradition lives on, in film.

Some people try to have it all, as fine artist and entertainer. If they try too much they fail. Julian Schnabel thinks too much like a filmmaker now. It's clear he's given up on painting even if he hasn't stopped. His work was never about control, but he used to be able to edit his indulgence, sometimes, and now he's gotten used to other people doing it. Film is collaborative and Schnabel is the one artist from that generation of those who always wanted to be filmmakers who succeeded in becoming one; not a great one maybe but a real one. Zhang Yimou, doesn't face these contradictions. As a filmmaker and a designer of spectacle he's able to keep focus. And the ambiguities of his manipulation of pure form and emotional nuance, and their relation to his role now in official PRC culture, will give intelligent critics something to talk about for a long time.

Most recent sculpture is made up of props from performance, imaginary or otherwise, and we shouldn't pretend that

conceptual furniture and wallpaper represent the height of our age, any more than dinnerware produced at the Bauhaus or the Barcelona Chair were the height of modern European art. That Issey Miyake and Jean Prouvé. are shown now in art galleries doesn't mark a decline in culture only in one of its forms.

If the intellectual model of fine art remains intellectual design (and the logic of original intent) the popular model is now theatrical design. There's a relation: the children of conceptualists have returned to an art-making process the only way they could, as furniture makers. There's a similar culture of "crafting" in academia, of grad school knitting circles, economist coffee connoisseurs, philosopher illustrators and wood carvers. None of this amounts to much, or won't until the preoccupations outpace the ideas. The best example of this, going back to the beginnings of conceptualism, is Adrian Piper, who has had careers both as an artist and as an academic philosopher. But her best, most tortured, work documents the sleep of reason, undermining all of her ideological pretensions. Her work is the poetry of confused rage. The new culture of crafting by comparison is another form of naïve decadence. For academic crafters, knitting circles are the closest they'll come to hammering out scenarios for *The Wire*. But our more committed culture of geek enthusiasm, of crafting, *artisanal* and *bespoke*, is *Fin-de-siècle* Vienna restaged in ignorance, the overdetermined attachments of people desperate to escape their isolation. It connects to the art of the closet, without the humor or sadness. We now have a variety of geeks outside of science and tech, all with the moral philosophy of Asperger's patients: so fixated on their manias that the only way out is the dream of the hive, the ultimate overdetermined community.

Paul Schrader tells a story.

> I recently watched a demonstration by the guys from Rockstar Games who did the Western video game *Red Dead Redemption*. They said that all new technology is essentially run by techies. And then at some point, somebody comes in from another field and makes it universal. And they were hoping that we were getting to that point with video games. We're not there yet. It's still in the realm of the techies.[318]

Video games are dystopias without the sense of loss. To take them beyond the realm of the techies would be to take them beyond the enthusiasts, the optimists, and to those who can introduce tragedy: out of the realm of games and into the realm of art. Schrader's point of course is that if we're not there yet, we will be.

Even architecture at its best is becoming theater. Walking through a building by Gehry or Jean Nouvel (below an image from *The Dark Knight*) you sense a concentration on light and image or experience that makes the buildings either less building than engineering spectacle—Calatrava/*Circ de Soleil*—or stage set and theatrical environment. On the walkway around Disney Hall in Los Angeles I was almost expecting to see gaffer's tape and c-clamps behind the flats. The experience held my attention, and it wasn't as if there was any sense that I was being asked not to look behind the curtain, quite the opposite, But if baroque engineering is a form of over-determined physical presence, a focus on immateriality and light and reflection

can make a building feel temporary, and that's disconcerting. It doesn't matter if the jacks are welded and the flats are stainless steel.

As I've said, when I first read Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood" I was surprised: Fried had forgotten the fact that art describes the world, it doesn't direct it. The prescriptions of the avant-garde of every sort led to failures and dead ends. Every scheme went awry, and with very few exceptions we look closely only at the works that fits the category avant-garde not by design but *by default*: Manet in 1863 and Picasso in 1906. Early post-revolutionary Russian art described first of all the desperate hope of its own time, and that's why we still look at it. Eisenstein like Brecht but unlike Vertov, or Boccioni, looked backward to think about the future. But Brecht's theater was at war with itself, while Eisenstein looked with envy at the theatricality of Japanese Kabuki while trying to give life to the cardboard cutouts of revolutionary characterization.[319] And as I've said, his favorite writer was Dickens.

So the new baroque Modernism, on its own terms, without defense or rationalization (the language of "baroque specialization") manifests an ethic not of utopian idealism but of description: of the realities of how we live, of capital and commerce, and of our perceptions of ourselves as actors within the world both define. Glass is everywhere again but now reflection is as important as transparency and the distinction between object and reflection becomes difficult to judge. Solids become light. Talking to younger architects a few years ago about who first began using glass as it's being used now, I was told that in architecture proper, it was probably the Austrian firm Coop Himmelblau, and before that, Dan Graham. Before that however, and no one mentioned it, it was Jaques Tati, in *Playtime*.

Architecture is obliged to give simple pleasures before complex ones (even more so than the fine arts are obliged to flatter the wealthy). We may enjoy reading about infernos or even having pictures of them on our walls but it's still perverse to have a cocktail party in the boiler room. Graham's use of reflectivity was intended originally to be emotionally disturbing, the sense of disembodiment linked to one of isolation and even terror, and Tati's response was cooler but no less critical. Life has acclimated us so much to the splintering if not the obliteration of self in the endless reflectivity of mirrors and markets that it's now an aspect of the popular sense of architectural pleasure. And the architects I talked to remember discovering Graham's pavilions, and responding to them instantly, in their late teens or early 20s; recognizing what they already understood.

But hyper-Modernism, focusing on experience rather than the ideology of technology and progress, is only one aspect of the baroque. One of the nice things about Gehry's buildings, which became clear to me at the Guggenheim exhibition in 2001, is that at the best of them succeed in escaping or bypassing modern idealism, focusing on open-ended experimentation without leaning on false innocence. They're very sophisticated cosmopolitan constructions, and they don't hide it. At the same time there's no reason for every decision to be backed up by a forest of academic references, and they aren't. His buildings are neither idealist nor anti-idealist and you don't get the sense that their designer is even shadowed by that—subjectively derived—dichotomy. The relation of architecture to meaning is always blatantly allegorical and Gehry's architecture, as

allegory and synecdoche of experience itself, connects to one of the richest veins of American culture.

All of this too is more description than defense. You can talk about Catalan Modernism without having to argue why you prefer *Casa Milà* to the *Palau de la Música*. I haven't spent enough time with any of Gehry's buildings to give more than a general idea of their possibilities, and limitations. Spectacle is the preferred art of a technocracy, and Zhang Yimou, as the director of the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics, knows that as much or more than anyone. I'm not going to go against my own advice and give the observer and messenger the balance of the credit or the blame. My interests here have been very basic, or (ironically enough) *structural,* though concerning structure as necessary but not sufficient, to art or to society, absent the reciprocal actions of performance and judgment by individuals: not the idea of performance but the *act*. My interests have been in a defense of art, as art, as craft, as manifesting not just preference but the details and inner workings of preference, details that warrant examination and "unpacking," requiring not agreement but debate, and the full depth and breadth of our engagement.

Slumdog Millionaire when it came out was recommended to me by a friend who divided his time between the art world and Hollywood, as not a great film but an important one: a hybrid that couldn't be measured by its in-between-ness as much as in being a new kind of thing. Of American-born filmmakers Quentin Tarantino is one of the few with a sensibility as marked by foreign influences as by American ones in a way that one can sense is less conceptual than visceral. I return to the last hour of *Kill Bill II* to try to understand the mix of sincerity and con that he pulls off: his love of the craft of acting, of lying, so that you end up less seduced into believing a lie than in love with the lie itself. All representational art does that, but it's harder in film, which is a waking dream.

A lot's been written on this, and the classic example is Ozu breaking the 180 degree rule (so that actors facing left in one shot are shown facing right in the next) but Tarantino is one of the first directors I'd seen –or at least I noticed it watching his films– to mix realism and anti-realist theatricality so naturally. Lars von Trier does something similar, shaded with the cynicism of a moralizing sadist. Both have an adolescent boy's fixation on lying and honest dishonesty, but Tarantino has a generosity that he extends first towards his actors and then his audience that can be disarming, while indulging a cartoon fantasy of individualism matching what Steven Jay Gould called Darwinian fundamentalism; the only morality in the end is integrity. It's humanism again only in the context of anti-humanism. But they're both part of a change, a new cinema, and TV, a magic realism that's richer than anything like it that's come before, richer because organic rather than intellectual, grown as a new common form. It's not anti-intellectual, but it's an art built openly on priors without pretense. Godard's late dreams are the culmination of a desire to escape language, to escape the structures that were fed to him in childhood. As an old man he's approaching the innocence of childhood. A pseudo-revolutionary pedant rather than hippie in his past, his anti-intellectualism is the kind only an old man can pull off. It's the freedom of old age, but a mix of freedom and despair. He's meeting quasi-literate image-saturated teenagers half-way. But he's also meeting their siblings, equally image-saturated, but sophisticated, without the romantic moralism, utopian or nihilist, of the earlier generation.

The friend who told me to see *Slumdog Millionaire* grew up near Chicago and went the Art Institute. Two of his closest friends went to a film program at a small local school focused on commercial production. He went to NY and they went to LA. 15 years later he took their advice to come out and start again. He's now in the commercial world which sometimes makes art. Apichatpong Weerasethakul studied film at the Art Institute and fell in love with the American avant-garde, but he wasn't trapped by its history; he was able to use it and adapt it, free of moral imperatives.

Conclusion

American idealism is now the aristocracy of the technocrat, but American culture has always been more complex than its statesmen pretend. The greatest American art comes not from the elite but from outside or below. In mid 20th century America the high bourgeois of Carnegie Hall was trumped by the outsiders' bourgeois on 52nd street, as Hollywood with few exceptions trumped the Great American Novel. Earlier those who aspired to the state of intellectual aristocracy and took it seriously had either drowned, left for England or turned outwardly or inwardly eccentric. Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens are strange birds. When official America adopted European Modernism it did so while trying to ignore that European Modernists were in awe, albeit mixed with terror, of American vulgarity and freedom. The Surrealists loved Chaplin and Mondrian loved Mickey Mouse. And now while Roberta Smith defends the noble intentions of American fine art, others defend the intellectual model of objectivity for the American press and the academy and the oxymoron of democracy and authority. No one questions that objectivity was always objectively pro-American. American internationalism is still the expansive nationalism of good intentions.

Frank Rich was for while the best political writer in the New York Times, but for most of his career he'd been a theater critic, and many expert commentators -with academic degrees in politics- had mocked him and the Times for the switch. Now all of them watch *Veep*, and it's taken for granted that comedians are better pundits than the people paid to do it. Maureen Dowd, who's basically a tabloid writer and a blue collar democrat, was attacked for her focus on politicians' manners and public performance, though she came out publicly against the invasion of Iraq well before many of those who condescend to her. Intellectual lightweight or not she's a sharp judge of character: she was right about Kerry and Gore as public performers, about John Edwards,[320] and if you bothered to pay attention also about Hilary Clinton's tears, one the most narcissistic pieces of political theater I've ever seen. Read the transcript and watch the video and ask yourself why she's crying, or rather who she's crying for. If you pay attention it's clear she was crying for the American people whom she was trying to save. The details were lost on people who paid attention only to the fact of the tears themselves, inventing their own stories.

As for serious journalists worthy of the title, Seymour Hersh wrote for the New Yorker not the Times, and Tony Judt, though not a journalist published his strongest commentaries on American politics in the London Review of Books.[321] Christopher Hitchens and Alexander Cockburn followed an earlier tradition, but like Judt they were immigrants from a country where the press, like the law, is still a trade. Whatever you think of either of them they never lied about their biases. Regional journalism kept it's flavor; local writers kept their local base, and expanded without changing. Molly Ivins and Carl Hiaasen are both vulgar, in the best sense.

The most pointed defense of journalism I've read is by Nir Rosen, commenting on a post at *Small Wars Journal*, a military blog, responding to accusations of treason after he'd embedded with the Taliban. [formatting is in the original]

> objections to my article have been silly so far. i'm a journalist, not an american journalist. my job is not to serve as a propagandist for anybody, just to tell stories and my advantage is that i can tell stories that are hard to come by[.]
>
> any comparison to WWII or the nazis always shows a lack of imagination, but in this case also a lack of understanding. the whole reason why its important to have people like me, able to hang out with militias in somalia, afghanistan, iraq or lebanon, is because they are not a formal army of a formal state, with clear goals, structure, hierarchy etc. on the contrary, their motives are not known and diverse, often at odds, they take up arms for different reasons and as anybody remotely interested in COIN knows by now (except for sassaman perhaps), they do not put down their arms through force, unless you're willing to use force like the russians in chechnya (and that hasnt worked for the israelis), but instead their goals and motives must be understood, and eventually a political accord must be reached.
>
> moreover, journalists regularly embed with the american military when it is conducting operations, attacks, killing. whats the difference?
>
> imagine if that one taliban commander had not screwed up my plans to go with them when they conducted attacks, and i had seen that too. isnt that interesting? isnt it important to understand who they are? and most importantly, wouldnt it make for a fun read?[322]

That's not a defense of objectivity; it's a defense of disinterest, verging on amorality. We're back to Baudelaire. Yet I'd trust Rosen more than most, more than the older or new generations of American "advocacy" journalists. I don't see Rosen ever wanting to partner with a billionaire so he can have his name on a masthead. At the same time, if he did there wouldn't be the same sense of sleaze. Civil liberties are defended now more by libertarians, who equate speech and the market, than by defenders of democracy, which means of what I've called divided consciousness, the awareness that each of us has the right and responsibility to find the lines we won't cross. Both liberalism and libertarianism are defined by the need for non-contradiction, as Modernism was. Du Bois saw "double-consciousness" as a handicap. It's much easier to be a moralist. Rosen argues less from moral superiority than honesty. He's an adventurer; his work makes a case for intellectual seriousness.

The fine arts, art critics, journalists and academics are all struggling with the same dilemma: how to defend an authority based either more on title than on role, or on everything they themselves may claim to oppose. Self-identified moral seriousness is affectation. "Well, I think that 'philosopher' is an honorific term that we hand out to people whose thinking about foundational issues we admire and approve of. It's like putting a gold star next to someone's name. ...I gave myself the gold star."[323] Seriousness is for others to judge. Manners are not actions, and technocracy is not democracy. The problem isn't self-interest, indulgence in rhetoric or the use of art, it's the old American moralism, and self-blind claim of innocence and artlessness.

The political culture of the US is separate from its wider intellectual culture to a degree unknown in other countries. American culture at large, even intellectual culture, is anti-political, the art of subjective experience, the ideological mirror of optimistic

public culture. So not even our most respected novelists now are considered for the role of public intellectual, even if they were fit for it. We're probably the only country on earth where those who document the intimate empiricism of social life, who know the most about what we are as a people and can communicate that in the common tongue are asked the least for comment. Remember the Berlusconi paper and the fake interview with Philip Roth, great critic of rational actor theory. "Doctor! What am I doing? What the fuck am I doing!?" And the fake interview was of a novelist *as intellectual*. Meanwhile our model intellectual technocrats read John Rawls, Isaac Asimov, *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*; our philosophy professors read Quine or Kripke, and the same cheap fiction; students of art and theory read Heidegger and Adorno; and they all read comic books. Earnest liberals now would never accept that one reason Joan Didion's eye is so sharp is that she began as a Goldwater Girl, that one of Norman Mailer's strengths was that he never denied being a jackass, and that Gore Vidal was never anything less than an American patrician.

The US still has a limited interest in foreign culture (and philosophy has been stripped away from culture). From the NY Times, in 2008:

> It is a commonly held assumption that Americans don't like to read authors who write in languages they don't understand. That belief persists here in Frankfurt, where publishers from 100 countries show off a smorgasbord of their best—or at least best-selling—books. By and large, the American publishers spend most of the week in Hall 8, the enormous exhibit space where English-language publishers hold court.[324]

It used to surprise me how so many economists and the political scientists I encountered were fans of science fiction. Both Newt Gingrich and Paul Krugman credit Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy* with the beginnings of their intellectual lives. In propositional literature plot as idea takes precedence over description and form. That's why it's the favorite pastime reading of economists, philosophers, and technocrats. But not all "pulp" fiction is speculative. Detective fiction is foundational literature, focusing on moral ambiguities in experience. It's the only form of pulp fiction that's ever transcended the form[325]. We're back to *Double Indemnity*. But above we're back with the absurdity and banality of Bourdieu's Flaubert, and the fantasies of art as illustration of principles. Speculative fiction is a kinder and gentler positivism, or socialist realism.

But pulp is still pulp. And reading back now into American criticism, Dwight Macdonald, Alfred Kazin, and Edmund Wilson, something bothers me about the American reportorial style; an artlessness that leaves me suspect even when I want to agree with its arguments. "The triumph of the fact," as Macdonald called it, came early. C. Wright Mills, writing in the mid 1950s, was a man in the grey flannel suit, rebelling against himself. Read *The Power Elite* for its language and you'll sense it's more symptom than critique. The description itself is flat: a jeremiad written as an end of year report. Without the historical awareness of what he was or what he came from, he was unable to describe his surroundings or himself as anything more than another example of the American pendulum, swinging from rationalism to irrationalism, from Puritan to drunk, and back again. The true genius of American art is only evident in the art of drunkenness, when the artist knows intuitively that the poetry of drunkenness needs to be the description of drunkenness: the rational description of irrational action. This is critics'

role in the reciprocal relation with artists, but only if they throw away the pretense of a universal knowledge of value, and focus on description, in relations among people. In democracy philosophy is parasitic.

Journalism at its best is art without the label, because it's not the thing you set out to do. It's never great and doesn't try to be. It's a genre. Sportswriters were famous as the best writers on newspapers because they were the last to become self-important. For Americans it also helps to get out of town. Below is A.J. Liebling, on the irregulars, French, Muslim, Jewish, and anyone else, fighting in North Africa in 1945.

> …in a hospital tent at the clearing station I came across a man with a French flag wrapped around his waist; the medics discovered it when they cut his shirt away. He was a hard-looking, blondish chap with a mouthful of gold teeth and a face adorned by a cross-shaped knife scar—the *croix de vache* with which procurers sometimes mark business rivals. An interesting collection of obscene tattooing showed on the parts of him that the flag did not cover. Outwardly he was not a sentimental type.
> "Where are you from?" I asked him.
> "Belleville," he said. Belleville is a part of Paris not distinguished for its elegance.
> "What did you do in civilian life?" I inquired.
> That made him grin. "I lived on my income," he said.
> "Why did you choose the Corps Franc?"
> "Because I understood," he said. [326]

You can sense that writing has devolved into the labeling of facts by a professional. Worldliness in America is street-smarts, so Liebling is still an observer of the street, engaged with whatever comes his way, including a career criminal who knows that fascism is beyond the pale. There are bits that read like Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, on Vietnam twenty years later. Liebling wrote for the *New Yorker*; Herr wrote for *Esquire*; he ended up writing for Francis Ford Coppola and Kubrick; reportage turned into romanticism. The famous passage quoting the photographer Tim Page after Page had been approached by a publisher to write a book, "whose purpose would be to once and for all 'take the glamour out of war.'"

> "Take the glamour out of war! I mean how the bloody hell can you do that? Go take the glamour out of a Huey, go take the glamour out of a Sheridan … Can you take the glamour out of a Cobra, or getting stoned on China Beach? It's like taking the glamour out of an M-79, taking the glamour out of Flynn … you can't take the glamour out of that. It's like trying to take the glamour out of sex, trying to take the glamour out of the Rolling Stones." [327]

At about the same time as *Dispatches* came out, Phillip Knightley published *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker from the Crimea to Vietnam*. I've always remembered one sentence from the dust-jacket of my parents' copy, and the book reviewer for the CIA noted it as well.

> Before going into any further detail it should be noted that Knightley's competence on the subject of both war correspondents and the horrors or war is qualified by the dust-jacket statement that "He has never heard a shot fired in anger, and hopes he never will." [328]

Worldly observation is split into sensibilities too close and too far.

Knightley was an Australian writing in England, following a model the New Yorker writers copied. Tom Wolfe credited Liebling with the beginnings of his style.[329], but Liebling wasn't a fop. "New Journalism" was a way to turn writing for a deadline into a self-consciously American art, adding a label to what could have more simply been a conscious effort to write well. Whatever will last of it will outlast the name, or has. And it goes unnoticed that the bitterest attack on Wolfe came not from straight journalists but Dwight MacDonald, defending The New Yorker, which he wrote for while famously calling it "midcult". It would be unfair to say it was only the narcissism of minor differences; for all his indulgences MacDonald was a serious critic. But as the author of an early attack on what's now called "data culture" , "The Triumph of the Fact", in 1957, he might have done better only 8 years later than simply call out "a bastard form, having it both ways, exploiting the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric license of fiction".[330] All of this documents the struggle for the individual and community, for communication, and art in the broadest sense, in the world of rising instrumentalism and atomization. The best of the writers of new journalism were still writers who wrote for money, not journalists who wanted to be artists.

> Sinatra with a cold is Picasso without paint, Ferrari without fuel—only worse. For the common cold robs Sinatra of that uninsurable jewel, his voice, cutting into the core of his confidence, and it affects not only his own psyche but also seems to cause a kind of psychosomatic nasal drip within dozens of people who work for him, drink with him, love him, depend on him for their own welfare and stability. A Sinatra with a cold can, in a small way, send vibrations through the entertainment industry and beyond as surely as a President of the United States, suddenly sick, can shake the national economy.[331]

> Once, in a dry season, I wrote in large letters across two pages of a notebook that innocence ends when one is stripped of the delusion that one likes oneself. Although now, some years later, I marvel that a mind on the outs with itself should have nonetheless made painstaking record of its every tremor, I recall with embarrassing clarity the flavor of those particular ashes. It was a matter of misplaced self-respect.[332]

There's no line in mimetic form between focus on self or object. The distinction between art and illustration is the perception in the audience that the world common to craftsman and audience is allowed a weight and depth outside the craftsman's imagination, but not so much as to render craft superfluous. Journalism is illustration by name and trade, but good journalists are writers within its limitations. Leibling wrote about others, trying to do justice to them and to himself. Gay Talese writing about Sinatra is giving himself and his readers the opportunity to indulge their shared sense of superiority towards the object of their jealousy and worship. Joan Didion in her first published piece begins with herself; reading it you can spend a lot of time talking about nothing but cadence, phrasing and timing, style not as stylishness but as inseparable from what my mother disparaged rightfully as "content". It's bright, clear, cold stuff. It belongs with Pinter. For Talese and Wolfe the style comes

and goes with the suit; Didion's style is in her bones. But again, Herr and Wolfe and Talese all wrote for Esquire. "On Self-Respect" was published in *Vogue*. The bourgeoisie, self-aware, ironic, is talking to itself, about itself and its relations to the world. But it's talking to itself with less and less awareness of history.

> Whatever Greenwich Village may once have been or may now be supposed to have been, anyone who has recently strayed down MacDougal Street on a Saturday night knows that now it is a playground. What Coney Island was once to the honest workingman, Greenwich Village is now to the unmarried or ex-married young professional. The Village streets, pads, coffee houses, and bars are jammed with people who look a million times more sensitive, artistic, and "interesting" than William Faulkner or Igor Stravinsky, but who live by teaching economics, analyzing public opinion, writing advertising copy, practicing psychoanalysis, or "doing research" for political candidates. They are not intellectuals, but occasionally dream that they will be. That is their secret ambition. Meanwhile, being young and frisky, they are not yet the "managers" in our highly organized technical society. But they have the skills someday to become managers. Just now they don't want power any more than they want marriage. They want a good time, and a good time is what they go to the Village for, and a good time in the Village is what they get. [333]

"The Village Today: or The Music the Money Makes" Alfred Kazin, in 1960 reviewing a book of Village Voice columns by Bill Manville. Kazin like MacDonald, a writer from the older tradition, not an academic, a reader of literature not strictly newspapers and social science, a friend of Arendt, still a humanist, a reader for subtext, of the words on the page and not only the arguments they're claimed to make. "They are not intellectuals, but occasionally dream that they will be. That is their secret ambition.". My mother divorced her first husband, she said, because he didn't understand the tragedy of life. He was an optimist. He went on work in the White House flacking the Great Society and the Vietnam war. And now almost 60 years later a college graduate with the same optimism can designate himself a "public intellectual" and people will take him at his word.

Mad Men is a flat screen Disney World for people who grew up on reruns, made by suburban infants of the 60s for an audience of the suburban infants in the 70s and 80s. It's dirty and sterile. Todd Haynes' films, the older more highbrow version of this are a mashup of Douglas Sirk and Ozzie and Harriet, second hand history and fetishist misogyny. The real subject of course is always the present, but the present is embalmed too, and that specifically *is not* the subject. There's so much art, meaning artifice, there's no room to breathe, and darkness is twisted through technical mastery that the end is less observation than projection. Haynes' films are worse than a bad Coen brothers film, crueler, because no strained attempt at comedy, just Americans finding ways to avoid responsibility and watching other people fuck up. But there are also good Coen brothers films, and *The Wire* and *Breaking Bad* and *The Sopranos*; and like Warhol, those are black as pitch.

"Mailer was a left conservative."[334] Didion was a Goldwater Girl. MacDonald mocked his own past as a Trotskyite. Liebling, Herr and Page lived through wars. You can indulge as a craftsman and admit that you're indulging; you can fight so much to deny something that it shows up in everything you do, but art doesn't work as symptom. It needs to be made so that someone without the fixations can feel their pull. Works can be popular when they're made because the tastes, desires and fears, are

common. That doesn't mean the works will last. Haynes and Matthew Weiner are like Talese and Wolfe. The perversity is as clear as the desperation to avoid the subject. The problem isn't the kink; it's the dishonesty. Didion indulges journalistic sleaze. She's a voyeur, passive, condescending, but she's cruel to herself too. That's enough to keep your sympathy. Art is conservative, or it's reactionary.

The purpose of this essay has been to argue from the documentation of human behavior and history, for a positive philosophy of arts and language, language not as idea but in use, by many people and with multiple meanings, which is the only politics not based in fantasy. I didn't want to add to the pile of books written by melancholic ex-priests of reason and the Church, who did no more than argue against an illusory certainty, that the cup was half empty. I was annoyed always by the generic confusion in the conceptual half-literature of continental philosophy. And conceptual literature itself of Borges and others is the poetry of anarchist control freaks, bureaucrats of dreaming.

The art of criticism, of art *as* criticism, is always reactionary in the literal sense that it's following and dependent on what it tries to leave behind. In literary terms it's the model of secondary text as primary, or of the biographer as the killer or usurper. Religious scholars all the way to Derrida have an easier time of it because the author they celebrate and kill is the author of everything. But imitation in rebellion in all cases, from drag queens and Alfred Jarry to Kafka and Adorno is the sincerest form of flattery. Negative Dialectics is a model of and for passive aggression: of anger and a refusal either to take action, or if active to take responsibility for what results. That's the danger of identification with the role chosen by your masters: the anger of *ressentiment*, of *niggers, faggots* and *bitches*, of *victims,* and of children rather than adults, (and Nietzsche's writings of course were self-diagnosis first and foremost). All societies are founded on exclusion, but even slave owning societies exist not *to* exclude or oppress but *by way of* oppressing, at the same time existing as cultures that their citizens as opposed to their victims, enjoy. The culture of *Critique* sees society as a series of absolute forces, again, as children imagine the authority of their parents, and recreates those forces, fighting an imaginary fire with fire, in an aesthetic of totalization and universalization that becomes a parody of the past. Fascism is a parody of monarchism. The most radical becomes the most reactionary. Zionists define themselves as the oppressed; it's logically impossible for them to be the oppressor.

Philosophy has never come to terms with what's now called "the other" precisely because philosophy begins with the fantasy of an all-knowing self. And now we're back where I started, with Weber, eliding the existence of the self that exists.

> But bragging is a common vice, and a more specific, and also more decisive, flaw in Eichmann's character was his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view. [335]

The denial of Panofsky's "empathy" ends here. Even the attempt is a distraction. Anglo-American philosophy has focuses on aperspectival assumptions and generalization, collapsing spatial and temporal relations into atemporal truths. The most extreme proponents of "Disenchanted Naturalism" say flat out that "history is bunk".[336] Asking whether or not you can translate Mallarme or Pushkin into English, or whether a man could have written *Pride and Prejudice,* or whether their originalism applies to the U.S Constitution meets with silence, or claims of irrelevance, or half-hearted affirmations stated

sheepishly but not defended. Rationalist fundamentalism is the child of textualist fundamentalism, and all claims otherwise are no more than arguments from authority. Continental philosophers' attempts meanwhile, to "find the other in myself" conjoin the sensibilities of the romantic poet and Investigating Magistrate in the European Inquisitorial System of justice. Rather than the philosopher as technocrat we get the philosopher as sage; rather than arguments from original intent we get smoke and mirrors and sincere obfuscation, *containing multitudes*. In both cases the ideal and model is a single figure, a man alone, the model of the neoliberal imagination.

Recently the two schools have been moving closer and rather than philosophers taking precedence over artists, either as theologians or scientist/technocrats, philosophers and artists are now equals in their ability to "create" new concepts and futures. Unfortunately, this 'creativity' is to philosophy what Madison Avenue is to art. Deleuze is accepted in the US even by those who consider Derrida a fraud, and this is out of a need to maintain the pretense that philosophical invention gives permission for others to act. The results are absurd. I've written enough already to answer Deleuze and Rancière as to whether art leads. History shows that it follows. And here I'll kill two more birds with one stone.

The theory of The Extended Mind says that since we orient ourselves in the world by means of objects in the world, our minds themselves extend outward. In the words of Andy Clark of the University of Edinburgh, the human mind has never been "bound and restricted by the biological skin-bag."[337] Hatred of the physical self is one of the founding precepts of futurism in the computer age, but in this new fantasy of hypertrophied individualism, not only do we find "the other" in ourselves, we find the world. I've parodied it a few times, in the characters a of jaded professor answering an enthusiastic student, and the same student with his girlfriend who's lost patience.

"Put your cell phone on my desk." The professor smashes the cell phone with a hammer. "Now put your hand on the desk."
"No baby... please... I understand you... you're a part of me! I have an extended mind!"

This fantasy relates directly to Actor Network Theory and Bruno Latour's "Collective", a self expanded not only to the world around it but to the world as a whole. Latour's fantasy is of an extended, universal, benign self. It's rhetoric, not logic, but it's the rhetoric of expansion when humility is if anything the rhetoric of reticence. His collective includes non-voting members, obliterating distinctions central to self-government, a fitting parallel to Paul Romer's idea of Charter Cities.[338] If we're all equal, some are more equal than others. Why not imagine ourselves as humanists once did, as small, with burdens of both responsibility and tolerance? But all humility being false –Derridian ostentation– the problem remains. In the end there can be no humanism without irony. Saying "I love you" means nothing absent the agreement of another human being. *The other* is the chimera in the mind of an adolescent boy who talks endlessly about himself while claiming to be talking about the girl of his dreams. All of these philosophies, in the name of the primacy of ideas and theory and the self-regarding optimism of their authors, ignore the practice of adversarialism in daily life, from the schoolyard to the theater of politics and law, all built in the tacit admission that all that is fully common in the human world is form.

Technocracy demands that the majority replace the world of experience, of conflicting obligations judged by each of us as individuals, with an inflexible model of rules: all of us limited to an identical internally consistent ideology of self. The model is authoritarian.

I'm ending where I began.

> "If her interests have the same value as his, then my interests have the same value as yours."

An objective viewpoint, imagined as outside social relations and with the goal of seeing the equivalence/equality of all, by definition is a view from above. This "scientific" process, focused on the making of generalizations (the analysis of equivalence), is also by definition amoral; questions of morality are allowed only after science has had its say. Popular, "common sense" morality says values should come first, teaching an ideal of service or self-sacrifice. And this is still the model for the military, subject to rank, as I wrote above, where you follow orders from above but freely sacrifice for your peers. Military piety and democratic responsibility are in conflict and our now professional military does not teach its recruits to understand the full weight of their moral responsibility as citizens and soldiers. Again, Socrates asks, "And is, then, all which is just pious? or, is that which is pious all just, but that which is just, only in part and not all, pious?"[339] A citizen soldier has to make his own decisions even about when to make his own decisions. This doesn't collapse self and other; it divides self from self. And this division is something neither our military nor our liberal philosophers concerned with solving trolley problems are willing to accept.

Along with the logical, objective, model of the equivalence of all, modern economic thought begins in accepting our tendency towards individual self-interest, which liberals see as needing to be policed, again as if objectively and militarily from above. But this moral passivity has led to a realist acceptance: focusing on the mean puts downward pressure on the mean. The 'scientific' acceptance of greed as a 'fact' results in an increasing tendency to see greed as 'truth'. Optimism has drifted from one to the other.

Contradiction, the divided self, is the first principle of democracy: to judge knowing you are also judged, to see not only formal rules that remove the need for judgment but also your own conflicting obligations to self and others, that require it, obligations that aren't mutually exclusive but flexible, and breakable, and reparable, in *time*.

Here's Panofsky in his essay on film.

> While it is true that commercial art is always in danger of ending up as a prostitute, it is equally true that noncommercial art is always in danger of ending up as an old maid. Non commercial art has given us Seurat's "Grande Jatte" and Shakespeare's sonnets, but also much that is esoteric to the point of incommunicability. Conversely, commercial art has given us much that is vulgar or snobbish (two aspects

> of the same thing) to the point of loathsomeness, but also Durer's prints and Shakespeare's plays. For, we must not forget that Durer's prints were partly made on commission and partly intended to be sold in the open market; and that Shakespeare's plays—in contrast to the earlier masques and intermezzi which were produced at court by aristocratic amateurs and could afford to be so incomprehensible that even those who described them in printed monographs occasionally failed to grasp their intended significance—were meant to appeal, and did appeal, not only to the select few but also to everyone who was prepared to pay a shilling for admission.
>
> It is this requirement of communicability that makes commercial art more vital than noncommercial, and therefore potentially much more effective for better or for worse.[340]

Greed is an astringent, but it's not the only one there is. And the works Panofsky praises, of Durer and Shakespeare, are not the simplest or most one sided but the most divided within themselves, as the best work always is. But with that statement of opinion we need again to distinguish between a statement of simple preference and description. The challenge is to draw someone to your preference, by whatever means, assuming also that the other person should be no more or less seducible than you are: equally on guard. equally engaged. More than specific rules, a dynamic, just, society is in need of adults.

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in a dissent from 2009:

> This court has never held that the Constitution forbids the execution of a convicted defendant who has had a full and fair trial but is later able to convince a court that he is 'actually' innocent.[341]

Scalia says this because the Constitution refers to due "process" not to outcome.

> No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.[342]

The letter and the spirit of the law. The phrase itself undermines the claims of naturalist epistemology. What is judging? Who's to judge? Here we get back to the relation of art and law and of abstraction to representation.

On the letter of the law Scalia is correct. To argue from the spirit of law or language is subjectivism, and subjectivism is inarticulate, in-formal, isolate: the end of the social. But to argue only from the letter is cold, inhuman, unjust:

> "He's just a boy! He didn't mean it! It was an accident! He's my son!"
> "Okay Let him go."

"He's just a boy! He didn't mean it! It was an accident! He's my son!"
"It doesn't matter. It's the law."

Does it matter that he killed five people?
Who's to judge?

Formal logic in the world of experience is pedantry, and military pedantry in civic life is fascism. Pedantry will always become hypocrisy. Policemen enforcing law will always tend to identify themselves not with its enforcement but its embodiment: "I am the law." And by identifying themselves with law the laws' authority will become theirs. St Paul [Titus 1:15] says, "To the pure all things are pure." That's the pull of the short circuit, of identification.

I'll end with two passages on the subject of democracy by two prominent contemporary philosophers writing in English, Colin McGinn and again, Simon Blackburn.

McGinn:

> Tocqueville's point is that democracy presupposes that each person is as competent and virtuous as any other. But of course this is false: people differ widely in intelligence and virtue. Note that he says "considered" not "really". So democracy rests on a lie. How, then, to defend democracy? Well, if truth, reason, virtue, etc are not objective qualities that people exemplify to varying degrees, but are rather relative to each person, we have a way out: everyone is as smart and good as anyone else to himself. Then democracy rests on no lie, since everyone really is cognitively and morally equal. Relativism steps in to save democracy from its noble lie. Thus relativism finds a foothold. But relativism is rubbish; so where does that leave democracy? [343]

Blackburn:

> The belief that everyone deserves equal respect and that anything else is discriminatory and elitist. The truth is the exact opposite: discrimination is a virtuous activity and elites are to be admired. The very few human beings who are good at anything, whether football or playing the violin or writing or painting, form an elite and deserve respect for their excellence. Other people either deserve sympathy for trying and failing, or should be ignored if they have not even tried.[344]

I can't argue with the factual statements in the first. There is no truth value to the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution any more than there's a truth value to the Bible, or the works of Beethoven and Shakespeare. However they're defended, and *all* are often in terms of the supernatural, all in fact are used most importantly as lenses to focus both private thoughts and public conversation. For the rest, McGinn is the perfect example of the pedant brought low by his own conflation

of opinion and truth.[345] Though I don't doubt he blames relativism and lawyers.

Mathematics is the universal language and the most private, because it can be learned and practiced in isolation. There's no danger in this until its returned to public use, because a private imagination will construct a private telos for those universal terms: the brilliant car-designer will think of highways before train tracks. And the Nobel Prize winning physicist and secularist will write a book defending science and rationality and include a chapter defending Zionism in the same terms.[346]

Blackburn extends the logic of reason to the arts, because he loves both but sees reason as the force behind them. He's arguing from assumption. In the sciences great minds only emulate greatness. In the arts great minds owe everything to their teachers, major, or minor. Mozart did not *correct* Haydn; Beethoven did not correct Mozart. Michelangelo was in awe of Masaccio though he was a more advanced technician and a greater artist. Bernini was a better technician than Michelangelo, but not a better sculptor.

The world is becoming less and less religious, but the enchantment of the world will never fade. The question of how to manage that reality should not be left to mythyfiers against mythification any more than to orators against rhetoric.

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