On the first appearance in English of what is probably one of the most influential books on art to be published since the war, Kenneth Tynan wrote:

"In this challenging new Pelican Ernst Fischer, the Austrian painter and critic, surveys the whole history of artistic achievement through Marxist eyes. People have always needed art; but why have they needed it? And what shaped the forms whereby they satisfied their needs? Fischer's answers to these questions should be as vitally studied and debated here as they have been on the Continent."

The book abounds in signs that Fischer is an empirical rather than a doctrinaire Marxist; you never feel he is tailoring his reactions to fit a schema. "A new art," he says, "does not come out of declines but out of works. Aristotle did not precede Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus and Sophocles; he derived his aesthetic theories from them."

"Marxism has long needed an Aristotle; and in Ernst Fischer I suspect it has found its man."

This book was first published in East Germany in 1956. It is now available in English for the first time.

The front cover design by Frederick Price represents a sculpture by Soviet artist Nezvestny photographed by Jens Mohr, and the "Dancer in Animal Diapason" from the cave of Las Troje Frieze, after Brunn, reproduced from Paolo Orsi's "Paleoartistic Art," with kind permission of G. E. Senneli, Florence.
CHAPTER ONE
THE FUNCTION OF ART

"Poetry is indispensable — if I only knew what for." With this
charmingly paradoxical epigram Jean Cocteau has summed up
the necessity of art — as well as its questionable role in the late
bourgeois world.

The painter Mondrian spoke of the possible "disappearance"
of art. Reality would, he believed, increasingly displace the
work of art, which was essentially a substitute for an equili-

brum that reality lacked at present. "Art will disappear as
life gains more equilibrium."

Art as a "life substitute"; art as a means of putting man in a
state of equilibrium with the surrounding world — the idea con-
tains a partial recognition of the nature of art and its necessity.

And since a perpetual equilibrium between man and the
surrounding world cannot be expected to exist even in the
most highly developed society, the idea suggests, too, that art
was not merely necessary in the past but will always remain so.

Yet is art really no more than a substitute? Does it not also
express a deeper relationship between man and the world?
Indeed, can the function of art be summed up at all in a single
formula? Does it not have to satisfy many and various needs?
And if, as we reflect upon the origins of art, we become aware
of its initial function, has not that function also changed with
the changing of society, and have not new functions come into
being?

This book is an attempt to answer questions such as these,
found on the conviction that art has been, still is, and always
will be necessary.

As a first step we must realise that we are inclined to take an
astonishing phenomenon too much for granted. And it is
certainly astonishing: countless millions read books, listen to
music, watch the theatre, go to the cinema. Why? To say that
they seek distraction, relaxation, entertainment, is to beg the
question. Why is it distracting, relaxing, entertaining to sink oneself in someone else’s life and problems, to identify oneself with a painting or a piece of music or with the characters in a novel, play, or film? Why do we respond to such “unreality” as though it were really intensifies? What elusive, mysterious something that is only play can so utterly absorb us?

Evidently man wants to be more than just himself. He wants to be a whole man. He is not satisfied with being a separate individual, but of the partiality of his individual life he strives toward a “fulness” that he senses and demands, toward a fulness of life of which individuality with all its limitations, cheats him, toward a more comprehensive, a more just world, a world that makes sense. He rebels against having to consume himself within the confines of his own life, within the transient, chance limits of his own personality. He wants to refer to make himself; to extend his inquisitive, world-hungry, in science and technology as far as in the remotest constellations and as deep as the innermost secrets of the atoms to unite his limited vision in art with a communal existence; to make his individuality social.

The function of art
reflects his infinite capacity for association, for sharing experiences and ideas.

And yet: is this definition of art as the means of becoming one with the whole of reality, as the individual’s way to the world at large, as the expression of his desire to identify himself with what he is not, perhaps too romantic? Is it not rash to conclude, on the basis of our own near-hysterical sense of identification with the hero of a film or a novel, that this is the universal and original function of art? Does art not also contain the opposite of this ‘Dionysian’ losing of oneself? Does it not also contain the ‘Apollonian’ element of entertainment and satisfaction which consists precisely in the fact that the onlooker does not identify himself with what is represented but gelen distance from it, overcomes the direct power of reality through its deliberate representation, and finds, in art, that happy freedom of which the burden of everyday life deprives him? And is not the same duality — on the one hand the absorption in reality, on the other the excitement of controlling it — also evident in the way the artist himself works? For make no mistake about it, work for an artist is a highly conscious, rational process at the end of which the work of art emerges as mastered reality — not at all a state of intoxicated inspiration.

In order to be an artist it is necessary to seize, hold, and transform experience into memory, memory into expression, material into form. Emotion for an artist is not everything; he must also know his trade and enjoy it, understand all the rules, skills, forms, and conventions whereby nature — the stream — can be tamed and subjected to the contract of art. The passion that consumes the dilettante, the true artist: the artist is not masked by the heart, he tames it.

Tension and dialectical contradiction are inherent in art; not only must art derive from an intense experience of reality, it must also be contracted, it must gain form through objectivity.

The free play of art is the result of mastery. Aristotle, so often misunderstood, held that the function of drama was to purify the emotions, to overcome terror and pity, so that the spectator identifying himself with Creusa or Odysseus was liberated from that identification and lifted above the blind workings of fate.
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The ties of life are temporarily cut off, for art 'captivates' in a different way from reality, and this pleasant temporary captivity is precisely the nature of the 'entertainment', of that pleasure which is derived even from tragic works.

Berthold Brecht said of this pleasure, this liberating quality of art:

"Our theater must encourage the trust of comprehension and train people in the pleasure of changing reality. Our audience must not only learn how Prometheus was set free, but also train themselves in the pleasure of freeing him. They must be taught to feel, in our theater, all the satisfaction and enjoyment felt by the inventor and the discoverer, all the triumph felt by the liberator."

Brecht points out that in a society of class struggle, the "immediate" effect of a work of art demanded by the ruling aesthetic is to suppress the social distinctions within the audience and thus, while the work is being enjoyed, create a collective not divided into classes but "universally human". On the other hand, the function of 'non-Aristotelian drama' which Brecht advocated was precisely to divide the audience by removing the conflict between feeling and reason which has come about in the capitalist world.

Both feeling and reason degenerated in the age of capitalism when that age was drawing towards its end, and entered into a bad, unproductive conflict with each other. But the rising new class and those who light on its side are concerned with feeling and reason engaged in productive conflict. Our feelings impel us towards the maximum effort of reasoning, and our reason purifies our feelings.

In the alienated world in which we live, social reality must be presented in an arresting way, in a new light, through the 'alienation' of the subject and the characters. The work of art must grip the audience not through passive identification but through an appeal to reason which demands action and decision. The rules according to which human beings live together must be treated in the drama as 'temporary and imperfect' so as to make the spectator do something more productive than merely watch, stimulating him to think along with the play and finally to pass judgement: 'That's not the way to do it. This is very strange, almost unbelievable. This must stop.' And so the spectator, who is a working man or woman, will come to the theater to . . . enjoy, as entertainment, his own terrible and never-ending labour by which he is meant to support himself, and suffer the shock of his own incessant change. Here he may produce himself in the easiest fashion: for the easiest fashion of existence is art.

Without claiming that Brecht's 'epic theatre' is the only possible kind of militant working-class drama, I quote Brecht's important theory as an illustration of the dialectic of art and of the way that the function of art changes in a changing world.

The role d'etre of art never stays constant the same. The function of art in a class society at war within itself differs in many respects from its original function. But nevertheless, despite different social situations, there is something in art that expresses an unchanging truth. It is this that enables us, who live in the twentieth century, to be moved by prehistoric cave paintings or very ancient songs. Karl Marx described the epic as the art form of an undeveloped society, and then added:

But the difficulty is not in grasping the idea that Greek art and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. It rather lies in understanding why they still constitute for us a source of aesthetic enjoyment and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment.

He then offered the following answer:

Why should the social childhood of mankind, where it had obtained its most beautiful development, not exert an eternal charm as an age that will never return? These are ill-bred children and precocious children. Many of the ancient nations belong to the latter class. The Greeks were normal children. The charm their art has for us does not consist with the primitive character of the social order from which it had sprung. It is rather the product of the latter, and is rather due to the fact that the unique social conditions under which the art arose and under which alone it could appear can never return.

Today we may doubt whether, compared with other nations,

the ancient Greeks were "normal children". Indeed, in another connection Marx and Engels themselves drew attention to the problematic aspects of the Greek world with its contempt for work, its degradation of women, its ideals of the soul, and its love of _comfort and ease_. And since then we have discovered a great deal more about the sordid side of Greek culture, science, and ethics. Today our ideas of the ancient world coincide only in part with those of Winckelmann, Goethe, and Hegel. Archeological, ethnological, and cultural discoveries no longer allow us to accept classical Greek art as belonging to our "childhood". On the contrary, we see in it something relatively late and mature, and in its perfection in the age of Pericles we detect hints of decadence and decline. Many works, once praised as "classical", by the sculptors who followed the great Polygnotos, a large number of those heroes, artists, discus throwers, and characters, strike us today as empty and meaningless compared with Egyptian or Mycenean works. But to go deeper into these matters would take us too far from the question Marx raised and the answer he supplied.

What matters is that Marx saw the time-conditioned art of an undeveloped social stage as a _moment of humanity_, and recognized that in this lay its power to set beyond the historical moment, to exercise an eternal fascination. We may put it like this: all art is conditioned by time, and represents humanity in so far as it corresponds to the ideas and aspirations, the needs and hopes of a particular historical situation. But, at the same time, art goes beyond this limitation and, within the historical moment, also creates a _moment of humanity_, promising constant development. We should never underestimate the degree of continuity throughout the class struggle, despite periods of violent change and social upheaval. Like the world itself, the history of mankind is not only a contradictory discontinuum but also a continuum. Ancient, apparently long-forgotten things are preserved within us, continue to work upon us - often without our realizing it - and then, suddenly, they come to the surface and speak to us like the shadows in Hades whom Odysseus fed with his blood.

Different classes and social systems, while developing their own ethos, have contributed to the formation of a universal human ethos. The concept of freedom, though it always corresponds to the conditions and time of a class or a social system, nevertheless tends to grow into an all-encompassing idea. In the same way, constant features of mankind are captured even in time-conditioned art. Insofar as Homer, Aesop, and Sophocles mirrored the simple conditions of a society based on slavery, they see time-bound and out of date. But so far as, in that society, they discovered the greatness of man, gave artistic form to his conflicts and passions, and imbued him with an infinite potentiality, they remain at modern as ever. Prometheus bringing fire to earth, Odysseus in his wanderings and his return, the fate of Tantalus and his children, all this has preserved its original power for us. Though we may regard the subject-matter of _Antigone_ - a struggle for the right to give honourable burial to a blood relative - as archaic, though we may need historical commentaries in order to understand it, the figure of Antigone is as moving today as it ever was, and to long as there are human beings in the world they will be moved by her words: "My nature is to join in love, not hate." The more we come to know of long-forgotten works of art, the clearer become their common and continuous elements, despite their variety. Fragment joins fragment to make humanity.

We may conclude from a constantly growing wealth of evidence that art in its origins was magic, a magic aid towards mastering a real but unexplored world. Religion, science, and art were combined in a latent form - generically as it were - in the needs of rising or declining classes, different things which have been lost or lost are brought again into the light of day, awakened to new life. And just as it was no coincidence that Leonardo and Herder, in their revolt against the feudal and the courtly and all the contemporary false posturings with wig and alexandrine, discovered Shakespeare for the Germans, so it is no coincidence that, today, Western Europe in its denial of humanism and in the fetish-like character of its institutions reaches back to the fetishes of pre-history and constructs false myths to hide its real problems.
Chapter Two

The Origins of Art

Art is almost as old as man. It is a form of work, and work is an activity peculiar to mankind. Marx defined work in these terms:

The labour process is . . . purposive activity . . . for the fitting of natural substances to human wants; it is the general condition requisite for effecting an exchange of matter between man and nature; it is the condition permanently imposed by nature upon human life, and is therefore independent of the forms of social life — or, rather, it is common to all social forms.*  

Man takes possession of the natural by transforming it. Work is transformation of the natural. Man also dreams of working magic upon nature, of being able to change objects and give them new form by magic means. This is the equivalent in the imagination of what work means in reality. Man is, from the outset, a magician.

Tools

Man became man through tools. He made, or produced, himself by making or producing tools. The question of which came first — man or tool — is therefore purely academic. There is no tool without man and no man without tool; they came into being simultaneously and are indissolubly linked to one another. A relatively highly developed living organism because man by working with natural objects. By being put to such use, the objects became tools. Here is another definition of Marx’s:

The instrument of labour is a thing, or a complex of things, which the worker interposes between himself and the subject-matter of his labour, and one which serves as the conductor of his activity. He makes use of the mechanical, physical, and chemical properties of things as means of exerting power over other things, and in order to

make these other things subservient to his aims. Leaving out of consideration the gathering of ready-made means of subsistence, such as fruits, for which purpose man's own bodily organs suffice him as the instrument of labour, the object of which the worker takes direct control is not the subject-matter of labour but the instrument of labour. Thus nature becomes an instrument of his activities, an instrument with which he supplements his own bodily organs, adding a coiled and more to his stature, scripture and understanding.... The use and the fabrication of instruments of labour, though we find their first beginnings among certain other animal species, is specifically characteristic of the human labour process, and for that reason Benjamin Franklin defined man as a "tool-making animal."

The pre-human being which developed into man was capable of such development because it had a special organ, the hand, with which it could grasp and hold objects. The hand is the essential organ of culture, the initiator of humanization. This does not mean that it was the hand alone that made man: nature, and particularly organic nature, does not allow of such simple and one-sided sequences of cause and effect. A system of complicated relationships - a new quality - always comes out of a set of diverse reciprocal effects. The panting of certain biological organisms into the tree stage, favouring as it did the development of vision at the expense of the sense of smell; the shrinking of the muscles, facilitating a change in the position of the eyes; the urge of the creature now equipped with a more acute and more precise sense of vision to look in all directions, and the erect body posture conditioned by this; the release of the front limbs and the enlargement of the heels due to erect body posture; changes in food and various other circumstances acted together to create the conditions necessary for man to become man. But the directly decisive organ was the hand. Thomas Aquinas was already aware of the unique significance of the hand, that organum organorum, and expressed it in his definition of man: "Homo hominis fabrica et mensus!" And it is true that the hand released human reason and produced human consciousness.

Gordon Childe points out in The Story of Tools:

†  Ibid.

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Men can make tools because their forefathers have turned into hands, because seeing the same object with both eyes they can judge distances very accurately and because a very delicate nervous system and complicated brain enables them to control the movements of hand and arm in precise agreement with and adjustment to what they see with both eyes. But man does not know by any inherent instinct how to make tools nor how to use them; that they must learn by experiment - by trial and error.

A system of completely new relationships between one species and the entire rest of the world came about through the use of tools. In the working process, the natural relationship of cause and effect was, as it were, reversed; the anticipated, foreseen effect became, as 'purpose', the legislator of the working process. That relationship between events which, as the problem of 'finality' or 'final cause', has driven many a philosopher to distraction, was developed as a specially human characteristic. But what is this problem? Let me quote once more one of Marx's clear definitions:

We have to consider labour as a form peculiar to the human species. A spider carries on operations resembling those of a weaver; and many a human architect is put to shame by the skill with which a bee constructs her cell. But what from the very first distinguishes the most incompetent architect from the best of bees, is that the architect has built a cell in his head before he constructs it in wax. The labour process ends in the creation of something which, when the process began, already existed in the worker's imagination, already existed in an ideal form. What happens is not merely that the worker brings about a change of form in natural objects; at the same time, in the nature that exists apart from himself, he realizes his own purposes, the purpose which gives the law to his activities, the purpose to which he has to subordinate his own will.

This is a definition of the nature of work by the time it has reached the wholly developed, wholly human stage. But a long distance had to be travelled before this final form of work, and therefore the final humanization of the pre-human being, was attained. Action determined by purpose — and from this the birth of the mind, the birth of consciousness as the prime creation of man — was the outcome of a long and laborious
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process. Conscious existence means conscious action. The original existence of man was that of a mammal. Man is a mammal, but he begins to do something different from all other mammals. The animal, too, acts from 'experience,' that is to say from a system of conditioned reflexes; that is what we call the 'instinct' of an animal. The organism which developed into man acquired a new kind of experience leading to a unique turning point, insignificant though it may have appeared at the onset: the experience that nature can be used as a means to achieve man's purpose. Every biological organism is in a state of outbalancing with the surrounding world; it continually gives and takes something to and from that world. But this taking is always done directly, without an intermediary. Only human work is mediated mediately. The means has preceded the purpose; the purpose is revealed by the use of the means.

Biological organs are not replaceable. True, they were formed as a result of adaptation to the conditions of the outside world; but an animal must manage with the organs it has got and make the best of them. Yet the instrument of labour, which is outside the organism, is replaceable, and a primitive one can be discarded in favour of a more efficient one. With a natural organ, the question of efficiency does not arise: it is as it is, the animal must live as its organs will allow and adapt itself to the world in the manner in which its organs are adapted to it. But a being which uses a non-organic object as an instrument need not adapt its requirements to that instrument—on the contrary, it can adapt the instrument to the requirements. The question of efficiency cannot exist until this possibility arises.

Man's discovery that some instruments are more or less useful than others, and that one instrument can be replaced by another, led inevitably to the discovery that an imperfect, available instrument can be made more efficient: i.e., that an instrument need not be taken directly from nature but can be produced. The discovery of greater or lesser efficiency in itself requires a special observation of nature. Animals, too, observe nature, and natural causes and effects are reflected or reproduced in animal brains. But, for an animal, nature is a given fact, unchangeable by any effort of will, like its own organism. Only

the use of non-organic, replaceable, and changeable means makes it possible to observe nature in a new context, to foresee, anticipate, and bring about events.

There is a fruit to be picked from a tree. The pre-human animal reaches for this fruit, but its arm is too short. It tries everything but cannot reach the fruit; and after repeated, frustrated attempts it is forced to give up and turn its attention elsewhere. But if the animal takes a stick, its arm is extended; and if the stick is too short, it can choose a second and a third one, until at last it has found one that will do the job. What is the novel element here? It is the discovery of varying possibilities and the ability to choose among them, hence the ability to compare one object with another and decide on its greater or lesser efficiency. With the use of tools, nothing is, in principle, any longer impossible. One only needs to find the right tool in order to reach—or accomplish—what was previously out of reach. A new power over nature has been gained, and this power is potentially unlimited. In this discovery lies one of the roots of magic and, therefore, of art.

In the brain of the higher mammal, an inherited reciprocal effect has been established between the centre which signals hunger—the organism's lack of necessary foodstuff—and the centre which is stimulated by the sight or smell of a piece of food, say a fruit. Stimulation of one of the centres involves the other; the mechanism is delicately attuned: when the animal is hungry, it looks for a piece of food. Through the interposition of the stick—the instrument for fetching the fruit down from the tree—a new contact between the brain centres is established. This new cerebral process is then strengthened by being repeated countless times. At first the process takes place in one direction only: the stimulation of the 'hunger-fruit' complex is extended to include the centre which, putting it cruelly, reacts to 'stick'. The animal sees the fruit it wants and looks for the stick which is associated with it. This can scarcely yet be called thinking: the element of purpose characteristic of the working process—which is the creator of thought—is still absent. So far it is not yet the purpose of the stick to fetch down the fruit: the stick is only the instrument for doing so. This
This tells us something of extreme importance. Man, as the pre-human being, had originally discovered — while gathering objects — that, for instance, a sharp-edged stone can take the place of teeth and fingers for tearing apart, cutting up, or crushing a prey. A stone that happens to be available becomes an occasional tool and is thrown away again when it has fulfilled its momentary function. Anthropomorphous speculations also sometimes use such occasional tools. Through repeated use, a firm connection is established in the brain between the stone and its usefulness; the creature about to become man begins to collect and preserve such useful stones, although no definite function or concrete purpose is as yet connected with each stone. The stones are all-purpose instruments to be experimented with from case to case and tested for their specific applications. Two things eventually emerge from these repeated and varied experiments, from this 'thinking with the hands': first, the discovery that stones of a particular shape are more useful than others, that it is possible to choose among the incidental offerings of nature, the reference to purpose thus becoming more and more dominant; secondly, the discovery that it is unnecessary to wait for these offerings, because nature can be corrected. Water, climate, the elements can shape a stone so that it becomes 'handy'. When once the almost-man took natural objects 'in hand' and began to use them as instruments, his active hands discovered that he could shape and alter a stone himself, and from this discovery they learned that there is inherent in a piece of stone the potentiality of becoming sharp-edged and, hence, a useful tool.

There is nothing in the least mysterious about this potentiality — it is not a 'power' with which the stone is endowed, nor did he, like Dallis Athens, spring from a creative consciousness. On the contrary, creative consciousness developed as a late result of the manual discovery that stones could be broken, split, sharpened, given this shape or that. The shape of the hand-axe, for instance, which nature produces from time to time, was useful for a number of activities; and so gradually man began to copy nature. In producing tools like this he was not obeying any 'creative idea' but only imitating; his models were stones...
be found in nature. More and more the tool lost its resemblance to any natural object. The function of the tool displaced its original nature-likeliness, and as a result of growing efficiency its purpose—the intellectual anticipation of what it could do—became more and more important. This transformation of the nature of work could only occur when work had reached a comparatively highly developed stage.

Language

The development towards work demanded a system of new means of expression and communication that would go far beyond the few primitive signs known to the animal world. But work did not only demand such a system of communication, it also encouraged it. Animals have little to communicate to each other. Their language is instinctive: a rudimentary system of signs for danger, mating, etc. Only in work and through work do living beings have much to say to one another. Language came into being together with tools.

In many theories of the origins of language, the important role played by work and tools is overlooked or underestimated. Even Herder, who uncovered factors of immense importance in his revolutionary studies and his brilliant argument against the 'divine origin' of language, failed to see the significance of work to the birth of language. Anticipating the results of later research, this is how he described the view of prehistoric man:

Man stepped into the world: what an ocean immediately raged around him! With how great an effort did he learn to distinguish to recognize his various senses! to rely only on the senses he had recognized?

Herder foresees what science was later to confirm: that prehistoric man saw the world as an indeterminate whole, and that he had to learn to separate, differentiate, select whatever was most essential to his own life among the world's many and complex features, so as to establish the necessary equilibrium between the world and himself, its inhabitant. Herder is right when he says:
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Even as an animal, man already had language. All the wild and violent, all the painful sensations of his body as well as all the strong passions of his soul were expressed directly through screams, calls and wild, inarticulate sounds.

These animal means of expression are undoubtedly an element of language. "Traces of these natural sounds can still be heard in all original languages." Yet Herder understood that these natural sounds were "not the actual roots" of language, "but only the juices that nourished those roots".

Language is not so much a means of expression as of communication. Man gradually became familiar with objects "and gave them names taken from nature, imitating nature as far as possible by their sounds... It was a pantomime in which body and gesture collaborated". Original language was a unity of words, musical intonation, and mimetic gesture. Herder says:

The first vocabulary was compiled from the world's sounds. The idea of the thing itself was still suspended between the action and its performer: the tree had to indicate the wood, just as the wood supplied the tree; and so verbs became nouns and nouns became verbs... .

Early man did not yet make a clear distinction between his activity and the object to which it was related; the two formed an indistinguishable unity. Although the word became a sign (no longer a simple expression or imitation), a multitude of concepts were still included within this sign; pure abstraction was only gradually arrived at.

Sensory objects were soundly described - and from how many sides, how many aspects they could be described! And so language was full of word, unsystematic word inversion, full of irregularities and quirks. Images were reproduced as images wherever possible, and in this way a wealth of metaphor, idioms and sensory nouns was created.

Heider recalls that the Arabs had fifty words for a lion, two hundred for a snake, eighty for honey, and more than a thousand for a sword: in other words, sensory nouns had not yet been completely concentrated into abstractions. Ironically he asked those who believed in the "divine origin" of language:

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Why did God invent a superfluous vocabulary?

And again:

A primitive language is rich because it is poor - its inventors had no plan and so could not afford to economize. Is God, then, supposed to be the idle inventor of the most undeveloped language?

And finally:

This was living language. The huge repertoire of gestures established, as it were, the rhythm and the limits which confined the spoken words, and the great wealth of definitions which lay in the actual vocabulary replaced the art of grammar.

The more man gathers experience, the more he comes to know different things from different aspects, the richer his language must become.

The more often his experiences and his new characteristics are repeated in his own mind, the finer and more direct his language. The more he distinguishes and classifies, the more ordered his language.

Alexander von Humboldt developed and refined Herder's revolutionary discovery, although in some respects he gave Herder's materialist and dialectical ideas an idealistic, metaphysical twist. Humboldt declared that language was "image and sign at the same time, not quite the product of the imagination created by objects not yet quite the product of the speaker's arbitrary will". He also noticed with equal clarity that thought was "not only dependent on language in general, but also, to a certain extent, determined by each separate language". This brings to mind a remark of Goethe's: "Language makes people far more than people language." Emphasizing the importance of articulation (without which there can be expression but never language), Humboldt arrived at an almost mystical conclusion:

In order that a man may truly understand even a single word - understand it not only as a sensory impulse but as an articulate sound defining a concept - the whole of language must already be present within his mind. Nothing is separate in language; each and
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as an Abstract. Man created articulate, differentiated words not only because he was a being capable of pain, joy and surprise, but also because he was a working being.

Language and gesture are very closely interconnected. Either derived from this that speech evolved from reflex actions of the vocal organs incidental to the muscular efforts involved in the use of tools. As the hands became more finely articulated, so did the vocal organs, until the awakening consciousnes seized on these reflex actions and elaborated them into a system of communication. This theory emphasizes the significance of the collective working process, without which systematic language could never have been formed out of the primitive signals, moans, cries, and cries of fear that were the raw material of language. The animal's signal notifying some change in its surrounding world developed into a linguistic "work reflex." This was the turning-point from passive adaptation to nature to active changing of nature.

Among hundreds of "occasional tools" of various kinds it is impossible to distinguish each by a specific sign; but if a few standard tools are evolved, then a specific sign - or name, or saw - becomes both possible and necessary. When a standard tool is imitated and time and time again, something completely new happens. All the imitations, made to resemble each other, contain within them the same prototype: the prototype, in its function, its form, and its usefulness to man, recurs again and again. There are many hand-axes yet there is only one. Man can take any of the imitations instead of the original hand-axe because all of them serve the same purpose, produce the same effect, and are similar or identical in their function. It is always this tool that is meant, and none other; it does not matter which particular sample of the standard hand-axe happens to come to hand. Thus the first abstraction, the first conceptual form, was supplied by the tool itself: prehistoric man abstracted from many individual hand-axes the quality common to them all - that of being a hand-axe; in so doing, he formed the "concept" of a hand-axe. He did not know he was doing it. But he was nevertheless creating a concept.

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Making alike

Man made a second tool resemble the first and by so doing produced a new, equally useful and equally valuable tool. Thus "making alike" grants man a power over objects. A stone which was previously useless acquires value because it can be made like a tool and so recruited into man's service. There is something magical in this process of "making alike." It brings mastery over nature. Other experiences confirm this strange discovery. If you imitate an animal, make yourself look and sound like that animal, you can attract it and stalk it more closely, and the prey falls more easily into your hands. Here again, resemblance is a weapon of power, of magic. The primeval instinct of the species adds still greater force to the discovery. This instinct makes all animals suspicious of those of their own species that deviate from the norm, the abnorm, the freaks of every kind. They are instinctively seen as rebels against the tribe. They have to be killed or driven out of the natural collective. Thus similarity is universally significant, and prehistoric man - who had by now acquired practice in comparing, choosing, and copying tools - began to attach enormous significance to all similarity.

Advancing from one similarity to another, he arrived at an ever-increasing wealth of abstractions. He began to give a single name to whole groups of related objects. It is the nature of such abstractions that they often (though not always) express a real connection or relationship. All tools of a particular kind, it will be remembered, came out of the first tool of which they were an imitation or copy. The same is true of many other abstractions: the wolf, the apple, etc. Nature is reflected in newly discovered connections. The brain no longer reflects each tool as something unique; nor does it reflect every seashell in that way. A sign has been evolved to cover all tools, all seashells, all objects and living beings of the same kind. This process of concentration and classification in language makes it possible to communicate more and more freely concerning the outside world, which man shares with all other men.
The necessity of art

The same is true of processes and, above all, of the social process of work. The emerging human collective repeated the same process many hundreds of times. Gradually it found a sign—a means of expression—for this collective activity. It may be assumed that this sign came out of the working process itself, reflecting some sort of rhythmic regularity. It indicated a specific activity and was so directly connected with it that its sound or sight immediately registered all the brain centres in which the activity was registered. Such signs were of immense importance to early man; they had an organizing function within the working group or collective, because they meant the same thing to all its members.

A collective working process requires a coordinating working rhythm. This working rhythm is supported by a more or less articulate unison chant. Such chants, be they the English ‘Hooyee-hoo-ho!’, the German ‘Herrlich’, or the Russian ‘Es-sol-ga’s’, are essential to the rhythmic accomplishment of the work. In such refrains, which have a certain magic attaching to them, the individual preserves the collective even if he is working outside it. George Thomson (in whose splendid work *Studies in Ancient Greek Society: The Prehistoric Agora*) I was unfortunately not acquainted until this book was practically finished, so that I can only refer to it in passing) analyses the ancient work songs as a combination of refrain (collective unison chant) and individual improvisation. He quotes inter alia a chant recorded by the Swiss missionary Junod. A Thonga boy breaking stones on an African roadside for his European employers sang:

"Bu bë shrit-aa, adî
Bu bë bë khipho, adî
Bu bë bë niphō, adî
Bu bë bë sôôlî, adî
They treat us badly, adî!
They are hard on us, adî
They drink their coffee, adî
And give us none, adî!

The first word—signs for working processes—chanted

*Lawrence & Whatt, London, 1940.*

The origins of art

sounds providing a uniform rhythm for the collective—were probably, at the same time, command signals intended to arouse the collective to action (in the same way as a warning cry produces an immediate passive reaction, e.g., the flight of the bird). Thus there was power stood up in every linguistic means of expression—power over both man and nature.

It was not only a question of prehistoric man believing that words were a powerful tool—they actually did increase his control over reality. Language not only made it possible to coordinate human activity in an intelligent way and to describe and transmit experience and, therefore, to improve working efficiency: it also made it possible to single out objects by attaching particular words to them, thus snatching them out of the protective anonymity of nature and bringing them under man’s control. If I make a notch in a tree growing in a forest, that tree is doomed. I can instruct someone else to go and cut down the tree I have marked; he will recognize it by the notch.

A name given to an object has a similar effect: the object is marked, distinguished from other objects, and delivered into the hands of man. There is an unbroken line of development from the making of tools to the marking and taking possession of those tools (by a notch, say, or a series of notches or a primitive ornament) and thence to their naming, whereby they become recognizable and graspable to every member of the collective.

The standardized tool was reproduced by imitation, which singled it out by a kind of magic from among other stones, hitherto subject to the power of nature alone. It may be assumed that the first linguistic means of expression, too, were nothing other than imitation. The word was regarded as largely identical with the object. It was the means of grasping, comprehending, mastering the object. We find that nearly all primitive races believed that by naming an object, a person, a demon, they would exercise some power over them (or else incur their magic hostility). This idea is preserved in innumerable folk tales: we need only remember the old Rumpelstiltskin with his triumphant

Glad I am that no one knows
That Rumpelstiltskin I am styled.
The origins of art

of a new reality, a super-nature, whose most extraordinary product is the mind. The working being elevates itself, by work, into a thinking being: thought – i.e., mind – is the necessary result of man's mediated metabolism with nature.

By his work, man transforms the world like a magician: a piece of wood, a bone, a flint is fashioned to resemble a model and thereby transformed into that very model; material objects are transformed into signs, names, and concepts; man himself is transformed from an animal into a man.

This magic at the very root of human existence, creating a sense of powerlessness and at the same time a consciousness of power, a fear of nature together with the ability to control nature, is the very essence of all art. The first toolmaker, when he gave new form to a stone so that it might serve man, was the first artist. The first name-giver was also a great artist when he singled out an object from the vastness of nature, named it by means of a sign, and banded over this creature of language as an instrument of power to other men. The first organizer who synchronized the working process by means of a rhythmic chant and so increased the collective strength of man was a prophet in art. The first hunter who disguised himself as an animal and by means of this identification with his prey increased the yield of the hunt, the first stone-age man who smacked a tool or a weapon by a special notch or ornament, the first chief who stretched an animal's skin over a lump of rock or the stump of a tree in order to attract animals of the same kind – all these were the forerunners of art.

The power of magic

The exciting discovery that natural objects could be turned into tools capable of influencing and altering the outside world was bound to lead to another idea in the mind of early man, always experimenting and slowly awakening to thought: the idea that the impossible, too, could be achieved with magic tools – that nature could be "bewitched" without the effort of work. Overwhelmed by the immense importance of similarity and imitation, he deduced that, since all similar things were identical, his
power over nature – by virtue of “making alike” – could be limitless. The newly acquired power to grasp and control objects, to prompt social activity and bring about events by means of signs, images, and words, led him to expect the magical power of languages to be infinite. Fascinated by the power of the will – which anticipates and brings about things that are not yet there but exist only as an idea in the brain – he was bound to ascribe an immensely far-reaching, boundless power to acts of will. The magic of tool-making led inevitably to the attempt to extend magic to infinity.

In Ruth Benedict’s book Patterns of Culture (Routledge, 1931) there is a good example of the belief that imitation must bring power. A sorcerer on the island of Dobe wants a fatal illness to strike an enemy.

In communicating the spell the sorcerer imitates in anticipation the agony of the final stages of the disease he is inflicting. He writes on the ground, he shrieks in convulsion. Only so, after faithful reproduction of its effects, will the charm do its designed work.

And we read further:

The charms themselves are almost as explicit as the action that accompanies them... The following is the incantation for causing gangrene, the horrible disease which eats away the flesh as the homatolla, its animal patron from which the disease is named, eats the tree trunk with its great excising beak:

Homatolla dweller of Sipasiga
in the lowest tree top,
be cut, be cut,
he rends open,
from the nose,
from the temple,
from the throat,
from the hip,
from the root of the tongue,
from the back of the neck,
from the navel,
from the small of the back,
from the kidneys,
from the entrails,
he rends open.

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Art was a magic tool, and it served man in mastering nature and developing social relationships. It would be wrong, however, to explain the origins of art by this element alone. Every newly formed quality is the result of a set of new relationships, which may sometimes be highly complex. The attraction of shining, glistening, glittering things (not only for human beings but also for animals) and the irresistible attraction of light may have played their part in the birth of art. Sexual allurements – bright colours, pungent smells, splendid coats and feathers in the animal world, jewels and fine clothes, seductive words and gestures among humans – may have provided a stimulus. The rhythms of organic and inorganic nature – of heartbeat, breathing, sexual intercourse – the rhythmic recurrence of processes or elements of form and the pleasure derived from these, and, last but not least, working rhythms – may have played an important part. Rhythmic movement unites work, coordinates effort, and connects the individual with a social group. Every disturbance of the rhythm is disapprovable because it interferes with the processes of life and work; and so we find rhythm assimilated in the arts as the repetition of a constant, as proportions and symmetry. And, lastly, an essential element of the arts is the旁福, the awe-inspiring, and that which is supposed to confer power over an enemy. Clearly the decisive function of art was to exert power – power over nature, an enemy, a sexual partner, power over reality, power to strengthen

* The victim.

† The innumerable power of the charm.
the human collective. Art in the dawning of humanity had little to do with 'beauty' and nothing at all to do with any aesthetic desire: it was a magic tool or weapon of the human collective in its struggle for survival.

It would be very wrong to smile at the superstitions of early man or at his attempts to tame nature by imitation, identification, the power of images and language, witchcraft, collective rhythmic movement, and so on. Of course, because he had only just begun to observe the laws of nature, to discover causality, to construct a conscious world of social signs, words, concepts, and conventions, he arrived at innumerable false conclusions and, led astray by analogy, formed many fundamentally mistaken ideas (most of which are still preserved in one form or another in our language and philosophy). And yet, in creating art, he found for himself a real way of increasing his power and enriching his life. The freest Allied dances before a hunt really did increase the tribe's sense of power; war paint and war cries really did make the warrior more resolute and were apt to terrify the enemy. Cave paintings of animals really helped to build up the hunter's sense of security and superiority over his prey. Religious ceremonies with their ecstatic conventions really helped to instill social experience in every member of a tribe and to make every individual part of the collective body. Man, the weak creature confronting dangerous, incomprehensible, terrifying Nature, was greatly helped in his development by magic.

The original magic gradually became differentiated into religion, science, and art. The function of mime altered imperceptibly; from imitation intended to bestow magic power it came to replace blood sacrifice by enacted ceremonies. The song to the bowerbird on the island of Dobs, which I have quoted, is still pure magic; but when certain Australian aboriginal tribes appear to prepare for an act of blood vengeance while, in fact, appeasing the dead by means of mime, this is already a transition to drama and to the work of art. Another example: Disaga Negroes felling a tree. They call it the sister of the man on whose plot of land it is growing. They represent the preparation for felling as preparations for the sister's wedding.

On the day before the tree is actually felled they bring it milk, beer, and honey, saying 'near my (departing child), my sister, I give you a husband, he shall marry you, my daughter.' And when the tree has been felled the owner breaks out in lamentations: 'You have robbed me of my sister.' Here the transition from magic to art is clear. The tree is a living organism. By felling it, the members of the tribe prepare for its rebirth, just as initiation and death are regarded as the individual's rebirth out of the maternal body of the collective. It is a performance delicately balanced between serious ceremonial and artistic play: the owner's simulated distress carries echoes of an ancient ritual and magical improvisations. Ceremonial rite has been preserved in drama.

The magic identity of man and earth was also at the root of the widespread custom of sacrificing the king. The emas of a kingdom originated, as Franze proved, first and foremost in fertility magic. In Nigeria, kings were at first only the queen's consorts. The queens had to conceive so that the earth might bear fruit. After the men — who were seen as earthy representatives of the moon god — had done their duty, they were strangled by the women. The Himbas sprinkled the blood of the murdered king over the fields and his flesh was eaten by nymphs — the queen's followers, wearing masks of bitter, mares, and sores. As matriarchy developed into patriarchy, the king took over more and more of the queen's power. Wearing female dress and equipped with artificial breasts, he represented the queen. An intersex was killed instead of him and finally this intersex was replaced by animals. Reality became myth, the magic ceremony became religious enactment, and finally magic itself became art.

Art was not an individual but a collective production, although the first characteristics of individuality began to declare themselves tentatively in the sorcerer. Primitive society meant a dense, close-knit form of collectivism. Nothing was more terrible than to be cast out of the collective and to remain alone. Separation of the individual from the group or tribe meant death; the collective means life and the content of life. Art in all its forms — language, dance, rhythmic chants, magic ceremonies — was the social activity par excellence, common to all...
and raising all men above nature and the animal world. Art has never wholly lost this collective character, even long after the primitive collective had broken down and been replaced by a society of classes and individuals.

**Art and the class society**

Stimulated by the discoveries of Bachofen and Morgan, Marx and Engels described the process of disintegration of collective tribal society, the gradual growth of productive forces, the progressive division of labour, the birth of barter trade, the transition to patriarchal rule, and the beginnings of private property, social classes, and the State. Cosmological scholars have since analysed every detail of this process on the basis of abundant evidence. George Thomson’s *Australasian and Aborigines and Studies in Ancient Greek Culture* were of immense importance in this field. In ancient Greece, increased labour productivity led to a situation in which labourers, the *deme* (those working for the community), were accepted as part of the community consisting of the chief, the elders, and the land cultivators. The chief was empowered to dispose of any surplus agricultural produce. The chiefs received regular tribute. Barter of goods developed imperceptibly out of friendly relations between tribes. Gifts and counter-gifts assumed the character of barter. Chiefs and labourers were the first to discard the bonds of the clan; the former became landowners, the latter organised themselves in guilds. The tribal village was transformed into a city state ruled by the landowners. That was the beginning of class society.

Just as magic corresponded to man’s sense of unity with nature, of the identity of all existing things—an identity implicit in the clan—so art became an expression of the beginnings of alienation. The totemistic clan represented a *totality*. The clan totem was the symbol of the immortal clan itself—the ever-living collective from which the individual emerged and to which he returned. The uniform social structure was a model of the surrounding world. The world order corresponded to the social order. Some races call the lowest social

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unit the soul. The social collective is a union of the living and the dead. Father van Wing writes in *Ethnological Lao:*

The land belongs, undivided, to the entire tribe, that is to say not only to the living but also—rather, primarily—to the dead, i.e. the Bakula. The tribe and the land on which it lives form an indivisible whole, and this whole is ruled by the Bakula.

G. Strehlow wrote of the Aranda and Lariui tribes in Central Australia:

As soon as a woman knows that she is pregnant, i.e. that a *kudjaga* (totem) has entered her, she becomes the *father of the expected child*... goes to a sacred tree and cuts off a small piece (the secret, hidden totem body that unites the individual with his ancestors and with the universe), on which he carves, with an opossum tooth, signs connected with the totem ancestor or his totem... The totem, the totem ancestor and the totem descendent, that is to say the performer (who, in the ceremony, embodies the totem by his ornaments and his mask) appears in the totemic songs as a single unit... The perfect unity of man, animal, plants, stones, and sources of life and death, collective and individual, is a promise of every magic ceremony.

As human beings separated themselves more and more from nature, as the original tribal unity was gradually destroyed by division of labour and property ownership, so the equilibrium between the individual and the outside world became more and more disturbed. Lack of harmony with the outside world leads to hysteria, treason, fits of insanity. The characteristic posture of the insane or bacheante—the body arched, the head thrown back—is the classic posture of hysteria. In a letter written from prison on 15 February 1921, the great Italian moralist Antonio Gramsci spoke of the psycho-analytical method, which, he thought, would only be usefully applied to the social elements described in Romantic literature as the insulted and the injured... who are much more numerous than is traditionally believed. That is to say, applied to persons caught up in the iron contradictions of modern life (no talk only of the present, but every age has had a present in contrast to a past), who cannot, without help, come to terms with those contradictions, overcome
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There are times of crisis in which the contrast between the present and the past assumes extreme forms. The transition from the primitive social collective to the 'iron age' of class society with its small stratum of rulers and its masses of 'insulted and injured' was such a time.

The condition of being 'beside oneself', i.e. of hysteria, is a forcible re-creation of the collective, of world unity. As social differentiation progressed, so, on the one hand, there occurred periods of collective demoniacal possession and, on the other hand, there were individuals (often actually forming associations or guilds) whose social function it was to be possessed or 'inspired'. It is the task of these possessed individuals, both the blessed and the damned, these prophets, sibyls, and singers, to restore a disturbed unity and harmony with the outside world.

We read in the law of Plato:

For the epic poets, all the good ones, have their excellence, not from art, but are inspired, possessed, and thus they utter all these admirable poems. So it is also with the good lyric poets; as the worshipping Corcyraeans are not in their senses when they dance, so the lyric poets are not in their senses when they make these lovely lyric poems. No, when once they launch into harmony and rhythm, they are seized with the Bacchic transport, and are possessed - as the Bacchaeans, when possessed, draw milk and honey from the rivers, but not when in their senses.*

God speaks in the possessed, said Plato. God is a name for the collective. The content of demoniacal possession was the collective reproduced in a violent manner within the individual, a sort of mass essence. Thus, in a differentiated society, art developed out of magic precisely as a result of differentiation and of the increasing alienation to which it led.

In a class society the classes try to recruit art - that powerful voice of the collective - into serving their particular purposes. The verbal exhortations of Pythia in her state of ecstasy were very

* Translated by Lane Cooper, Oxford University Press, 1958.

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skillfully, very consciously 'edited' by aristocratic priests. Out of the chorus of the collective developed the chorus leader; the sacred hymn became a hymn in praise of the rulers; the clan totem was sub-divided into the aristocracy's gods. Finally the chorus leader with his gift of improvisation and invention developed into a bard, singing without a chorus at the king's court and, later, in the market place. On the one hand we find the Apollonian glorification of power and the status quo - of kings, princes, and aristocratic families and the social order established by them and reflected in their ideology as a supposedly universal order. On the other hand there was the Dionysian revolt from below, the voice of the ancient, broken collective which took refuge in secret associations and secret cults, protesting against the violation and fragmentation of society, against the libido of private property and the wickedness of class rule, prophesying the return of the old order and the old gods, a coming golden age of commonwealth and justice. Contradictory elements were often combined within a single artist, particularly in those periods when the old collectivism was not yet too remote and still continued to exist in the consciousness of the people. Even the Apollonian artist, herald of the young ruling class, was not entirely free from this Dionysian element of protest or nostalgia for the old collective society.

The sorcerer in the primitive tribal society was in the most profound sense a representative, a servant of the collective, and his magic power entailed a risk of being put to death if he repeatedly failed to fulfill the collective's expectations. In the young class society the sorcerer's role was shared between the artist and the priest, later to be joined by the doctor, the scientist, and the philosopher. The intimate bond between art and worship was only very gradually loosened, eventually to be discarded altogether. But even after this had happened, the artist remained a representative or spokesman of society. He was not expected to importune his public with his own private affairs; his personality was irrelevant, and was judged only by his ability to echo and reflect common experience, the great events and ideas of his people, his class and his age. This social
and again during the process of differentiation and class division was the fear of hubris, the belief that man had lost all balance and measure and that the birth of individuality inevitably led to tragic guilt.

The individualization of human beings was bound in the end to spread to the arts. This happened when a new social class, that of seafaring traders, came into being—the class that had so much to do with evolving the human personality. The aristocratic landed gentry, those grave-diggers of the old tribal collective, had also thrown up a few personalities, but their natural element was war, adventure, heroism. An Achilles or an Odysseus could only be conceived of away from their native soil: at home they were not individual heroes but merely representatives of their noble families, merely the mortal frame of the eternal landowner, impersonal links in a long chain of ancestors and heirs. The seafaring trader was something very different: a reckless self-made man used to making his life again and again, and owing no allegiance to the conservative land with its unshakable pattern of sowing and harvest but only to the inconstant, moody, perpetually moving sea that could bring him as low as it had swung him high on the crests of its waves. Everything depended on individual skill, determination, mobility, cleverness—and luck. But the difference went still deeper than that. The landowner and his land did not confront each other as strangers; they were closely bound together, so that a piece of land was almost the extension of its owner's person. Everything came from the earth and was returned to the earth. The trader's relationship with his property was very different. They were alienated from each other. It was the very nature of that property not to remain itself but to be constantly exchanged, and therefore transformed. Never in the history of the ancient world—which had regarded the incursions of money into the natural economy as an evil thing—had exchange value triumphed so completely over utility value as it did in the capitalist world. The concrete qualities of the exchanged object—whether it happened to be metal, linen, or spices—became secondary for the merchant; its abstract quality—value—and the most abstract form of property—money—became the
essential things. But just because a product was now a commodity, something detached and alien, the merchant's attitude to it was that of a sovereign individual. The depersonalization of property gave him the freedom required to become a personality. In the trading colonial cities of the ancient world we always come across the great merchant princes, the individual 'tyrant,' confronting the aristocratic families, defining the traditional privileges, and claiming his rights as a strong, efficient, and successful personality. Wealth in its monetary form recognized no traditional bonds. It did not care for nobility or loyalty. It fell to the boldest—and the handsomest.

This invasion of money and trade into the conservative feudal world had the effect of dehumanizing relationships between people and loosening the structure of society still further. The self-reliant and self-dependent "I" came to occupy the foreground of life. In Egypt, a country where work was respected and the worker was not discriminated against as in Greece, profane poetry concerned with individual destinies came into being as an early stage, side by side with sacred poetry and the literature of the collective. Let me quote one of the many love songs of ancient Egypt:

My heart holds you dear.
When I lie in your arms
I do whatever you wish.
My desire is my passion;
When I see you, my eyes shine.
I cling close to you so on to see your love;
You, the husband in my heart.
This hour is beautiful above all others,
May this hour swell to eternity.
Since I have slept with you,
You have raised up my heart.
Whether my heart be pleased or jubilant,
Do not go away from me.

In other countries of antiquity it was trade that brought subjectivism into literature. The individual experience became so important that it could hold its own by the side of the tribal chronicle, the heroic epic, the sacred chant, and the war song.

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The Song of Songs, ascribed by legend to King Solomon, was an expression of this new age. In the Greek world—a world of sea traders—Sappho wrote poetry full of individual passion, lamenting her own fate and her own sorrows. Later, Euripides revolutionized the magnificent collective drama created by his predecessors by portraying individual human beings instead of collective masks. The myth, once the mirror of a collective of which the individual had been but an anonymous particle, gradually became a formal disguise for individual experience.

This new individualism, however, was still contained within a larger collective framework. The personality was the product of new social conditions; individualization was not something that happened to one man, or a few, but was a development shared by many and therefore communicable, for all communica
tive presupposes a common factor. If there existed in the whole world only one self-aware "I" pitted against a collective, it would be senseless to try to communicate this unique plight. Sappho could not have sung of her fate had it been hers alone: intensely subjective though she was, she had something to say which, as yet unsaid, nevertheless applied to others. She expressed an experience common to many—of the lonely, wounded, rejected personality—in a language common to all Greeks. It was not simply an inarticulate lament; her subjective experience was rendered objective in the common language, so that it could be accepted as a universally human one. More than that: the famous poem to Aphrodite is, by its nature, a prayer—a magic means of influencing the gods, that is to say, of exercising some power over reality: it is a magic, a sacramental act. The purpose or function of such poems is to affect either gods or men: not merely to describe a condition but effectively to change it. That is why the subjective poet submits to the objective discipline of metre and form, to magic ceremony and religious convention. The fact that a human being does not just cry out in fruitless protest against the pain and passion of individual fate but deliberately obeys the discipline of language and the rules of custom seems inexplicable—until we realize that art is the individual's way back to the collective.

The new "I" emerged from the old "we". The individual voice
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break away from the chorus. But an echo of that chorus still lingers on in every personality. The social or collective element has become individualized in the 'I', but the essential content of personality is and remains social. Love, the most subjective of feelings, is also the most universal instinct of all — that of the propagation of the species. But the specific forms and expressions of love in any particular age reflect the social conditions that allow sexuality to develop into more complex, richer, and more subtle relationships. They reflect either the atmosphere of a society based on slavery, or the atmosphere of a feudal or bourgeois society. They also reflect the degree of feminine equality or inequality, the structure of marriage, the current ideas of the family, the contemporary attitude to property, and so on. An artist can only experience something which his time and his social conditions have to offer. Hence an artist's subjectivity does not consist in his experience being fundamentally different from that of others of his time or class, but in its being stronger, more conscious, and more concentrated. It must uncover new social relationships in such a way that they will become conscious of them too. It must say the same to all.

Even the most subjective artist works on behalf of society. By the sheer fact of describing feelings, relationships, and conditions that have not been described before, he channels them from his apparently isolated 'I' into a 'we', and this 'we' can be recognized even in the emerging subjectivity of an artist's personality. Yet this process is never a return to the primitive collective of the past. On the contrary, it is a reaching out into a new collective full of differences and tensions, where the individual voice is not lost in a vast unity. In every true work of art, the division of human reality into the individual and the collective, the specific and the universal, is suspended; but it remains as a suspended factor in a re-created unity.

Only art can do all these things. Art can raise man up from a fragmented state into that of a whole, integrated being. Art enables man to comprehend reality, and not only helps him to bear it but increases his determination to make it more human and more worthy of mankind. Art is the social reality. Society needs the artist, that supreme sorcerer, and it has a right to demand of him that he should be conscious of his social function. This right was never doubted in any rising, as opposed to decaying, society. It was the ambition of the artist full of the ideas and experiences of his time not only to represent reality but also to shape it. The Musee of Michelangelo was not only the artistic image of Renaissance man, the embodiment in stone of a new, self-aware personality. It was also a commandment in stone to Michelangelo's contemporaries and patrons: 'That is what you ought to be like. The age in which we live demands it. The world at whose birth we are all present needs it.'

Usually the artist recognized a twofold social mission: the direct one imposed by a city, a corporation, or a social group; and the indirect one arising from an experience which mattered to him, i.e. from his own social consciousness. The two missions did not necessarily coincide, and when they conflicted with each other too often, it was a sign of increasing antagonisms within that particular society. But, generally, an artist who belonged to a coherent society and to a class that was not yet an impediment to progress did not feel it as any loss of artistic freedom if a certain range of subjects was prescribed to him. Such subjects were very rarely imposed by an individual patron's whim, but usually by tendencies and traditions deeply rooted in the people. By his original handling of a given subject, an artist could express his individuality and at the same time portray the new processes taking place within society. His ability to bring out essential features of his time and to disclose new realities was the measure of his greatness as an artist.

It has nearly always been characteristic of the great periods of art that the ideas of the ruling class or of a rising revolutionary class have coincided with the development of the productive forces and with the general needs of society. At such periods of equilibrium, a new, harmonious unity has seemed to be just round the corner, and the interests of a single class have seemed to be the common interest. The artist, living and working in a state of magic illusion, anticipated the birth of an all-embracing collective. But as the illusory nature of this expectation became clear, as the apparent unity disintegrated, as the class struggle flared up again, and as the contradictions and injustices of this
CHAPTER THREE
ART AND CAPITALISM

The artist in the capitalist age found himself in a highly peculiar situation. King Midas had turned everything he touched into gold: capitalism turned everything into a commodity. With a hitherto unimaginable increase in production and productivity, extending the new order dynamically to all parts of the globe and all areas of human experience, capitalism dissolved the old world into a cloud of whirling molecules, destroyed all direct relationships between producer and consumer, and flung all products onto an anonymous market to be bought or sold. Previously the artisan had worked to order for a particular client. The commodity producer in the capitalist world now worked for an unknown buyer. His products were swallowed up in the competitive flood and carried away into uncertainty. Commodity production extending everywhere, the increasing division of labour, the splitting up of the job itself, the anonymity of the economic forces—all this destroyed the directness of human relationships and led to man’s increasing alienation from social reality and from himself. In such a world art, too, became a commodity and the artist a commodity producer. Personal patronage was superseded by a free market whose workings were difficult or impossible to comprehend, a conglomerate of nameless consumers, the so-called ‘public’. The work of art was subjected more and more to the laws of competition.

For the first time in the history of mankind the artist became a ‘free’ artist, a ‘free’ personality, free to the point of absurdity, of icy loneliness. Art became an occupation that was half-romantic, half-commercial.

For a long time capitalism regarded art as something suspect, frivolous, and shady. Art ‘did not pay’. Pre-capitalist society had tended towards extravagance, carefree spending on a vast scale, lavish entertainments and the promotion of the
CHAPTER THREE
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For a long time capitalism regarded art as something suspect, frivolous, and shady. Art 'did not pay'. Pre-capitalist society had tended towards extravagance, carefree spending on a vast scale, lavish entertainments and the promotion of the
wealth for prestige reasons. Capitalism is not essentially a social force that is well-disposed to art or that promotes art; in so far as the average capitalist needs art at all, he needs it as an embellishment of his private life or else as a good investment. On the other hand, it is true that capitalism released tremendous forces of artistic as well as economic production. It brought into being new feelings and ideas and gave the artist new means with which to express them. It was no longer possible to cling rigidly to any fixed, slowly evolving style; the local limitations within which such styles are formed had been overthrown, and art developed in expanded space and accelerated time. And so, while capitalism was basically foreign to the arts, it nevertheless favoured their growth and the production of an enormous range of many-sided, expressive, and original works.

Furthermore, the society, problematics condition of the arts in the capitalist world did not become fully manifest so long as the bourgeoisie was a thing class and the artist who affirmed bourgeois ideas was still part of an active progressive force.

During the Renaissance, on the first wave of the bourgeois advance, social relationships were still relatively transparent, the division of labour had not yet taken the rigid and narrow forms it was to assume later, and the weight of new productive forces was still stored up as a potential within the bourgeois personality. The newly successful bourgeoisie and the princes who collaborated with him were generous patrons. Whole new worlds were then open to a man of creative gifts. Naturalist, discoverer, engineer, architect, sculptor, painter, and writer were often combined in one person, who passionately affirmed the age in which he lived and whose fundamental attitude was summed up in: 'What joy it is to be alive!' The second wave came with the bourgeois–democratic revolt which reached its climax in the French Revolution. Here again, the artist in his proud subjectivity expressed the ideas of the age, for it was precisely this subjectivity of the free man championing the cause of humanity and of the unification of his own country and mankind as a whole in a spirit of liberty, equality, and fraternity that was the banner of the age, the ideological programme of the rising bourgeoisie.

And further on:

Accumulate! Accumulate! That is Mises and all the prophets.

'Industry banishes the material which wastes accumulation!' (Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations). Therefore you must save, you must save, you must reconvest the largest possible portion of surplus value or surplus product into capital. Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake, this was the formula by which the classical political economists gave expression to the historical mission of the bourgeois period.

Of course the capitalist's increasing wealth also brought new luxuries with it, but, as Marx pointed out, '... the capitalist's extravagance never had the genuine character of unbridled prodigality which was typical of certain feudal magnates ... behind it there lurked awful anxiety and anxious calculation'.

For the capitalists, luxury may mean the purely private satisfaction of his desires, but it also means the chance of displaying his *Capital, op. cit.*
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True, the inner contradictions of capitalism were already at work. It proclaimed liberty while practising its own peculiar idea of freedom in the form of wage slavery. It subjected the promised free play of all human capabilities to the jungle law of capitalist competition. It forced the many-sided human personality into narrow specialization. And these contradictions were beginning to pose problems even then. The sincere humanitarian artist was bound to feel profound disillusionment when faced with the thoroughly prosaic, thoroughly sobering, yet disquieting results of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. And after 1848, the year of that revolution’s collapse in Europe, we may speak of something like a disenchantment in the arts. The brilliant artistic period of the bourgeoisie was at an end. The artist and the arts entered the fully developed world of capitalist commodity production with its total alienation of the human being, the externalization and materialization of all human relationships, the division of labour, the commodification, the rigid specialization, the obscuring of social consciousness, the increasing isolation and denial of the individual.

The sincere humanitarian artist could no longer affirm such a world. He could no longer believe with a clear conscience that the victory of the bourgeoisie meant the triumph of humanity.

Romanticism

Romanticism was a movement of protest – of passionate and contradictory protest against the bourgeois capitalist world, the world of ‘lost illusions’, against the harsh prose of business and profit. The harsh criticism by Novells, the German Romantic, of Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister is characteristic of this attitude (although Friedrich Schlegel, another Romantic, was full of praise for the great novel). In Wilhelm Meister, Goethe presents bourgeois values in a positive spirit and traces the path from aestheticism to active life within the prosaic bourgeois world. Novells would have none of this. Adventurers, comedians, courtiers, shopkeepers and philosophers are the inhabitants of this novel. Whoever takes it properly to heart will never read another.

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From Rousseau’s Discourse until The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, Romanticism was the dominant attitude of European art and literature. Romanticism, in terms of the petty-bourgeois consciousness, is the most complete reflection in philosophy, literature, and art of the contradictions of developing capitalist society. Only with Marx and Engels did it become possible to recognize the nature and origin of those contradictions, to understand the dialectic of social development, and to realize that the working class was the only force which could surmount them. The Romantic attitude could not be other than confused, for the petty bourgeoisie was the very embodiment of social contradiction, hopeful of sharing in the general enrichment yet fearful of being crushed to death in the process, dreaming of new possibilities yet clinging to the old security of rank and order, its eyes turned towards the new times yet often also, nostalgically, towards the ‘good old’ ones.

To begin with, Romanticism was a petty-bourgeois revolt against the Classicism of the nobility, against rules and standards, against aristocratic form, and against a content from which all ‘common’ issues were excluded. For these Romantic rebels there were no privileged themes: everything was a fit subject for art.

The extremes and excesses (Goethe, the admirer of Stendhal and Mme de Staël, said as an old man on 14 March 1830) will gradually disappear; but at last this great advantage will remain – besides a freer form, richer and more diversified subjects will have been attained, and no object of the broadest world and the most manifold life will be any longer excluded as unpoetical.*

Opposed though he was to everything that Goethe stood for, Novells, too, saw that Romanticism encouraged the poetic treatment of hitherto forbidden themes. ‘Romanticizing,’ he wrote, ‘means giving a lofty significance to that which is common, a mysterious appearance to the ordinary, and the dignity of the unknown to the familiar.’ Shelley wrote in The Defence of Poetry: ‘Poetry... makes familiar objects appear as

Romantic movement. Again and again, at each turning-point of events, the movement split up into progressive and reactionary trends. Each time the petty bourgeoisie proved itself to be, as Marx wrote to Schweitzer, 'contradiction incarnate'.

What all the Romantics had in common was an antipathy to capitalism (some viewing it from an aristocratic angle, others from a plebeian), a Feuerbachian or Byronic belief in the insatiable dependency of the individual, and the acceptance of 'passion in its own right' (Stendhal). In proportion as material production was officially regarded more and more as the quiescence of all that was praiseworthy, and as a crust of respectability focused round the dirty core of business, artists and writers attempted more and more intensively to reveal the heart of man and to heal the dymanite of passion in the face of the apparently well-ordered bourgeois world. And as the relativity of all values was made increasingly clear by capitalist production methods, so passion—intensity of experience—became increasingly an absolute value. Keats said that he believed in nothing so much as in the 'hearts' affection'. In the preface to The Cenci, Shelley wrote: 'Imagination is as the immortal God made flesh for the redemption of mortal passion.' Gérard de Nerval, 'extreme in all things' as Delacroix said of him, wrote in an essay of the 'fever of exaltation which overpowers and overwhmbs everything', and of the 'fire of a volcano which must irresistibly break through to the light of day'.

Romanticism was indeed a gigantic breakthrough. It led to the wild and the exotic, to limitless horizons: but it also led back to one's own people, one's own past, one's own specific nature. The generous of the Romantics all admired Napoleon, the 'cosmic self', the unbounded personality; yet at the same time the Romantic revolt merged with the national liberation struggles. Foscolo greeted Napoleon with an ode entitled A benefactor Liberator. In 1802 he pledged with Napoleon to proclaim the independence of the Cisalpine Republic, i.e. of Italy. In the end he turned, full of loathing, against Napoleon the conqueror. Leopardi, similarly embittered and disillusioned by the French Liberator's failure to set his country free, exclaimed in the Canto:
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eminent bourgeois movement, and all the problems regarded as modern today were already implicit in it.
Because of Germany’s central position between the capitalist world of the West and the feudal world of the East and because of the ‘German wretchedness’, die deutsche Masse, which was the result of dismutated historical developments, German Romanticism was the most contradictory of all the Romantic movements. The capitalist ‘disenchancement in the arts’ had set in before the bourgeois-democratic revolution had spread to Germany; illusions were lost before they had been properly accepted; and so, in its disgust with the capitalist aftermath of revolutionary upheavals, German Romanticism turned against those upheavals themselves and their postulates and ideals. Heine recognized here the element of anti-capitalist protest.

Perhaps it was disgust with the money cult of today [he wrote] and disgust with the ugly face of egoism which they saw lurking everywhere, that first led some parts of the Romantic school in Germany, whose intentions were honest, to seek refuge from the present in the past and to call for the return to the Middle Ages.

The German Romantics said ‘No’ to the developing social reality of their day. Bare negation can never be a permanent artistic attitude; to be productive, such an attitude must point to a ‘yes’ as a shadow points to the object which casts it. But this ‘yes’ cannot, in the last analysis, be anything other than the affirmation of a social class in which the future is embodied. In Western countries, the working class was beginning to rise behind the bourgeoisie. In the East, the entire people—peasants, workers, bourgeois, and intellectuals—opposed the ruling system. But the German Romantics, already seeing the bourgeois businessman as a repellent figure, could not yet direct in the wretched German working class any force capable of building a future, and therefore tried to escape into an idealized feudal past. In doing so they were able to set certain positive features of that past against corresponding negative features of capitalism, e.g. the producer’s, artist’s, or artist’s close bond with the consumer, the greater directness of social relationships, the stronger collective sense, the greater unity of
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The human personality due to a more stable and less narrow division of labour. But these elements were taken out of their context, idealized, and turned into a fetish, before they were opposed to the judicious criticism of capitalism. The Romantics, yearning for a 'totality' of life, were unable to see through the real totality of social processes. In this respect they were true children of the capitalist bourgeoisie world. They did not understand that precisely by wiping out all social stability, destroying all fundamental human relationships, and atomizing society, capitalism was in fact preparing the way for the possibility of a free unity—whilst itself being utterly incapable of forming a new whole out of the fragments.

Novelli, the most original of the German Romantics and a man who combined great talent with an outstanding intellect, was quite aware of the positive aspects of capitalism and wrote the following astonishing sentence:

'The spirit of commerce is the spirit of the world. It is the magnificent spirit, pure and simple. It sets all things in motion and connects all things. It creates empires and cities, nations and works of art. It is the spirit of culture, of the perfection of mankind.'

But the brilliance of such thoughts as this was often overshadowed by his dread of the mechanization of life, of the machine in all its forms. Novelli attacked the new, commercial, bourgeois State emerging in Germany: 'The moderate form of government in half State, half nature; it is an artificial, very fragile machine—and therefore highly efficient to all great minds—but it is the hobbyhorse of our time. If this machine could be transformed into a living, autonomous being, the great problems would be solved.' This is the concept of the 'organic', which all the Romantics opposed to the 'mechanical': 'The beginning of all life must be anti-mechanical—the violent breakthrough—opposition to the mechanism.' In the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann this antithesis was intensified until it became a ghostly dialect between man and automaton, and the whole of Hoffmann's output was, as Heine said, 'nothing but a scream of fear in twenty volumes'. The Romantic idealization of everything 'organic', everything that had grown or taken form

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'Naturally', became a reactionary protest against the outcome of the revolution: the old social classes and relationships were regarded as 'organic', the movements and conditions created by the new classes as wickedly 'mechanical'. The 'world's sleep' must not be disturbed. The society must not be replaced by the new day. In 'Hymn to the Night' Novelli asked:

Must the morning always come again?

Does the power of earthly things ever end?

Obdole industry countless

The heavenly mantle of night.

Friedrich Schlegel argued against the phrase 'the Dark Ages', saying that 'that remarkable period of humanist' might indeed be compared to the night, but what a starry night it was! Today, it seems, we are living in a confused, clouded interim state of half-light. The star which illuminated that night has paled and for the most part vanished, but day has not yet dawned. More than once, the imminent appearance of a new sun of universal understanding and bliss has been announced to us. But the reality has in no way confirmed the rash promise, and it should not be thought that it will soon be fulfilled, that cause is only the apparenciable cold which, in the morning air, usually precedes sunshine.

Side by side with the motif of 'lost illusions' we find that of the 'cold', the sense of a lonely and inexpressible world—and this note, struck for the first time by Romanticism, has never since been stillled: on the contrary, it has become more and more pronounced throughout the development of the capitalist world, in the increasing alienation of life. Hand in hand with this feeling goes the yearning for a return to warmth and security, to a condition which, in the imagination, resembles the mother's womb; and also for the voluptuousness of death, that death—wish peculiar to German Romanticism. Unity, an all-encompassing totality, is identified with death:

One day all will be body,
One body
In heavenly blood
The happy couple swimming.
This feeling of living in a broken world, a world of fragments, this flight from reality into associations without sense or connexion as a means of apprehending a mystical reality, all these ideas, proclaimed for the first time by the early Romantics, were later to become accepted artistic principles in the bourgeois world.

The Romantic protest against bourgeois-capitalist society, the escape into the past, did also, however, have a positive side. There was a 'day' as well as a 'night'. This was expressed in a profound longing for unity and a noble belief in man's potential ability to become master of his fate.

Community (wrote Novalis), pluralism is our very essence. The tyranny that oppresses us is our spiritual indulgence. By widening and cultivating our activities we shall become our own fate... if we establish harmony between our intelligence and our world, we are equal to God.

And a vision is glimpsed: 'The world judgement - the beginning of a new, cultivated, poetic era.'

Finally, the negative, backward-looking aspects of German Romanticism turned many Romantic writers into bigoted Catholics and reactionaries. Friedrich Schlegel preached an art of 'purely Christian beauty of feeling' and condemned the 'false glamour of diabolical enthusiasm, an abyss towards which Lord Byron's muse is more and more inclined'. And so it happened that while Byron died of marsh fever fighting for freedom in Greece, while Stendhal supported the national liberation movement in Italy, while Pushkin sympathized with the Decembrists, many a German Romantic became an acolyte of Metternich's and fully desired Heine's contemptuous verdict: 'Thiers is the party of Lies, and they are the henchmen of the Holy Alliance, the torturers of all the wretchedness, the horrors, and the follies of the past.'

When considering German Romanticism and all later, similar movements, we must analyze their internal contradictions and recognize both their negative and positive roles. There is always the same conflict: on the one hand, a deeply-felt protest against bourgeois values and the machinery of capitalism; on
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On the other hand, fear of the consequences of revolution and escape into mystification which inevitably leads to reaction. German Romanticism was the prototype of all the divided movements which later flowered among the intellectuals of the capitalist world, including, in our own time, Expressionism, Futurism, and Surrealism. The conflict in such movements is also reflected in the fact that by no means all the artists concerned become reactives. Of the German Romantics, Heinrich Heine and Nikosha Lassen became revolutionaries; and others such as Uhland and Eichendorff never associated themselves with the 'party of lies'.

It must also be remembered that part of Romanticism developed into realistic criticism of society. Romanticism and realism are closely intertwined in the works of many great writers - Byron and Scott, Goethe and Grillparzer, Hoffmann and Heine, Stendhal and Balzac, Pushkin and Gogol - with sometimes the Romantic element predominant and sometimes the realist. Thomas Mann, the great realist writer of the late bourgeois world, was deeply rooted in the traditions of German Romanticism, and particularly in the glittering variety of meaning contained in irony - irony which Mann himself described as 'refraction of the fundamental instincts'.

Folk art

The concept of 'folk lore' and 'folk art' was developed by Romanticism - not only German Romanticism but Romanticism in general - and constitutes one of its most important elements. In its search for a lost unity, for a synthesis of the personality and the collective, it is present against capitalist alienation, Romanticism discovered folk songs, folk art, and folk lore, and straightaway proclaimed the gospel of 'the people' as an organically developed, homogeneous entity. This Romantic concept of 'the people' soon as a kind of essence outside and beyond class divisions and processes of a collectively creative 'folk soul' has gone on causing confusion right up to the present day, and many of us frequently use the word 'the people' without a clear idea of what we mean. Folk art was contrasted to all other kinds of art as a 'natural' phenomenon opposed to 'manufactured' ones, and its 'anonymity' was taken to be a proof of its spontaneous creation by a mysterious 'community' without individuality or conscious-ness. The Romantics were led astray by verses like this:

Wer hat das alte Lied?  
Es hat das alte Lied der Wässer gebracht.  
Zwei grane und eine rote.

Who made up the party song? Three grane brought it from across the water, two grey ones and a white.

This may be poetic but it is not acceptable as either truth or symbol. Undoubtedly folk art expresses something common to many and so reflects the ideas of a community; but that is true not only of folk art but of all art. Art originated in a collective need. But even in the Stone Age, it was the individual - the sorcerer or witch-doctor - who transformed what the collective needed into words or shapes. Not only the cave paintings and the epics of the distant past but folk songs, too, are the products of individual authors - helped, certainly, by an abundance of traditional patterns. The Romantic attitude to folk songs was highly uncritical. Der Knabe Wunderbar, the collection edited by Brentano and Arnim, is a ragbag of lies, original poems side by side with insignificant ones of little value.

Many of these poems might be quoted to support the anti-Romantic theory that folk art is only a derivative or by-product of 'high' art (just as many modern scientists do not regard the virus as transitional from inert to living matter but as the result of a retrogressive development). I consider this theory to be as one-sided as the Romantic one. Folk songs may have been, in many cases, the result of a retrogressive development - fragments of heroic epics, religious poems, or troubadour lyrics converted into popular form - but to say this is not enough. We must not forget that the heroic epic itself had its origins in ancient myths and legends, originating in social conditions where there was not yet a ruling class and therefore no 'people' as its antithesis. Art then expressed a relatively homogeneous collective. Folk songs and folk art must, in many cases, have
the same kind of origin, without having gone through the intermediate stage of "high" art, expressing the needs of a ruling class. Folk songs and folk art are partly (more in some countries, less in others) produced by the peasantry, among whom ancient traditions tend to persist for a long time; very largely, however, they are a product of the highway with its journeymen, runaway clerics, wandering students, apprentices, shoemakers, and magicians of all kinds.

Neither folk songs nor folk plays are ever found in a definitive, "authentic" form. They have always been altered many times in the process of transmission, sometimes enriched by these changes but often cheapened, coarsened or unbearably sweetened by them. Béla Bartók made the attempt of purifying Hungarian folk music, getting rid of additions and deformations, restoring the freshness and strength of the originals. Something of the same kind might well be done for folk art as a whole, bearing in mind, however, that it can very rarely be stated with certainty that this or that form is the "original" one, since it is the very nature of folk art to occur in different versions. What is possible—and that was Bartók's great achievement—is to clear away superimposed elements of ethos, of coarseness and sentimentality, although these elements, one must add, may also well be "popular".

In folk songs, the tradition of a far distant collective is often mixed with elements which come from the conflict between the "people" and the ruling class. A characteristic example of this mixture of the traditional (in this case, traces of witchcraft and blood sacrifice) and the peasants' class struggle against the landowner is quoted by Fraser in *The Golden Bough*:

In some parts of Pomerania (at harvest time) every passer-by is stopped, his way being barred with a cane-crope. The reapers form a circle round him and sharpen their scythes, while their leader says:

"The men are ready,
The scythes are keen,
The corn is great and small,
The gentleman must be moved."

Then the process of whetting the scythes is repeated. At Ramín, in

Three elements are clearly recognizable here: prehistoric magic still surviving among a primitive peasantry as yet untouched by capitalism; the peasant's anger with the lords and princes who are to be "mown down"; and a brokenness of spirit following the failure of several peasant risings, a readiness to be bought by beer and brandy, a coarse, sidelong threatening desire for material benefits. In many folk songs, a prehistoric core has been overlaid with a number of later motifs arising partly from class struggles and revolts and partly from the degradations and corruptions inherent in class society. How much unbroken rebelliousness we find, for instance, in the ballads of Robin Hood, how much defiance in many German folk songs such as the song of poor Schlabbars:

*I took my sword into my hand and strapped it to my side,
Alas, poor fellow, I had to walk because I had no horse.
Far and wide I walked,
I took the broad highway,
A rich man's son then came along
his purse he had to leave me.*

*or the song of the obdurrate bride:*

*I don't like eating barley
I don't like rising early,
I am to be a man
and that's not my wish at all.*
Furthermore, we must realize that increasing industrialization irrevocably destroys folk art. The possibility of folk art now renewing itself by drawing upon the content and means of expression of the peasantry and the wandering artisans has become extremely remote. The working class represents a new content and demands new means of expression. New ‘folk songs’ – the ‘Marseillaise’, the ‘Internationale’, songs of the patriots in their struggle for freedom – have grown out of revolutionary movements. Songs composed with a very high degree of conscious skill, such as those by Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler, have become the new ‘folk songs’ of the revolutionary working class. A homogeneous ‘people’ possessed of a mysteriously creative ‘folk soul’ is a Romantic concept in the capitalist world, for it is a world of opposing classes, and only in class struggle against the ruling class will a ‘people’ gradually rise again from the Medea’s cauldron of our society’s fragments. The German Romantic idealization of the ‘people’ was not merely an illusion: it was reactionary in its consequences. It not only attacked the bourgeoisie but also all manifestations of class struggle, and eventually petered out in a bubble of ‘social partnership’ and the preaching of a false and hypocritical ‘brotherhood’. The Romantic protest against the bourgeois-capitalist world is, as we have already said, a constantly recurring one. But it is only one of the artist’s possible reactions to a reality which he can no longer affirm. With astonishing force and perseverance, bourgeois writers and artists have developed the method of Realism, a method whereby a society whose contradictions have been recognized as such is represented critically. England, France, Russia, and America are the countries where the attempt to represent social reality dialectically and without mystification has been most strikingly successful. Just as the Romanticism of Germany and Austria was different in character from that of other countries, so also their development of Realism was more inhibited and its works less rich than in countries where the breakthrough of capitalism had come earlier and taken revolutionary forms, or where extreme economic and social backwardness had unified all classes and
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people at all social levels against the ruling system, so that explosive tensions were created under intolerable pressure and revolutionary energies were irresistibly built up.

L'art pour l'art

L'art pour l'art was a movement related to Romanticism. It was born in the post-revolutionary bourgeois world, side by side with Realism, whose aim it is to explore and criticize society. L'art pour l'art - the attitude adopted by that great and fundamentally realistic poet, Baudelaire - is also a protest against the vulgar utilitarianism, the dreary business preoccupations of the bourgeoisie. It arose from the artist's determination not to produce commodities in a world where everything becomes a saleable commodity. Walter Benjamin, the outstanding German essayist who committed suicide in 1940 as a refugee from Hitler and whose works still await translation, tried to prove the opposite in an original interpretation of Baudelaire. He wrote:

Baudelaire's behavior on the literary market: Baudelaire's thorough understanding of the nature of commodities enabled or obliged him to recognize the market as an objective text... Baudelaire wanted to find a place for his works and so he had to elbow others out... His poems were full of special devices intended to put all other poems into the shade.

Against this opinion I should like to reaffirm something I myself wrote years ago:

Baudelaire set up the sacred effigy of beauty in opposition to the amoral world of the bourgeoisie. For the vulgar hypocrisy and the amoral aesthetic, beauty is an escape from reality, a clauing holy picture, a kind of self-protection for the beauty which lies out of Baudelaire's poetry in a stone coffin, a stern and incredible goddess of destiny. It is like the angel of wrath holding the flaming sword. Its eye strips and condemns a world in which the ugly, the base, and the inhuman are triumphant. Dressed-up poverty, hidden disease, and secret vice are revealed before its radiant radiations. It is as though capitalist civilization had been brought before a kind of revolutionary tribunal:

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beauty holds judgment and pronounces its verdict in lines of tempered steel.

Benjamin, however, develops his striking analysis as follows: the decisive element in the picture we have of Baudelaire is that he was the first to realize - and this realization had immense consequences - that the bourgeoisie was in the process of withdrawing its commission from the artist. What steady social commission could take its place? No class was likely to supply it; the lifetime place from which a living could be earned was the investment market. It was not the obvious, short-term demand that occupied Baudelaire but the latent long-term one... But the nature of the market, where this demand was to be discovered, was such that it imposed a manner of production, as well as a way of life, very different from those of earlier poets. Baudelaire was obliged to claim a poet's dignity in a society which had no more dignity of any kind to give away.

The essential point here is that the bourgeoisie world was incapable of "commissioning" Baudelaire's work even in an indirect sense, and that he produced for a nonexistent, anonymous market - hence "art for art's sake" - but that he did so in the expectation of some eventual, unknown public or consumer. Many remarks of Baudelaire's bear witness to his ambivalent attitude and so support both Benjamin's interpretation and mine. His art would have nothing to do with the bourgeoisie world, it arrogantly dismissed and repulsed the bourgeois reader; yet nevertheless it set out to fascinate him by its startling shock effects. Baudelaire spoke of his disgust with reality and, at the same time, of the "aristocratic pleasure of displeasing".

His disgust with reality meant a withdrawal into Part pour Part, his aristocratic pleasure meant a desire to terrorize the deep-seated bourgeois mind by a fearful beauty, by glittering instruments of torture. He refused to produce for the bourgeois buyer and yet he believed in and produced for a literary market as the final 'test'. We may recall that Marx quoted the principle established by capitalist economists - production for production's sake - the counterpart of which is 'science for science's sake' or 'art for art's sake'. In each case the market is lurking in the background. And so we recognize in Part pour Part the illusion...
finally in the aristocratic concept of Stefan George, who retreated into a narrow circle of disciples and glorified the elect personality against the common mass.

Impressionism

Impressionism also was a revolt, an attack by men of genius against the inflated pomposity of official academic art. Under the title of Twenty Years of Great Art, or the Lessons of Pissarro, Francis Jourdain has published a collection of the paintings that won official prizes in France in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Appended to the book is a list of French artists of the same period who won no prizes and enjoyed no official recognition. The list includes the names of Degas, Sisley, pissarro, Cézanne, Monet, Renoir, Rousseau, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bouvard, Matisse, Rouault, and Dufy. Their art has survived their period. The collection of the academicians’ works, on the other hand—works by the approved and acclaimed—is a coy Inferno of too much pretentiousness, pompous insignificance, and well-fed hypocrisy. There are stuffy historical canvases side by side with jolly pew scenes, gallantly saluting soldiers, and naked women whose flesh is as smooth and glutinous as gelatine, polite portraits of statesmen enlivening the dignity of their office from every pore, bearded worthies being wooed by muses seconded to Parnassus from the Moulin Rouge, coy nymphs and crucified saints groomed for martyrdom at a salon de beau.

This kind of academic art with its empty classicism, its pilfering of old forms whose content had long been lost, its made-to-order idealism, and its sentimentalism which moistens the eye with false emotion while artfully revealing a boor and a leg, was one of the most repellent products of the bourgeois world in process of disintegration. It was made up of lies, empty phrases, and hypocritical invocations of classical and Renaissance traditions in an age where replete respectability went whooping with naked commerce. It was to be found not only in art but everywhere: the reactionary politician holding forth on “liberty, equality, and fraternity” of a Sunday afternoon, the
tricolour of the Revolution wrapped like a napkin round his stomach, differs only in the degree of the crudity of his impudence from the painter who borrows the forms and
intimations of classicism in order to deceive the public about
the nature of the world they live in. Those academic heroes
who degraded Titian and Racine to the status of cliche-makers,
who had 'the beautiful' and 'the sublime' forever on their lips
and on their canvases, who were always bursting with indignation
at the 'decadence' of others, were themselves the emblems
of the worst and most shameful form of decadence. For it
is utterly decadent, in a world gone out of joint, to behave as
though everything were in perfect order, as though all that
mattered was to repeat, with every kind of polite flourish, what
the classics had once expressed with the full force of their
originality as the true experience of their age.

It was against this artistic counterfeiting, hung with medals and
disguising its private parts with laurels, that Impressionism
revolted. When Courbet, who was later to take part in the
Paris Commune, wrote his proud letter to the Minister of Fine
Arts declining the Cross of the Legion of Honour offered him,
it was as though an opening chord were struck.

At no time, in no case should I have accepted it. Still less should I
accept it today, when treason multiplies itself on all sides and human
courage cannot but be troubled at so much self-seeking and
disloyalty. . . . My conscience as an artist is no less repelled by accepting
a reward which the hand of the Government is pressing upon me.
The State is not competent in artistic matters.

Further on in the letter Courbet says that it is fatal for art if it is
forced into official respectability and condemned to sterile
mediocrity. "This is a declaration of war on official, academic
art. Courbet, who broke out of 'official respectability', who
painted peasants and working men, landscapes, fruits, and
flowers with a vigorous naturalism, handling his brush like a
trouvel, was no Impressionist, but his leap over the museum
wall into nature, into the people's midst, into the freshness of
light and colour gave an example to the Impressionists.

Cézanne said of him:

A stonemason, a rough and ready peasant. A colour grinder...
There is none other who could eclipse him in this century. He may
roll up his sleeves, lift his hat over one ear, overthrow the Vendôme
column, his brushstroke is that of a classic. . . . He is profound, serene,
gentle. There are shades of his, golden as ripe corn. I'm read about
these shades. His colours have the fragrance of corn. . . . Those girly.
An easel, a breadbasket, a happy language, a reposé that Manet in his
Déjeuner never gave us.

Courbet was a painter of nature and of the people. The
Impressionists who followed him were also the discoverers of a
new reality and were obsessed by the desire to paint the people
and objects of their age. The elegant Manet, friend of Baudelaire
and later of Zola, suggested to the Préfet of Paris that the
walls of meeting-rooms at the Hôtel de Ville should not be
covered with academic historical paintings but with figures and
motifs of the new age, with market, railway station, Seine
bridges, and public parks swarming with people. Like
naturalism in literature, in exact contemporary, Impressionism
turned its eyes upon the present day, contemplating ordinary
things without reticence, even though they might be ugly.

Manet formulated this attitude:
The painter today does not say 'look at flawless works'. He says
'look at sincere works'. It is sincerity that bestows on paintings the
character of a present, although the painter may only have been con-
cerned to record his impression.

Manet added that he had not set out with the intention of
protesting, but the violent reaction of the academicians, and of
the public corrupted by them, had forced him to protest against
such intolerance. In 1874, Claude Monet exhibited a painting in
the Salon des Refusés, which he entitled Still Life. Impression.
The name 'Impressionism' stems from this picture, which
provoked screams of foolish rage. The rebellious
character of the new movement was obvious.

Yet Impressionism, too, was a dual phenomenon, and
Cézanne, whose intelligence equalled his genius and who carried
the new movement to its peak and, at the same time, to its end,
was aware of this inner contradiction. He said of the old masters:
And, gazing at Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger*, he exclaimed: 'All of us are there in that man Delacroix!... Everything is connected, worked from the whole.' Only patchwork, no longer all of a piece! Cézanne recognized that the grand unity had been lost, not only in art but in social reality. Delacroix, in whom the flame of the Revolution had not yet been extinguished, whose Romantic ethos expressed a tremendous feeling for struggling humanity, was the last painter in whom the conception of man as a totality, so typical of the Renaissance, manifested itself in original form and with the vehemence of a fever. Baudelaire said of him:

The achievement of Delacroix sometimes seems to me like a kind of act of nullifying the grandeur and natural passion of man.... A good picture, true to the vision which has begotten it, should be brought into being like a world.... The principal characteristic of Delacroix's genius is precisely the fact that he does not know decadence; he shows only progress.... Eugène Delacroix never lost the traces of his revolutionary soul.

Baudelaire goes on to compare Delacroix with Stendhal, in whom enlightenment, revolution, and Romanticism were closely interwoven, and passion and reason, individual arrogance and social consciousness, warmth of feeling and austerity of form combined into a unity that was full of tension. This unity was lost with Delacroix, and the 'patchwork' art of which Cézanne speaks reveals a fragmented world. Cézanne formulated the new Impressionist principle many times:

The artist is merely a recording apparatus for sensory perceptions. ...No theory! Works....Theories corrupt men.... We are a shimmering chaos. I come in front of my theme, I lose myself in it.... Nature speaks to everyone. Ah! Landscape has never been painted. Man ought not to be present, but completely absorbed into the land-
Naturism

Literary naturalism was more decisively a movement of present and revolt than Impressionism, though it was marked by similar inner contradictions. Zola coined the term 'naturism' to describe a special and radical form of realism, in order to mark off the new movement from all sorts of well-meaning fools who tried to pass off their literary products as 'realistic'. Yet the actual originator of naturalism was Flaubert, whose Madame Bovary blazed the trail for the new movement. Zola wrote:

Flaubert has helped the true, the right word in literature, the word that everyone was waiting for, to break through. Madame Bovary is of such clarity and perfection that this novel represents a type, a fundamental model for this form of art.

It might seem strange at first glance that Flaubert, who loved beauty as much as Balzac and for whom the theme of his novel was a kind of torture, should have presented the dull, torpid reality of provincial petty-bourgeois life with such precision and artistic dedication. But his Impassibility was an expression of the same loathing of the basality, stupidity, and meaness of the bourgeois world that moved Balzac to summon them to judgment in poems of supreme beauty. Flaubert wrote to George Sand that an artist has no right to express his opinion on anything, no matter what. Has God ever expressed an opinion?... I believe that great art is scientific and impersonal.... I want neither love nor hatred nor pity nor anger.... Is it not time to introduce justice into art? The impartiality of description would then become equal to the majesty of the law.

In fact, however, this apparent impartiality amounted to a colossal hatred of bourgeoisie society as a whole, of the right and the left, of shopkeepers and working men. The result was total disillusionment with human beings, with mankind.

The unchangeable brutality of mankind fills me with black grief.... The immense disgust I feel for my contemporaries drives me back into the past....
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Zola's attitude change, so that he was able to say, anticipating a fundamental doctrine of socialist realism:

"Detailed investigation of the reality of today must be followed by a glance at the development of tomorrow." Only now, recognizing at last the need for socialism, did he write in his notebook:

The bourgeoisie is betraying its revolutionary past in order to preserve its capitalist privileges and maintain itself as the ruling class. Having acquired power it is unwilling to abdicate it to the people. And so the bourgeoisie must gradually become fascinised. It is becoming the ally of reaction, despotism, and militarism. I must emphasise again and again that the bourgeoisie is played out; it has given over to the reaction in order to maintain its power and its wealth. All hope lies in the forces of tomorrow, which are with the people.

All these things—the decay of the bourgeoisie, the wretchedness of the common people, the resistance of the working class—Zola depicted in his novels, but without hope of a solution, as a nightmare never to be shaken off. In this 'objective' portrayal of appalling social conditions and in this refusal to describe them as changeable lie both the strength and the weakness of naturalism. Here is to be found its duality. There comes a moment of decision when naturalism must either break through to socialism or founder in falsism, symbolism, mysticism, religiosity, and reaction. Zola chose the former path; many of his companions took the latter. Taine, horrified out of his wits by the Commune, became a champion of respectable religious art. Huysmans sought an escape, first in the realm of the pathological, and later in the bosom of the Catholic church. Paul Bourget retreated into the twilight of a sentimental Christianity.

If we consider also that Ibsen and Gerhard Hauptmann embraced symbolism and mysticism, and that Strindberg plunged into neo-Romanticism and wild superstition, we come to recognize the problematic nature of naturalism and its highly ambiguous position. From this position it is equally possible to go this way or that, forwards or back.

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Symbolism and mysticism

When naturalism developed into symbolism and mysticism, this had social causes but was also determined by the method particular to it. In all intellectual and artistic revolts within the bourgeoisie world there always comes a moment of decision when a revolutionary movement—not merely a movement of protest—strikes the masses, i.e. when the classes take action. The French Revolution, the revolution of 1848, and the Paris Commune were turning-points in literature and art as well as politics. Each time artists were forced to take sides, to align themselves with progressive or reactionary tendencies. The first proletariat revolution, the first transient grasping of power by the working class under the Paris Commune, had a lasting effect. The panic that seized the bourgeoisie affected Hippolyte Taine, an old man, at one end of the scale, and the young Friedrich Nietzsche, to whom the Commune came as an unforgettable shock, at the other. The more decisively the working class emerged into the foreground, the more difficult it became to remain satisfied with revolts within the bourgeoisie—always bedevilled as they were by contradictions—and the more simply did the class struggle force intellectual rebels to make a choice. Either they had to ally themselves with the working class, or else to join the reaction; the third choice was illiberal—by opting for the apparent independence of social nihilism they were in fact supporting the status quo against the forces of the future.

Naturalism believed that it depicted social conditions with "scientific objectivity". But this 'objectivity' was deceptive. (Like Impressionism, naturalism failed to see those conditions as a struggle between the past and the future but saw them as an unchangeable present, not in their dialectical context but as a fixed moment in time.) When Taine was still a progressive, he wrote to the young Zola:

If you shut yourself up in a vacuum and depict for the reader the hopeless story of a monster, a madman or a diseased wretch, you will only succeed in putting him off... The true artist must possess wide
knowledge and a superior attitude, which will help him to see the
overall pattern. The writers of today specialize too much, that them-
selves off from the world and concern themselves with microscopic
examinations of individual parts instead of fixing their eye upon the
whole.

The artist had lost 'the whole', as Classee, too, pointed out.
For naturalism there was no order of priorities in reality; the
incidental and the characteristic detail claimed the same amount
of attention. A decisive conversation or event, and the buzzing
of a bee or the entrance of a woman selling eggs that happened
to intercept it, were considered equally 'real' and therefore
equally important. This photographic recording of conditions,
thought of strictly rather than dialectically, created a feeling
of meaninglessness, an oppressive, discouraging atmosphere of
passivity. In a certain sense naturalism anticipated the de-
humanization, the dull and disappointing surrender to things made
autonomous by the inhuman laws of capitalist production,
which later were to find still more blatant expression in the
arts. Naturalism revealed the fragmentation, the ugliness,
the surface flint of the capitalist bourgeoisie world, but it
could not go further and deeper to recognize those forces
which were preposing to destroy that world and establish
socialism.

This is why the naturalistic writer, unable to see beyond the
patchwork shoddiness of the bourgeoisie world, was bound —
unless he moved towards socialism — to embrace symbolism
and mysticism, to fall victim to his desire to discover the
mysterious whole, the meaning of life, behind and beyond
social realities.

Alienation

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the first to use the concept of
'alienation'. His experiences in Calvinist-Republican Geneva
led him to recognize that when a people is 'represented' by
deputies it becomes alienated from its own collective and so
turns to be a people. The community, he found, could be the
instrument of government but never of the commons will, for
then it was bound to become alienated from itself within the
State.

The people... is not and cannot be represented by deputies. Sovere-
ingty... cannot be represented; it lies essentially in the general
will, and does not admit of representation; it is either the same, or
other; there is no intermediate possibility. (Common School)

Conditions, however, had become too complex and States too
large; division of State power and the fiction of 'popular
representation' could not, therefore, be abandoned, but from
this followed alienation, concentration of power, and loss of
freedom and democracy.

Hegel and the young Marx developed the concept of aliena-
tion philosophically. Man's alienation begins when he parts
company with nature through work and production. Through
his work 'man makes himself twofold, not only intellectually,
as in the conscience, but in reality, through his work, and hence
contemplates himself within a world made by himself.' (Karl
Marx). As man becomes more and more capable of mastering
and transforming nature and the entire world around him, so
does he confront himself more and more as a stranger in his
own work, and find himself surrounded by objects which are
the product of his activity yet which have a tendency to grow
beyond his control and to become more and more powerful in
their own right.

This alienation, necessary for Man's development, needs to
be continually overcome, so that men can become conscious of
themselves in the process of work, find themselves again in the
product of their work, and create new social conditions so as not
to be the slaves of their own production but its masters. The
artisan, who is creative, can find at home in his work and can
have a personal feeling for his product. But with the division of
labour in industrial production this becomes impossible. The
wage-earner can have no sense of unity with his work or with
himself to set against his 'alienation'. His attitude towards the
product of his work is that 'towards an alien object having
power over him'. He is alienated from the thing he makes and
of labour makes a man’s role more partial, so his field of vision becomes more limited; the more ingenuous the work process, the less intelligent is the work required and the more acute the individual’s alienation from the whole. The tag from ‘Fenence—
‘Nil in humanum nihil alienum est’—is reversed, and the tremendous expansion of production is accompanied by a shrinkage of the personality.

Franz Kafka, who felt the alienation of human beings more intensely than any artist before him, said in a conversation with Janouch about ‘Taylorism’ (a system which visualized the total transformation of the worker into a machine part by conveyor-belt mass production): ‘It defiles and degrades not only the work itself, but above all, the human being who is a component of it. This kind of Taylorized life is a terrible curse from which only hunger and misery can prove, instead of the longed-for wealth and profit. There’s progress for you . . .’ ‘Progress towards the end of the world,’ suggested Janouch. Kafka shook his head: ‘If that, at least, were certain! It is not certain. . . . The conveyor-belt of life carries you on, no one knows where. One is more of an object, a thing, than a living creature.’

Men’s living together has become so broad and thick [wrote Robert Musil in The Man Without Qualities] that their relationships are so enormously interwined, that no ray can any longer penetrate an area of any size, and every man outside the narrowest circle of his activities must remain dependent on others like a child; never before was the underling’s mind so limited as it is today, when it rules all.

In a note on Rousseau, Musil wrote:

The great undivided life-form must be preserved. . . . The culture of social and psychological division of labour which shatters this unity into innumerable fragments is the greatest peril for the soul.

Ulrich, the ‘man without qualities’, remarks that in the past ‘one had an easier conscience about being a person than one

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from his own self, lost in the act of production. Then, as Marx pointed it,
activity appears as suffering, strength as powerlessness, production as consumption, and the worker’s own physical and spiritual energy, his personal life—the very strength of life in general, if not activity, as an activity turned against himself, independent from himself, and not belonging to himself.

In primitive social conditions, e.g. in the natural economy of the early Middle Ages, the social relationships between people (landowner to peasant, customer to artisan, etc.) appear as their own personal relationships. In a developed commodity-producing society they are disguised as social relationships between objects, i.e. between products. An artisan produces a particular object for a particular customer. But for the industrialist, it is immaterial what his factory produces and for whom; any product is, for him, merely the means of profit. Those engaged in commercial exchange are totally alienated from one another, and the product is likewise totally alienated from the man who puts it on the market. Bertolt Brecht makes this point very strikingly in the ‘Trader’s Song’ from Die Mamanahes:

How should I know what rice is?
How should I know who knows what it is?
I’ve no idea what rice is.
I only know its price.

We speak of price trends, stock-exchange prices, and by so doing we acknowledge the inhuman, autonomous movement of objects, a movement that carries human beings along as a stream carries twigs of wood. In a world governed by commodity production, the product controls the producer, and objects are more powerful than men. Objects become the strange thing that casts long shadows, they become ‘destiny’ and the deans no machines.

Industrial society is distinguished not only by this objectification of social relationships, but also by an increasing division of labour and specialization. Man as he works becomes fragmented. His connection with the whole is lost; he becomes a tool, a small accessory to a huge apparatus. And in this division

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A man who has become a ‘case’ only comes into contact with junior representatives of the system; the senior representatives are remote and wrapped in mystery. A senior official such as Klamm in The Castle is virtually invisible. Bernabei, who serves under Klamm, is never sure whether he is really talking to Klamm. ‘He speaks to Klamm, but is it Klamm? Isn’t it rather someone who is a little like Klamm?’ Bernabei does not dare to ask ‘for fear of offending in ignorance against some unknown rules and so losing his job’. The junior bureaucrats, such as the two ‘assistants’ whom the Castle sends to watch the strangers, are present only within the limits of their function; otherwise they are without personality, that is to say without presence. K. conquers their faces:

‘How am I to know one of you from the other? The only difference between you is your names, otherwise you’re as like as . . .’ He stopped, and then went on involuntarily, ‘You’re as like as two stops.’

They are pure function, shadows of a task, servants of a secret power looming in the background. The ‘case’ is decided upon in impenetrable darkness.

This sense of the powerlessness of the individual who, as he confronts the apparatus of power, is from the start the accused, the culprit, not knowing what is the accusation against him nor what is the nature of his guilt – this feeling, so characteristic of the ordinary man under the Hapsburg monarchy, has since spread over continents. The great decisions are removed from the elected representatives of the people and placed in the hands of a small group of rulers. The State is alienated from the average citizen, who generally thinks of it as ‘the powers that be’ or ‘them up there’, never as ‘us’. His alienation is reflected in his poor opinion of politics and politicians. He is convinced that the whole business is a pretty dirty one, yet feels that nothing much can be done about it – that he must, in fact, accept it as it is. ‘Lie low and keep quiet’ is quickly becoming a universal social motto. The citizen, the active citizen, is disappearing fast. Retreat into private life is the order of the day.

* Sacher & Warburg, 1955.
The contradiction between the findings of modern science and the backwardness of social understanding also encourages a sense of alienation. Modern knowledge about the structure of the atom, the Quantum and Relativity theories, the new science of cybernetics, have made the world an uneasy place for the man in the street — far unseasier than the discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus, and Kepler made the world for medieval man. The palpable becomes impalpable, the visible becomes invisible, behind the reality perceived by the senses there is a vast reality that escapes the imagination and can only be expressed by mathematical formulae. Vigorous, forceful reality with all its shapes and colours — the 'natur' Goethe saw as a scientist as well as a poet — has become an immense abstraction. Ordinary men no longer feel at home in such a world. The icy breath of the incomprehensible chills them. A world that can only be understood by scientists is a world from which they are alienated.

There are moments when technical achievements — the flight into the cosmos, which is the realisation of an ancient, magic dream — can exalt men. But it is precisely this same power over the forces of nature that also intensifies a sense of powerlessness and arouses apocalyptic fear. And indeed the discrepancy between social consciousness and technical accomplishment is alarming. A single misleading of a radar report, a mistake by a simple technician may mean world disaster. Humanity may be destroyed and no one will have wanted it to happen.

Alienation has had a decisive influence on the arts and literature of the twentieth century. It has influenced the great writings of Kafka, the music of Schoenberg, the Surrealists, many abstract artists, the 'anti-narrative' and 'anti-dramatic', Samuel Beckett's sinister forces; and also the poetry of the American beatniks, one of which reads:

Now listen to this
a do-it-yourself hysterectomy set
the hydrogen stove
the best fallout possible.
Think of the forny embryonic mutations
generous, gentle, genocides.

The sense of total alienation veers into total despair, veers into nihilism.

Nihilism

Nietzsche, who understood decadence as anyone did, recognized nihilism as one of its essential features. He announced the 'rise of nihilism': "The whole of our European culture has been moving, for a long time past, with a tortured tension that increases from decade to decade, towards something like a catastrophe: restlessly, violently, precipitously. ...' And this is how he described the times into which we have been 'thrown' (this idea of being 'thrown' into one's time was to become one of the themes of existentialism):

... a time of great inner decay and disintegration.... Radical Nihilism (he declared) means being convinced that existence is absolutely unsuitable.... Nihilism is an intermediate pathological state (the colloquial generalisation, the conclusion that there is no sense at all is purely pathological): whether it be that the productive forces are not yet strong enough — whether it be that decadence is still hesitating and has not yet found its auxiliary means.... Nihilism is not a cause but only the logic of decadence.

Here nihilism is clearly diagnosed as a result, an expression of decadence. But, blind to social dialectics, Nietzsche failed to recognize the connection with excessivem capitalism. Nihilism, already foreshadowed by Flaubert, is a genuine attitude for many artists and writers in the late bourgeois world. But we must not overlook the fact that it helps many uneasy intellectuals to reconcile themselves to iniquitous conditions — that its radical nature is often only a form of disguised opportunism.

The nihilist writer says to us: 'The capitalist bourgeois world is
wretched. I say so without mercy and I carry my opinion to its most extreme consequences. There is no limit to this barbarity. And whoever believes that there is something in this world worth living for or worthy of mankind is a fool or a twaddler. All human beings are stupid and wicked, the oppressed as much as the oppressors, those who fight for freedom as much as the tyrants. To say this needs courage." Let me continue now with words actually written by Gottfried Benn:

The thought occurs to me that it is perhaps far more radical, far more revolutionary, far more of a challenge to a man who is strong, hard and fit, to tell mankind: You are like that and you will never be any different; this is how you live, have lived, and always shall live. If you have money, you keep your health; if you have power, you need not perform roundly; if you are strong, you are doing right. That is history! Era histórica ... Whatever cannot bear this thought lies among the worms that rest in the sand and in the dampness which the earth lays upon them. Whoever resists, as he looks into his children's eyes, that he still has a hope, is covering the lightning with his hand, yet cannot save himself from the night that snatches the nations away from their cities. ... All these catastrophes born from destiny and freedom: useless blossoms, powerless flowers, are behind them the impertinent with its boundaries No.

All this sounds much more radical than any Communist Manifesto — and yet the ruling class only occasionally has any objection to such 'radicalism'. More than that: in times of revolutionary upheaval, nihilism such as this becomes virtually indispensable to the ruling class, more useful, indeed, than direct expositions of the bourgeois world. Direct expositions provoke suspicion. But the radical tone of the nihilist's accusation strikes 'revolutionary' echoes and so can channel revolt into purposelessness and create a passive despair. Only when the ruling class thinks itself unusually secure, and particularly when it is perpetuating a war, does its satisfaction with anti-capitalist nihilism evaporate; at such times it requires direct apologists and references to 'eternal values'. Nihilistic radicalism then runs the risk of being beclouded as 'degenerate art'.

The nihilist artist is generally not aware that he is, in effect, surrendering into the hands of the capitalist bourgeois world, that in condemning and denying everything he condemns that world as a fit setting for universal wretchedness. For many of these artists, who are subjectively sincere, it is by no means easy to grasp things that have not yet come fully into being and to translate these things into art. There are two good reasons why it is not easy: first, the working class itself has not remained entirely uncorrupted by imperialistic influences in the capitalist world; secondly, the overconsuming of capitalism, not only as an economic and social system but also as a spiritual attitude, is a long and painful process, and the new world does not come forth gloriously perfect but scarred and disfigured by the past.

A high degree of social consciousness is needed in order to distinguish between the death-throes of the old world and the birth-pangs of the new, between the ruin and the as yet unfinished edifice. Equally a high degree of social consciousness is needed in order to portray the new in its totality without ignoring, or worse still idealizing, its ugly features. It is far easier to notice only the horrible and inhuman, only the ravaged foreground of the age, and to condemn it, than to penetrate into the very essence of what is about to be — the more so as decay is more colourful, more striking, more immediately fascinating than the hectic construction of a new world. And one last word: nihilism carries no obligation.

Dehumanization

Dehumanization in all its forms is another element of late bourgeois art. To describe such art as anti-humanist is by no means a Marxist prejudice; art theoreticians who are the very opposite of Marxist point out the same thing, often applying this dehumanization as a quality and a sign of progress. André Malraux writes:

'Art must not, if it wants to come to life again, impose any cultural idea upon us, because everything humanistic must be excluded from the start. Humanism art was an adornment for the culture which supported it, with the advent of a non-humanist art, ... artists closed their ranks more and more tightly as their separation from the culture and society of their time became more and more pronounced.'
impersonal, apparently 'objective' character. This objectivity, however, is not that of writing in which a social collective, a group, or a class finds expression, nor does the poet feel himself to be the instrument of a living community; on the contrary, he invents an 'I' removed from the reach of consciousness, an 'I'd' as Freud called it, and this 'I'd', rooted in an archaic or mythical past, becomes the agent of what the poem reveals. Rimbaud is reported to have said: 'My superstitious is that I have no heart.' And Rimbaud, too, said about the subject of poetry:

'If it is another, if this wakes up as a trumpet, that is not its merit. I am present at the flowering of my own thought, I watch it, I listen to it. I make a stroke with the bow, and already the symphony swims in the depths. It is wrong to say I think. One ought to say I see being thought.'

Depersonalization builds on the illusion that, by trusting the 'I'd', one can make even speechless objects talk— as for example Joyce tried to do in the abstruse Flannan Wake, where he constructed a language meant to be that of wind and water. It is not the objects that speak, however, it is man trusting himself as an object, no longer trusting his consciousness but only the associations of the unconscious. Gombrich Benne refers to Levy-Brühl's theory that logical thought is far inferior to the pre-logical mind because the latter is "deeper and comes from farther away". He goes on to speak of an 'archaically extended, hypersemically discharging the organ of poetry: 'Come down, oh I, to couple with the All; to me, ye hosts of the enchanted: visions, intuitions, dawns of morning.' In the place of the social collective in which he no longer believes, the decadent poet invents a mythical, archaic, cosmic collective supposed to be the true source of all poetry.

The dehumanization of art and literature can manifest itself not only in the disappearance or distortion of man, not only in the detachment of the 'I', but also in an anti-humanist attitude which sometimes assumes the character of brutally harsh social criticism. Let me quote a glaring example, namely the American type of thriller. This is not the place to discuss the function of the thriller, which is largely a substitute for the heroic epic we
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no longer have, with its successful "positive" hero emerging triumphant from all manner of exciting ordeal, with its excess of action, and its total absence of psychological analysis of any kind. I mention it only as a typical instance of dehumanization in literature. Leaving aside the appalling Salline, let me mention Dashiel Hamslett, an original writer who invented a new type of thriller. At the end of his *Maltese Faloney*, a boy no means idealized private detective turns his mistress over to justice and the electric chair. He explains to her, with icy logic, why he is doing this: because money, success, and his own life are more important than any feeling. When the asks him: "Don't you love me any more?, he replies: 'I don't know what that amounts to. Does anybody ever? Do suppose I do? What of it? Maybe next month I won't... Then what? Then I'll think I played the sap. And if I did it and got sent over than I'd be sure I was the sap. Well, if I send you over I'll be sorry as hell - I'll have some rotten nights - but that'll pass.' In this and other novels, Dashiel Hamslett depicted American capitalism with merciless truthfulness, indeed with loathing and disgust. But his attitude - "that's how things are" - accepts anti-humanism as a starting-point and presents the process of dehumanisation nakedly, without any philosophical frills. There are many other examples, not only among thrillers but among other genres of late bourgeois literature. Man is nothing. Success is all.

Fragmentation

The fragmentation of man and his world has found expression again and again in works of our period. There is no unity left, no wholeness. Discussing American drama of the present day, Arthur Miller was reported to say something like this: 'I believe that we in America have arrived at the end of a development because we are repeating ourselves year after year, and nobody seems to notice it.' He spoke of a "narrowing field of vision", a 'thickening grip', an 'inability to put the whole world on the stage and shake it down to its foundations, which has always been the aim of great drama'. 'Though we are at present incapable of distinguishing between a big subject and a small one, a wide and a narrow view, we remain absolutely at the mercy of the emotions involved.' It is an inability 'to see things in their proper size'. This is an important symptom of decadence. It is the result of an attitude which does not dare to recognize, in the struggle between an old world and a new, in the growth of socialism despite all its setbacks, the one important thing, the thing that will shake the world to its foundations'.

But the problem of fragmentation is bigger than this. It is closely bound up with the tremendous mechanization and specialization of the modern world, with the overwhelming power of anonymous machines, and with the fact that most of us are caught up in jobs which are only a tiny part of a much bigger process neither the meaning nor the functioning of which we are in a position to understand. Already the Romanists had become aware of the fragmentations of life in the bourgeoisie world; Heine had written, "Too fragmentary are world and life..." This awareness increased as capitalism and its problems grew, until the whole world seemed to be a chaos of fragments, human and material, levers and hands, wheels and nerves, the humdrum daily round and the fleeting sensation. The imagination, hobbled by a mass of heterogeneous details, was no longer capable of absorbing them as any kind of whole. The first poets of the modern metropolis, Edgar Allan Poe and Baudelaire, adapted their imagination to the fragmented reality surrounding them, smashing the world to pieces in their own minds in order to fit it together again with sovereign willfulness. Baudelaire wrote: "The imagination takes the whole of creation apart... according to laws which spring from the very depths of the soul, it gathers and assembles the parts and makes a new world out of them." Despite this synthetic method, Baudelaire's poetry still retained an apparent classicism. Its structure was firm, its form homogeneous. Rimbaud was the first to shatter the traditional form and structure of poetry. 'A storm,' he wrote, "strikes breaches into walls, smashes the boundaries of dwellings." Breaking away from ordinary reality, the new poetry constructed a new world for itself. In *La Belle Irène*, catacazts of images pursue one another, a stream
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without beginning or end carries everything along, all the shreds of a destroyed reality, out of sight, out of mind.

...Que vas-tu, tant de beaux chéris? 
Fleure folle, sans dard les hippocampe moelle, 
Quand les pêchés furent crows à coups de tripens
Les cines ultramarines aux ordres estomineux,
Meu qui trembleb, meta gazoner à cinqoustaux lâche
Le rai des nébuloses et les Montagnes épaul,
Florier floriell des immortellos blanc,
Je regarde l’Europe aux inondées purgater!
J’ai vu des arbres pêchés et des thy
Dans le cino d’âllevans j’ai ouvert au moyen
Exister - sur mes ans fins que tu derc et l’Œuvre,
Million d’essamies d’art, à future Vigneau?

...That raced, dotted with small electric moons, mud board with black eel-horses for escort, when Joly brightness the blushing
fanned, ultramarine sky; I, trembling as I sensed, fifty leagues
away, the grands of beesmeth in ruf and dense miliunre, eternal
depth of blue harvest, I long for Europe and her ancient pens
post! I have seen starry archipilagoes! and islands whose delicious
skins open to the drifter: is it in those bottomless nights that you
sleep, is it there you finish yourself, a million golden birds, O future
strength!

Poetry such as this had neen written before. Even
Baudelaire’s tremendous Le Voyage, when compared with such
extremism, seems orthodox like a traditional poem in the
tradition of Ronsard or Racine. The method invented by
Rimbaud, whereby the fragments of a dismembered world,
beautiful and ugly, brilliant and vulgar, legendary and real, are
pasted together, in dreamlike sequences and with a scientist’s
soldiers, to make a new ‘substance’, revolutionized what had
previously been meant by poetry. Modern poetry, with its
margent of heterogeneous scraps, with its intellectual irrational-
ism which recurs again and again, be it in the late Rilke or in
Geoffrey Benn, in Ena Pound, Eliot, Eluard, Auden, or
Alberti, stems entirely from Rimbaud. It would be academic
pedantry to go on lamenting this shattering of the traditional
poem, this abandonment of form, this unleashing of associative

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The development was undoubtedly the result of decen-
dence, but it is equally true to say that it has led to a great wealth
of new possibilities and means of expression. Mayakovsky, too,
was a destroyer of old forms — and his poetic method proved
magnificently suited for expressing the reality of revolution.
And Brecht, too, though with greater formal moderation,
applied the method of constructive fantasy — except that his
poetic intellect served the rational, not the irrational. That, how-
ever, is a matter of mental attitude, not of form. Mayakovsky
and Brecht linked the new means of expression with the theme
of revolution and class struggle, and by so doing went beyond
the meaningless of fragmentation.

Mystification

The literature and arts of the late bourgeois world tend towards
mystification. Mystification means shrouding reality in mystery.
This tendency is above all the result of alienation. The
industrialized, objectified late bourgeois world has become so
alien to its inhabitants, the social reality seems so questionnable,
it triviality has assumed such gigantic proportions, that
writers and artists are forced to grasp at every apparent means
of piercing the rigid outward crust of things. Both the desire to
simplify this unceasingly complex reality, to reduce it to essen-
tials, and the desire to present human beings as linked by
elementary human relationships rather than by material ones,
leads to the myths in art. Classicism’s use of ancient myths was
purely formal. Romanticism, in its rebellion against ‘prosaic’
bourgeois society, resorted to myths as a means of depicting
‘pure passion’ and all that was excessive, original, and exotic.
The danger of the method — in itself a legitimate one — was that,
from the outset, it opposed an unbridled ‘essential man’ to
man as he develops within society; it opposed the ‘eternal’ to
the time-conditioned.

Mystification and myth-making in the late bourgeois world
offer a way of evading social decisions with a reasonably clear
conscience. Social conditions and the actual phenomena and
conflicts of our times are transposed into a timeless unreality,
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into an eternal, mythical, changeless 'original state of being'. The specific nature of a historical moment is falsified into a general idea of 'being'. The socially conditioned world is presented as a cosmically unconditional one. In this way the 'outsider', not only divests himself of the duty to take part in social processes, but also rises above the world of the 'commoners' into that of his 'peer', from where he can gaze down with sarcastic superiority upon the clumsy efforts of his 'committed' brethren.

In his already grandiloquent book The Outsider, Colin Wilson calls upon his fellow-artists to refuse to commit himself to anything, to free himself from the 'curse' of all social obligations and try to dedicate himself totally to the redemption of his own existential 'I'. A 'new anti-humanist epoch' must be ushered in, for our civilization has already embraced too much of the human quality. The book ends with a kind of prophecy: 'The individual begins that long effort as an Outsider; he may finish it as a saint.' Günther Blöker, a more intelligent writer than Wilson, would doubtless acclaim such a conclusion as belonging to the 'true mythical conscience'. In Blöker's book The New Reality he chides the 'liminature' 'committed' artists who want to change social conditions:

"As long as man assumes that the evils of this earth have their cause in the specific failures of individual persons and individual institutions, he still remains in the stage of intellectual childhood. The moment of maturity comes when he becomes conscious of the innate faculties of the world, a faithfulness that may be mitigated but never wholly removed."

Hermann Broch has said that all literature tends towards the myth. But what is myth? Broch never tires of defining it.

"Myth is the naive of the beginning, it is the language of the first words, of original symbols, which each epoch must discover for itself anew. It is the irrational, the direct world view, the original glimpse of the 'first-time-ever', it is the whole world becoming an indivisible image."

Today it has become internationally fashionable to write newspaper features in the "language of first words" and to pretend

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that a quick look at Heidegger serves as 'the original glimpse of the first-time-ever'. Those elaborately-confused pronouncements have an ever-recurring refrain: namely that it is 'being', not 'doing', that matters. 'Events have lost their interest for people,' Gertrude Stein declared in a lecture. 'People are interested in existence.' Doing is dynamic, being is static. Those who opt for 'being' instead of 'doing', for the myth instead of the changeable social reality, do so—often unconsciously—out of a fear of social upheaval. 'Because things are as they are, they will not stay as they are,' said Brecht. 'Mythical being' is evoked precisely in order to defy this truth.

Romanticism made a cult of 'pure passion'. The myth-making neo-Romantics accept only the totally irrational as the 'being' of man—and by so doing they justify, without always being aware of their own purpose, the rule of social injustice. Man's 'being', says Blöker, is like 'a vast reverberation, an ancient moan, an elemental simmering in which the human essence, literally, makes itself heard before it assumes shape'. This simmering and simmering of the modern mystic—has it not all been said before, with admirable simplicity?

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; to kill, and to heal; to break down, and to build up; to weep, and to laugh; to mourn, and to dance; to cast away stones and to gather stones together; to embrace, and to refrain from embracing; to get, and to lose; to keep, and to cast away; to seek, and to set a man against his foe; to war, and to peace; to give away; and to keep the things that are set before the eyes of man, and to see them not. Or in the Book of Job:

Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the heat of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yes, men give up the ghost, and where is he?
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This, in articulate language, is the solemn song of birth and death, killing and caring, finding and losing; what is to be said of man's 'being', of the human condition, is said here without pretense.

But there is more than this to say about the fulness of ever-changing reality. Man is more than the eternal cycle of birth and death, of reproductive urge and weary old age; he is a being that is made and is still making himself, imperfect and incomplete, never to be completed, yet constantly moulding himself by moulding the world around him. There exist plenty of novels, plays, and films in which man's social activity is oversimplified so that the characters are mere puppets of social forces, devoid of inner contradictions, empty of personal dreams and personal sorrows. Every objection to this manner of presenting human beings as though they were only social beings is fully justified. But most of those who preach a 'return to the myth' are not concerned with the fulness of reality; on the contrary, they would like to empty reality in another way. They want to divorce man from society and reduce him to a lonely, isolated creature helpless in the power of destiny, a being such as has never existed.

The plunge into the 'world's sleep', into the archaic, the inchoate, and the inarticulate, is mostly an escape into irresponsibility. At the same time, however, the reaction against naturalism and the search for new forms of expression gave rise to Kafka's method of apparently transforming social reality into myth. The world owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Max Brod for saving Kafka's manuscripts; but it is a fact, too, that many have been led astray by Brod's misinterpretation of Kafka's works. Kafka did not write of man's origin in 'the cosmos' or in the 'origin of things', but in a particular social situation. He invented a marvellous form of fantastic satire - dream interwoven with reality - to present the revolt of the lonely individual hopelessly struggling against obscure powers in an alien world, and longing for some form of community, even the subhuman one of 'The Castle'. Brod interpreted these images of social conditions as symbols for supposed 'eternal' ones. He constructed a mystical whole out of a scattered hand-

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ful of mystical elements in Kafka's work, and presented the new means which Kafka employed to describe life under the Hapsburg monarchy - a life both real and ghostly - as a kind of calabash, a mysterious casket of record of religious experience and illumination. Kafka, thus misinterpreted, has done a great deal of harm and has encouraged many mystics.

Brecht's method of presenting social conflicts in the simplified form of parables has much in common with Kafka's. But they had very different attitudes, these two great writers. Kafka's attitude was one of solitude. He was on the side of the invaded and injured, and against the power-wielders. But he did not believe in the ability of the people to champion to alter the world. At the back of each new hope in his mind there was a new fear, at the back of every answer a new question. Brecht had the courage to answer. His parables were didactic pieces. His conviction that the world could be changed, that it could become better and more rational, was unshakable. Of course he, too, knew that every answer leads to a new question and that nothing on earth is final. But, unlike Kafka, he was not oppressed but encouraged by this knowledge. Kafka, desperately lonely, did not fundamentally believe in progress but only in the same things recurring for ever. Brecht believed that new things must arise against all odds.

Both Kafka and Brecht depicted social reality in their parables. They 'alienated' this reality, and just as ancient myths represented the quintessence of the historical past, so their works were attempts to distill the essence of the historical present. But this is not the case with the works of writers, ranging from Cervantes to Beckett, who set out to divorce man from society, to dissolve his identity and to wrap him in mystery as the agent of 'eternal being' and 'formless original forces'. Any man is more than the mere mask of a social character. But the tendency to turn him into a hieroglyphic in a play of cosmic mysteries, to blot out his social as well as his individual face in a mystical archaic fog, leads to nothingness. A man who does not belong to any society loses all identity, becomes a reptile crawling between nothing and nothing. Thus, reality is made unreal, and man inhuman.
The flight from society

The de-socialization of art and literature produces the recurring motif of flight: the motif of deserting a society which is felt to be catastrophic in order to attain a supposed state of "pure" or "naked" being. When Gertrude Stein suggests "a rose is a rose is a rose" like a monotonous magic incantation, the intention is precisely this: to persuade us to stand aside from any form of social reality, to dissolve all connections, to concentrate upon a single object magically transformed into a "thing-in-itself". Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein's successful disciple, discloses the technique of this flight from reality particularly clearly in his fifteen early stories called In Our Time. In short paragraphs between the stories, the catastrophic events of our age are hinted at -- war, murder, torture, blood, fear, cruelty, all the things that modern obscenities try to dismiss under the heading of the "senselessness of history"; the stories themselves consist of apparently uneventful incidents, empty of content, taking place beyond and apart from what moves the world -- and this "beyond" and "apart" is regarded as the real existence. One of the stories, a poetically memorable one, describes Nick putting up his tent, alone at night:

He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. He was a good place to camp. He was there, in the good place. He was in his home where he had made it... In the dark outside. It was lighter in the tent.

In a sense this is no different from "a rose is a rose is a rose". It also reflects the philosophy of a man fleeing from society. Put up your tent, far from the world. No other way is worth while.

The world is dark. Crawl into your tent. It's lighter inside.

Hemingway's attitude is typical of a widespread longing in the late bourgeoise world. Millions of people, particularly young people, seek to escape from unsatisfying jobs, from daily lives they feel to be empty, from boredom prophetically analyzed by Burdette, from all social obligations and ideologies, away, away on roaring motor-cycles, intoxicated by a speed that consumes every feeling and thought, away from their own selves, into a Sunday or holiday in which the whole meaning of life is somehow concentrated. As though driven by approaching disaster, as though sensing an imminent storm, whole generations in the capitalist world flee from themselves, to put up, somewhere in the midst of the unknown, a dimly tent where it will be brighter inside than it is in the outer darkness.

What makes the problems of the de-socialization and dehumanization of the arts all the more acute is the fact that the improving techniques of mechanical reproduction, which began with photographs and records, have created a colossal entertainment industry serving vast masses of art consumers. The barbaric character, anti-humanist content, and brutal sensationalism of many artistic items manufactured for mass consumption under capitalism are well known; to analyse such products and their effects would require a book in itself. I should like to make only two points. First, writers and artists of some stature often supply the models that are later imitated, in cruder form and cheaper execution, by the art-manufacturing industries -- so that, as it were, the haute couture of anti-humanism influences the mass-producing trade. Secondly, an art which arrogantly ignores the seeds of the masses and glories in being understood only by a select few opens the floodgates for the rubbish produced by the entertainment industry. In proportion as artists and writers withdraw more and more from society, more and more barbaric trash is unloaded on to the public. The "new brutalism" extolled as an admirable quality of modern art by certain aesthetes has in fact a free commercial run in the late bourgeoise world.

Realism

The feature common to all significant artists and writers in the capitalist world is their inability to come to terms with the social reality that surrounds them. All social systems have had their great apologists in art (side by side with their rebels and accusers): only under capitalism has all art above a certain level of mediocrity always been an art of protest, criticisms, and
revolt. Man's alienation from his environment and from himself has become so overwhelming under capitalism, the human personality released from the bonds of the medieval system of guilds and classes is so violently aware of having been cheated of the freedom and fullness of life that might have enjoyed, the transformation of all earthly goods into market commodities, the all-embracing utilitarianism, the total commercialization of the world, have provoked such intense repugnance in anyone possessed of an imagination that the imaginative have inevitably found themselves emphatically rejecting the vicious capitalist system.

The process began with the Romantic revolt and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's attack on bourgeois civilization. Hegel spoke of the 'increasing power of estrangement' and added: 'When the unifying force disappears from the lives of men and when contradictions lose their context and acquire independence, then the need for philosophy is born.' Shelley, in The Defense of Poetry, argued the necessity of poetry from the same premises: 'The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceeds the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature.' The lonely 'I' opposed to the banality of bourgeois life became a central theme. Thus Byron's Manfred:

I said with men, and with the thoughts of men, I held but small communion; but instead My joy was in the wilderness - to breathe The difficult air of the ice mountain tops... These were my pastimes, and to be alone... I disdain'd to mingle with A herd, though to be leader - and of wolves. The lion is alone, and to man I...-

Or Franz Grillparzer's Lahmaz:

Der alte Natur wird die ew'ge Alter, Und Ewigliche sterben Wahr und Aushol... Durch unbeschrankt Meere wirft der Schiffen,
control. Don Juan is still the old Romantic hero in his boldness, his thirst for life, and his anti-morality; but he is no longer fighting God and Satan. He is, in all his adventures, a living criticism of the world of ruse, hypocrisy, and nauseous around him, an embodiment of the longing for sincere, uncontaminated passion.

Balzac and Stendhal were still less prepared than Byron for any form of conciliation, whether with the post-revolutionary bourgeois world or with the State controlled by aristocrats, financiers, and the clergy. In his late novels, Balzac came to accept the victory of bourgeois capitalist society, though his distaste for its typical representatives remained unaltered. Again and again, men who retire in resignation from the 'great' world or artists obsessed by their work—like Wenceslaus in Le Comte de Ranke—who, in his visions, 'led, as it were, the life of a countess who abandons herself to an extravagant imagination'—are shown as antagonists of the bourgeoisie. Again and again, realist criticism leads to Romantic protest, to the Romantic antithesis of noble resignation and purged success, the genius and the bourgeoisie.

The boldest and most consistent of the novels that burst the confines of Romanticism was Stendhal's Lucien Lauer. In its social insight and in the ruthlessness of its criticism, this unfinished novel surpasses all Balzac's works. The bourgeois revolution has been accomplished. There is no going back to the Jacobins or to the young Napoleon. And forward? Lucien sympathizes with the republicans and the Saint-Simonists but that cause seems hopeless to him; and the bourgeois-democratic republic as the superstructure of capitalism repels him much in the same way as it did that witty conservative, Alexis de Toqueville. 'In New York, the cit of State has merely fallen in the gutter on the opposite side of the street, not our own,' Universal franchise rules like a tyrant, and a tyrant with dirty hands.' In Lucien Lauer one finds a merciless maturity bereft of illusion, a contradictory criticism that is not only causal but also aesthetic.

The novel breaks off with Lucien's flight from the 'coldness of heart' of Paris, first to Lake Geneva, where he visits 'the spots made famous by La Nuit et la Fête,' then to Italy, where a

*gentle melancholy* opens his soul to art. The final sentences are very curious:

Bologna and Florence threw him into a state of tenderness and sensitivity to the slightest deuil which would have caused him the keenest remorse three years earlier.

In fact, on reaching his post at Capel, he had to lacerate himself in order to adopt, towards the people he was about to see, a proper degree of frigidity.*

An anti-Romantic novel—and such a reversal to Romantic sensibility? We do not know where Stendhal eventually intended to take his Lucien. But the fragment suggests that (to use Marx's words) the Romantic view would always exist side by side with the bourgeois view as a 'justifiable contrast'.

The concept of realism in art is, unfortunately, elastic and vague. Sometimes realism is defined as an attitude, as the recognition of an objective reality, sometimes as a style or a method. Often the dividing line between the two becomes blurred. Sometimes the term 'realist' is applied to Homer, Phidias, Sophocles, Polygnotus, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Milton, and El Greco; then again, it is reserved for the method practised by a specific kind of writer or painter, from Fielding and Smollet down to Tolstoy and Gorky and from Géricault and Courbet down to Manet and Cézanne. If we are to regard the recognition of an objectively given reality as the nature of realism in art, we must not reduce that reality to a purely exterior world existing independently from our consciousness. What exists independently from our consciousness is *matter,* but reality includes all the immense variety of interactions in which man, with his capacity for experience and comprehension, can be involved. An artist painting a landscape obeys the laws of nature discovered by physicists, chemists, and biologists. But what he portrays in art is not nature independent from himself. It is a landscape seen through his own sensations, his own experience. He is not merely the accessory of a sensory organ apprehending the outside world, he is also a man who belongs to a particular age, class, and nation, he possesses a

* John Lehmann, 1937.
There are many different points of view within the scope of critical realism itself (‘critical’ as an attitude, ‘realism’ as a method): from the aristocratic contempt with which Fielding viewed the rising bourgeoisie (an element not lacking, either, in Byron, Stendhal, or Balzac) to a total condemnation of post-revolutionary society (Stendhal, Flaubert) and the reformist hopes and schemes of Dickens, Ibsen, and Tolstoy. In all these there is a critical attitude to society as it is, but the approach may be contemptuous, satirical, reformist, or nihilist. Nor is each personal approach necessarily tied to a particular form of expression. For example, the early novels of Thomas Mann (who at that time was an arch-conservative, especially Buddenbrooks, were written in a realistic style modelled on Tolstoy and Fontane, whereas the late novels, written when Mann was beginning to be interested in new social ideas and to overcome the heritage of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (the magnificent Doctor Faustus and The Holy Fear) go far beyond the limits normally ascribed to realism. Thomas Mann himself, in his account of how Doctor Faustus was written, points out its kinship with the novels of James Joyce. The characteristic attitude of most ‘critical realists’ is that of an individual, Romantic protest against bourgeois society, and this element of Romanticism is unmistakable not only in Stendhal and Balzac but also in Dickens, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Ibsen, Strindberg, and Gerhart Hauptmann.

**Socialist realism**

It was Gorky who coined the term ‘socialist realism’ as opposed to ‘critical realism’, and the antithesis is now accepted by Marxist scholars and critics.

The concept of ‘socialist realism’, perfectly valid in itself, has frequently been abused and misapplied to academic historical and genre paintings and to novels and plays in fact based on propagandist idealizations. For this reason, as well as for certain others, the term ‘socialist art’ seems to me to be better. It clearly refers to an attitude—not a style—and emphasizes the socialist outlook, not the realist method. ‘Critical realism’ and,
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even more widely, bourgeois literature and art as a whole (that is to say, all great bourgeois literature and art) imply criticism of the surrounding social reality. 'Socialist realism' and, even more widely, socialist art and literature as a whole imply the artist's or writer's fundamental agreement with the aims of the working class and the emerging socialist world. The fact that the distinction is the result of a new attitude, not simply of new stylistic standards, was often obscured by the methods of administrative interference in the arts practiced during Stalin's lifetime. After the Twentieth Congress, rigid adherence to a 'monolithic' Marxist theory of the arts was no longer obligatory, and although the conservative tendencies are still strong, a variety of different artistic concepts now confront each other within the fundamental framework of Marxism.

Here is an example. Epp Fradinin, a young Soviet theoretician, wrote in the journal, Aris and Literature (No. 1, Moscow, 1964) that it would be wrong to believe that

any dogmatic formula has attained the status of an unchallengeable truth just because it was often repeated during the years of the personality cult... How undeniably, with how little justification, was the merciless verdict of 'decadence' pronounced on the most widely different phenomena of Western art in those years! The art and literature of the period after 1848, and particularly of the twentieth century, were regarded as decadent through and through, and all the 'issues' were summarily dismissed.... The question of the artistic movements of the twentieth century is bound up with the wider question of the mutual relationship between realism and other artistic movements and methods. In this field, too, everything was often reduced, in the years of the personality cult, to the inapplicable simple but basically dogmatic and, in a scientific sense, value formula: progressive realism on the one side, various anti-realistic, essentially reactionary trends on the other. But in that case, what of artists of undeniable greatness such as the Classical playwrights Moliere and Racine, the Romanticists Hoffmann and Walter Scott, or the Post-Impressionists van Gogh and Gauguin? A simple way out of the difficulty was usually found: the greatness of such artists was recognized, but only in spite of their association with the above-mentioned movements, only so far as and to the extent that elements of realism could be detected in their work. But can such an

APPRAISAL OF THE PROBLEM? Did not Classical, Romantic, and Impressionism contain their own, their specific artistic truths side by side with their specific historic and aesthetic limitations? Was not Racine's greatness at the same time the greatness of the classical ideals of morality and humanism embodied in his tragedies? Was not Hildebrand's greatness connected with the magic of the poetic dreams of revolutionary Romanticism?

In the next issue of the journal there was a reply by one of the leading cultural policy-makers of the German Democratic Republic, saying that Fradinin's article made 'a big circle' round the subject without touching the heart of the matter.

It seems a few, so put it mildly, highly subjective ideas of the author's... He looks backwards in search of an allegedly necessary post facto revision of previous judgements. There is, for example, that poor innocent little flower, decadence... unless we are mistaken, important Russian artists and thinkers such as Solyonov-Shchedrin, Stanov, Pleshkov, and, not least, Marx's Gesetz worked to engross and condemn the phenomenon of decadence, partly in their own time, partly in the years that followed.... For various reasons, the decadence of bourgeois art which began in France towards the end of the last century was able to exercise a terrible and destructive effect on the development of the arts in Germany... We should be grateful if Soviet art historians helped us to arrive at a genuinely scientific analysis of that decadence.... Artistic scholarship should not indulge in such imitation of art in the light of their ideological and political content and their aesthetic quality. Neither should official cultural policy cease to have a direct influence, based on such considerations and judgements, upon artistic production, making individual artists conscious of errors and shortcomings in their work and, in special cases, intervening administratively, as happened in the Soviet Union with Boris Pasternak's novel...
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nightlight—or the first light of dawn. And so the source of light will determine the value of the judgement, its degree of approximation to the truth.

For example, the judgement of Stendhal, the Jacobin, upon the post-revolutionary social reality of his time was incomparably truer than that of the backward-glancing Romantics, not only because he had more talent than they, but also because his chosen viewpoint enabled him to see further and more clearly. Certainly it is true that even Stendhal, the major progressive writer of his time, was incapable of objectively presenting the total process of reality, and retained again and again, quite consciously, into subjectivism. The most that can be hoped for is that the viewpoint chosen by the artist will partly coincide with the development of social reality.

In our age a possibility of far-reaching objectivity is offered by taking sides with the working class and with the national struggles for independence—by adopting the viewpoint of an undogmatic Marxist. Certainly, it is only a possibility: in order to present reality in the process of developing, it is not enough to be conscious of the victory of socialism or to have a knowledge of general social principles. It is necessary to present the focus of transition—a change—in all their contradictory concreteness. Much as a grand vision is needed to cast the 'glimmer' of a light required for true judgement, all objectivity is jeopardized if the writer's desire that tomorrow and the day after tomorrow should fit exactly into a preconceived pattern obscures his view of today; if a wall of dogma, supposed to make his viewpoint 'unsailable', in fact blinds him.

Socialist realism—or rather, socialist art—anticipates the future. Not only what has preceded a particular historical moment, but also what will succeed it, is woven into its fabric. Facts do not alter, but the reality of a moment does alter depending on one’s viewpoint. What was once the future merges in the mind with a past event and, by so doing, not only influences the memory but also reveals and, as it were, completesthe reality which was partially concealed at the time. The prophetic component, often condemned in the name of
realism, has gained new force and dignity in socialist art. Johannes R. Becher was right when he wrote:

When we speak of socialist realism and when we struggle to arrive at a definition, we should not over-complicate and so confuse the issue. The concept of socialist realism is contained in very many statements made before its actual theoretical birth. Thus we find a socialist-realist perspective in Schiller's lines:

On wings the buoyantly
High above your time
And faintly in your mirror
May the future dawn.

And Brecht wrote:

Dreams and the golden "it"
Conjure the promised sea
Of ripe corn growing,
Sower, say of the harvest
You will reap tomorrow
That is your own today.

These two statements alone might suffice to define the nature of socialist realism.

Becher over-simplifies the problem somewhat, because, while Brecht's concrete manner reveals a realistic vision of socialist art, that is not true of Schiller's universally utopian view. The age of Romanticism was rich in social utopias and prophetic anticipation, but everything that lay between "today" and "the day after tomorrow" was vague. Socialist art cannot content itself with blurred visions. Its task is, rather, to depict the birth of "tomorrow" out of today, with all the attendant problems. The transition to socialism in all its complexity of interactions and its great variety of unexpected situations is by no means as straightforward as certain simplifiers would have us think.

The socialist artist and writer adopts the historical viewpoint of the working class. But this does not mean that he is in duty bound to approve every decision or action taken by whatever party or character represents the working class in his work. He sees in the working class the determining, but not the only, force necessary for the defeat of capitalism, for the growth of a classless society and the unlimited development of material and spiritual forces of production to liberate the human personality. In other words, he identifies himself fundamentally with socialist society in its process of growth, whereas bourgeois artists and writers, if they are of any importance, inevitably dissociate themselves from the world of the triumphant bourgeoisie. The socialist artist believes man's potential for development to be unlimited, without, however, believing in an ultimate "paradise state" - without, indeed, even wanting the fruitful dialectic of contradiction ever to come to an end:

Golden age! You will never be, Yet across the earth
fly ahead of us! And may the sea return to the spring that was its
source,
Deep in the dreams of the world's morning may the future's face be
mirrored
and may legend become the goal of a mature race.

(E. Fischer: "Eligien aus dem Nebel des Oids"

This fundamental acceptance of the new society cannot lack a critical component. What Marx said of proletarian revolutions is also true of periods when socialist societies are being constructed: "they are... ever self-critical; they again and again stop short in their progress; retrace their steps in order to make a fresh start...". True socialist realism is therefore also a critical realism, enriched by the artist's fundamental acceptance of society and a positive social perspective. The artist's personality is no longer engaged in a romantic protest against the world that surrounds him, but the equilibrium between the "I" and the community is never static; it must be established again and again through contradiction and conflict.

Socialist art, different in its attitude from the art of the capitalist world, requires always new means of expression. In his comments on formalism, Bertolt Brecht wrote:

It would be sheer nonsense to say that no weight should be attached to form and to the development of form in art. Without introducing innovations of a formal kind, literature cannot bring new subjects or new points of view before the new areas of the public. We build our houses differently from the Elizabethans, and we build our plays

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any art of the past. Do not be discouraged by obstinacy and mistakes, check and reverse. Bertolt Brecht’s ‘In Praise of Dialectics’ applies in this as in every other situation.

If you’re still living, never say never. What is certain isn’t certain. Things will not stay as they are... and

Never becomes Before The Day Is Out.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENT AND FORM

The interaction of content and form is a vital problem in the arts, and not in the arts only. Since Aristotle, who first posed the question, and whose answer to it was so mistaken as it was brilliant, many philosophers and philosophers-artists have regarded form as the essential, the higher, the spiritual component of art, and content as the secondary, imperfect component insufficiently purified to attain full reality. Pure form, such thinkers hold, is the quintessence of reality; all matter is driven by an urge to dissolve itself in form to the maximum possible extent, to become form, to achieve perfection of form and therefore perfection as such. Everything in this world is a compound of form and matter, and the more form predominates—the less it is encumbered by matter—the greater is the perfection achieved. Thus mathematics is the most perfect of the sciences, and music, they claim, the most perfect of the arts, for in both of them form has become its own content. Form is seen, rather like Plato’s ‘idea’, as something primary in which matter strives to become absorbed—a spiritual principle of order that legislates over matter. This view reflects the experience of the primitive poet: ‘First I made a form, and then I poured the amorphous mass into the prepared form.’

This view was developed in scholasticism and the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, which put forward the idea of a metaphysical world order. Every being, Aquinas taught, acts for the sake of a metaphysical ultimate purpose. Order—diversity ordered in a unified way—presupposes finality; the idea of order is a final principle. All beings strive towards their final goal; all creatures are ordered among themselves because God has created them. All beings except God are imperfect, and within all beings there is a desire for perfection. This perfection is given to the things of this world as an innescic potentiality.

CRISTALS

Crystals are thought to possess the most perfect form in all inorganic nature. Looking at those marvelously ordered, transparently radiant formations, contemplating their fascinating regularity, admiring their austere beauty, one might indeed come to think that in them inorganic matter has, as it were, become spiritual by attaining a flawless perfection. A naive, uncritical observer might be tempted to regard them as the works of art of a creative Nature or of a divine Creative Force. That is to say, he might well read something intentional or deliberate into them. This temptation is all the greater as the beauty-lover’s attention is not centered upon the crystalline structure of all solids, which is often quite undistinguished, but
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Only upon a small slice of particularly 'noble' crystals and to we are told by some modern disciples of scholasticism that crystals are 'the embodiment of mathematics', that the structure of the atom is 'immaterial' to the crystal, that symmetry is not due to the properties of the atoms of which a crystal is formed but to a non-material, metaphysical crystalline lattice, that the crystalline lattice is 'beyond substance', that it represents the 'formative order principle', and that form is present as an 'idea', a 'wish for perfection' in every crystal. The substance is, they tell us, 'consumed' by the crystal; the perfect crystal represents the 'ideal' crystal as purely as this is possible in reality; it is really completely homogeneous, 'outside a clear form, inwardly a differentiated unity', in which atoms are contained only as a 'potentiality' but not as a reality. Does this metaphysical view correspond to the truth? Is inorganic nature really subjected to an automatic 'formal principle'? Does form really make the crystal? Or is the crystalline form determined by atoms of matter having their own specific properties?

It would go far beyond the scope of this book to re-state the findings of modern crystallography with any degree of completeness. We must confine ourselves to a few characteristic examples. First: the structure of the atoms of which a crystal is composed, far from being immaterial to the structure of the crystal, actually determines it. Crystallographers today are often able to deduce the crystalline structure of a given chemical compound on the basis of the properties of its atoms. Let us take the diamond, that radiant apotheosis of carbon which is the strongest and most versatile of all the elements. The structure of the diamond, in which each carbon atom is tetrahedrally surrounded by four adjoining atoms, corresponds exactly to the structure of carbon with its four valency electrons. In other cases, too, the molecular grouping of atoms has been experimentally proved to apply to crystals. The crystal may be regarded as a molecule which is, in principle, infinite, or conversely the molecule may be regarded as a crystal. Further: it is by no means a metaphysically predetermined space lattice that assigns to each atom its place in the crystal in order then to

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transform it into pure 'potentiality', or necessity. On the contrary, the regular arrangement of the atoms is entirely determined by their properties; what is known as the 'space lattice' is merely the term for a specific relationship in space between specific atoms. Any change in substance is immediately reflected in a change in the space lattice.

The space lattice, or more precisely the ordered complex of associated atoms, is certainly not static. It does not represent a rigid metaphysical 'order principle'. The atoms in a crystal are by no means at rest but are in a state of oscillating movement. Each state of movement has a corresponding temperature. The higher the temperature, the greater the movement and the greater the average spacing of atoms in the crystal lattice. The expansion of the crystal lattice means an expansion of the whole crystalline system. This takes place in different directions to a different extent, depending on the structure of the crystal. As a result, the crystal changes form. At a particular moment, at nothing-point or at the point of metamorphosis, quantity is transformed into quality, and the crystalline structure changes or collapses altogether.

What sort of a metaphysically predetermined order principle is it, then, that changes with the properties of matter, with temperature, etc., that cannot impose conditions but is itself governed by material conditions?

Under certain circumstances, matter goes from a disordered into an organized state and vice versa. Moreover, under certain conditions that are by no means spiritual but, on the contrary, highly material, atoms change their state of order. These changes, prepared by a gradual process, occur simultaneously: particles of matter go suddenly from a chaotic state into an ordered one. Let us, for example, observe the crystallization of liquids. An indeterminate state between liquid and crystal is peculiar to all liquids, provided that the smallest particles of matter are not electrically neutralized. In methyl alcohol and some other benzene derivatives, ordered groups form incessantly and are as incessantly broken up: this is a process of crystallizations which produces no permanent crystals. Similarly, in the case of water, the low density of water suggests that there
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In all media there are certain energies opposing the maximum density of molecular compression (which is the characteristic feature of liquids). X-ray observations have shown that in water there is a tendency for a tetrahedral arrangement of molecules similar to that of silicon atoms in quartz. But when water changes into ice, i.e., into a permanent crystal, its atoms are arranged according to a quite different structural principle.

Hence a crystal is not a "finished" or "final" thing, not the embodiment of a rigid "idea" of form, but the transient result of continuous changes in material conditions. The processes of transition from non-crystalline to crystalline matter and vice versa can be observed very clearly in carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide crystallizes at low temperature. But the molecules forming the crystal lattice remain in a state of rotary movement even at low temperature, that is to say they are, as it were, at the ready to abandon their ordered state. In a compound of carbon and four hydrogen atoms, the hydrogen atoms adopt certain positions at temperatures below 18° centigrade (64.4° Fahrenheit), but continue to oscillate incessantly. At temperatures over 23° centigrade (73° Fahrenheit) these hydrogen atoms perform rotary movements which, as they increase, increasingly disturb the order of the crystalline lattice and finally cause it to collapse.

What then is the property of atoms that enables them to take up ordered positions under certain circumstances? Each atom in a crystal has its radius of action, its "field requirement." This is not constant under all circumstances, which is to say it is not a metaphysical "order principle"; it changes when conditions change, and obeys the dialectic law of interaction. The electric charge of the atom plays an important part. Furthermore, the radius of action increases in proportion with the so-called coordination coefficient. The coordination coefficient expresses the number of adjacent atoms or ions equivalent from an atom. This number may vary from 4 to 12. No case of an atom being surrounded by more than twelve adjacent atoms is known; hence the coordination coefficient of 12 expresses the highest "atom density," which is characteristic of the metallic elements. The higher the coordination coefficient, the greater

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is the radius of action of an atom; in other words, the larger the number of adjacent atoms, the more energy is required to keep them off. The coordination coefficient has a decisive effect on the crystalline structure. And so we find that the crystal is formed, not by a disembodied, form-creating crystal lattice, but by the properties and interactions of its atoms. The atoms and ions with their space requirements make the crystal lattice; matter constructs the lattice, and therefore also the crystal itself.

But what of the symmetry of crystals? Is there any explanation for this other than the mysterious "will for form," the metaphysical order principle? Unfortunately for the metaphysicists, symmetry, too, is not a "creation of the crystal lattice" but depends on the properties of the particular substance concerned. Without discussing all the symmetries possible in the world of crystals, it should be pointed out that every substance crystallizes in a particular symmetry class, of which there are thirty-two in all. This suggests that the particular symmetry of a crystal is very closely connected with its atomic structure. It could be argued that even if such a connection exists, the very fact of the existence of strict symmetries in the crystal world justifies the view that we are dealing here with the "embodiment of mathematics," with a non-material law of form. It is true that regular numerical ratios govern the world of crystals, that atoms of the same kind are always found at the same intervals, that only certain symmetries are possible, and that all symmetries can be expressed by simple numerical formulas. Anyone who finds this mysterious or takes it as an excuse for believing in "finality," purposive causes, or artistic intentions on the part of nature or super-nature, should try to imagine a world without regular laws or without a definite system of interactions. He would find that such a world cannot exist except perhaps in his imagination. All existence is so far a specific existence, i.e., a system of specific interactions. A specific arrangement of atoms can only exist because each atom requires a certain amount of space or has a certain radius of action, which is dependent on its energy potential.

The existence of a specific arrangement of atoms implies that atoms form groups at specific intervals within a specific
Ornaments are in art what crystals are in nature. They are a form of art in which only vectors - intervals of the same kind - are used. Ornamental art was first developed by the Egyptians, who were also highly creative and original in the field of mathematics; and this early ornamental art was so perfect that all later types of ornamentation can be traced back to ancient Egypt. The British Egyptologist Sir Flinders Petrie points out that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find any ornamental pattern that has arisen independently and could not ultimately be traced back to basic Egyptian forms. Such ornamental art is clearly a kind of graphic mathematics. It preceded numbers just as mathematics preceded letters. One might say it was the embodiment of mathematics in art. Group mathematics has concerned itself with ornamental art as well as with crystals, and has calculated the same possible symmetries for both. This, however, is not surprising. Surprising is only the fact that man, without knowledge of the laws of the world of crystals, discovered the sum total of nature's symmetries and put them into ornamental art. If we photograph crystalline structures and superimpose the pictures on each other by projecting them on a flat surface, we obtain extremely beautiful ornamental patterns such as we know from Egyptian art. In both cases the regularity is produced by vectors. In nature, vectors are the expression of natural relationships between atoms. But what gave human beings the impulse to introduce vectors into ornamental art? Undoubtedly this impulse came from land surveying, the mother of geometry; and the pleasure that order gives to human beings must also have bad something to do with it. Yet this pleasure, this tendency to find ordered things 'beautiful', has deeper causes. I have already pointed out how rhythm, the repetition of the same sound-pattern, was helpful to life and to work early in the history of man, and I have tried to explain why this was so. Now I should like to raise the question whether the human mind, which reflects the 'order' of human society, does not also reflect the 'order' of nature. Crystals, like ornaments, appear 'beautiful' to us - and the more symmetry they possess, the more beauty we see in them. This increase in beauty, proportional to the increase in symmetry, corresponds to the natural tendency of crystals to realise the highest degree of symmetry.

Such a tendency has been interpreted by metaphysicists as 'upward striving' and a 'will towards form'. However, what we find in crystals (and not only in crystals but also in atoms and molecules and in matter of every kind) is not an ideal 'striving' or mysterious 'will', but a tendency towards maximum equilibrium and conservation of energy. The greater the symmetry of a crystal, the more its energy is confined and the firmer is its equilibrium, i.e. its structure. And so what we call symmetry is nothing other than the expression of a more or less stable energy condition. The most stable atoms are those of the noble gases (such as helium or argon). It is precisely these atoms which have the highest degree of symmetry in their electron-shell structure. Similarly, in the world of crystals, the most stable structures are those of the highest symmetry, namely cubic and hexagonal.

There is no such thing as a 'will towards form'. It could be claimed with equal justification that there is a 'will towards formlessness' or a 'will towards chaos'. Both claims are deceptive. Words should not be mistranslated.
Goethe once said:

The idea of mechanism is the most respectable, but also the most dangerous gift from on high. It leads to formlessness, destroys knowledge, destroys time. It is like the edifice which would be lost in the infinite were we not provided with its counterweight: I mean the urge towards specification, the rough persistence of what has once become reality, a ceo edifice which cannot, in its deepest essence, be affected by anything external.

This expresses, in both poetic and philosophical form, the two mutually contradictory, fundamental tendencies of nature and reality. What Goethe calls the edice edifice and Hegel calls ‘equilibrium’ is the tendency of particles of matter to fly out into the infinite at constant velocity – the tendency towards evaporation and dissolution. This tendency is counteracted by the edice edifice, the Hegelian ‘attraction’, the tendency towards association, unification, the forming of groups, the agglomeration of energy. Both tendencies operate in all organized, ordered matter: the conservative tendency, the ‘tough persistence’, the clinging to a form of organization once it has been achieved, inertia: and the revolutionary tendency, personal movement, the inability to remain at rest, the continuous change of state. Without the infinite contradictions of these two tendencies and without the constant removal of contradiction by the states of relative equilibrium attained by matter and energy there would be no reality, since reality is just that: a state of suspended tension between being and non-being, in which both being and non-being are eternal and only their incessant interaction, their becoming, is real.

The dialectic relationship between form and content can be observed very precisely in crystals, i.e. in the structure of solid, ordered matter. What we call form is only a specific grouping, a specific arrangement, a relative state of equilibrium of matter; it is the expression of the fundamental conserving and conservative tendency, the temporary stabilization of material conditions. But content changes incessantly, at times imperceptibly, at other times in violent action; it enters into conflict with the form, explodes the form, and creates new forms in which the changed content becomes, for a while, stabilized once more.

Form is the manifestation of the state of equilibrium attained at a given time. The inherent characteristics of content are movement and change. We might, therefore, though it is certainly a simplification, define form as conservative and content as revolutionary.

Living organisms

The fundamental tendencies of nature are most readily detectable in the relatively simple relationships of inorganic matter: they become more complex as the substances become more complex. In the organic world, heterogeneity is the conservative tendency, and variation the revolutionary one. In human society, which has risen above nature and evolved its own laws, we may generally recognize the conservative tendency in the relations of production, which is to say in the forms taken by production, and the revolutionary tendency in the productive forces, i.e. in the developing, forward-thrusting economic content of all social formations. Always and everywhere, the form, structure, or organization that has already been attained offers resistance to the new – and everywhere the new content bursts the confines of old forms and creates new ones.

Living organisms assimilate the conditions of the outside world in a variety of ways. This assimilation of external conditions and their transformation into internal ones, this absorption and digestion of the outside world (not only of nourishment but also of an entire system of relationships) is one of the essential characteristics of living matter. For example, in the roots of plants the force of gravity has been transformed from an external into an internal condition. Like all mass, the root obeys the law of gravity – it ‘falls’ towards the centre of the earth – but it does not simply ‘fall’, it grows towards the centre of the earth with a force several times greater than gravity. Gravity has here become a ‘stimulus’ producing a chain of inner processes and reactions. The direct effect of gravity becomes an indirect one.
The formation of a plant is the sum of a series of form changes. Each of these changes comes about through a process of irregular growth which may often be extremely inconspicuous and slight. It is, for instance, consist in the local growth of a cell wall or in one side of an organ developing more strongly than the other, etc. These processes can be promoted or inhibited at will by altering the conditions, e.g. by irradiation or by special nourishment, and this will substantially affect the form of the plant. To consider just one example of the extent to which conditions of metabolism can affect the formation not only of plants but of animals, Hartmann has experimentally proved that all the young of the mussel worm *Pleurobranchus varillus* are males. If their body grows to more than fifteen or twenty segments they become females, their form changing considerably. If these animals are starved, not only do all the males remain males but those which were already females shrink back into males. The same result is achieved by increasing the proportion of potassium ions in the nutritive liquor. Thus in this particular case the metabolism conditions determine not only the form but actually the sex of a biological organism.

This extraordinary adaptability and changeability of biological matter is connected by a conservative, form-staining tendency. Its biological organism has adapted itself to relatively stable conditions and has found a form of relative equilibrium with the outside world, that form is then preserved in each cell nucleus and transmitted by heredity. Without such relative stability of form no biological organism could exist. This has nothing to do with striving towards an end. It merely means that any living organism unable to offer resistance to the surrounding world must disappear after a very brief period of existence, in the same way as many chemical compounds disintegrate almost as soon as they are formed. Only those organisms that are capable of existence - i.e. those that are adaptable and resistant at the same time - are preserved. The cell nucleus, in which the structure of an organism, the entire system of its interactions, and its 'form', are preserved, shows a considerable capacity for resistance, and maintain a 'resistant content and form'

conservatism' against the outside world. And yet this 'hereditary mast' is not unchangeable and exempt from all interaction with the outside world - any more than the crystal lattice is 'beyond substance' or represents an 'extra-spatial order principle'.

The form of living organisms is not immutable. If we give a plant a new 'content' (by changing its nourishment in the broadest sense, by cross-breeding, or by grafting, all of which amounts to no more than establishing a special new kind of metabolism by imposing new external conditions in a concentrated manner), its form will change too. And though the tendency to revert to the old form is very strong, new forms nevertheless become firmly established in their turn and acquired characteristics can under certain conditions be inherited. Goethe's words in praise of nature still apply: 'It is forever changing and not for an instant is there any standing still in it. It has no notion of remaining, and it has put its curse on everything static... 'Form, 'standing still' in a relatively stable state of equilibrium, is always liable to be destroyed by the movement and change of new content.'

Society

The problem of form and content in social reality, though it occurs on a different level and under much more complex conditions than in organic or inorganic nature, it fundamentally the same. The content of society is the production and reproduction of life, ranging from the simple fact that human beings must eat, drink, and be housed and clothed, to the vast array of modern tools, machines, and productive forces: it is the deliberate adaptation of the outside world to the growing material and spiritual needs of Homo sapiens. The forms in which this process takes place - social organization, institutions, laws, ideas, prejudices - are highly varied. For a certain time they correspond to the state of the forces of production, then they come into conflict with those forces, become rigid and out of date, and must be renewed again and again.
Karl Marx pointed out in the preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*:

As a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution.

Marx and Engels both warned against dogmatic and mechanistic over-simplifications of their fundamental thesis. In a letter to Joseph Bloch, Engels wrote:

According to the materialist view of history, production and reproduction of real life are, *in the last instance*, the determining factor in history. Neither Marx nor I have asserted more than that. If anybody twists this into a claim that the economic factor is the only determining one, he transforms our statement into a meaningless, chimerical, absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but all the factors of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its results, constitutions adopted by the victorious class after winning a battle, forms of law, and, more than that, the reflections of all these real struggles in the minds of the people involved, political, legal, and philosophical theories, religious views, both in their early and their more developed, dogmatic form—all these factors also influence the course of historical struggles and in many cases play the dominant role in determining their form.

And again, in a letter to Stockenburg:

Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, and artistic developments, etc., are based on economic development. But, in addition, they are all react upon one another and also on the economic basis. The economic situation is not an original cause which shines in active while all else is merely passive effect. There is, rather, mutual action on the basis of economic necessity, which always proves the determining factor in the last instance.

The interconnections within society are infinitely more complex than those in organic or inorganic nature, and it would be foolish to try to find the conditions governing the world of crystals repeated in the human world. In principle, however, the laws of dialectical contradiction between the conservative tendencies of form and the revolutionary tendencies of content apply to human society as well, and new, relatively stable states of equilibrium occur again and again when the relations of production coincide with the forces of production.

The basic content of society (i.e., the forces of production—human beings with their tools and their ever-increasing knowledge of production, but also with their material and spiritual needs) is constantly changing and developing. The forms of society show a tendency to remain stable, to be passed down as an inheritance from generation to generation. Always it is the ruling classes with their political and ideological machinery that cling to the traditional forms and make enormous efforts to invest them with the character of something eternal, immutable, and final. And it is always in the oppressed classes that new forces of production rise in revolt against anticipated production relations. The oppressed classes see nothing sacred or morally superior in the traditional forms but only a handicap to human progress. Of course it is not easy even for the oppressed classes to escape the influence and authority of traditional forms, which affect the consciousness of all members of society alike. To develop a political and economic class consciousness that runs contrary to predominant views and conventions is extremely difficult.

Any ruling class which feels threatened tries to hide the center of its class domination and to present its struggle to save an outdated form of society as a struggle for something "eternal", unalterable, and common to all human values. Hence the defenders of the bourgeois world do not speak today of its capitalist content but of its democratic form, though this form is cracking at every joint. They try to divert attention from the historic struggle between capitalism and socialism by transforming it, in people's minds, into a struggle between "democracy" and "dictatorship". The fact that social forms do influence the content of a society and of the lives of its members helps them in this. The merely formal character of bourgeois democracy is obvious; yet people who suffered under Fascist rule found that even formal democracy, even the facade of a...
Subject, content, meaning

I have tried to show how the problem of content and form is not merely confined to the arts, and how the idea that form is primary and content secondary is a typical reaction of every ruling class when its position is threatened. Let us now, within this general framework, go on to examine the question of content and form as it occurs specifically in the arts, bearing in mind that the arts have their own socially conditioned laws and problems.

First we must consider the concept of content in literature and art. Is the term too vague? Does it refer to the theme or subject of a work of art, or to its meaning or message? (But perhaps the term 'message' smacks too much of propaganda, and we should speak only of the meaning of a work of art, the meaning which is not revealed in the work's details but is in it as a whole.) Although subject and meaning are often mutually connected, they are nevertheless not the same thing. Two artists or writers may interpret and treat a subject so differently that their works will have hardly anything in common. The choice of subject is, of course, very important, and through it, among other things, we may often recognize the artist's or writer's attitude. Goethe knew exactly what he was doing when he chose the subjects of Faust and Götz. They were subjects directly related to a decisive period in German history, to Germany breaking away from the Middle Ages. But the same subjects can be given a totally different content. (We need only recall the treatment of the Faustus theme in Marlowe, Lessing, Lenau, Grabbe, Thomas Mann, and Hanna Flessl.) The subject alone does not determine a particular form; but content and form, or meaning and form, are closely bound together in dialectical interaction.

Subject is raised to the status of content only by the artist's attitude, for content is not only what is presented but also how it is presented, in what context, with what degree of social and individual consciousness. A subject like 'harvest' can be treated as a charming idyll, as a conventional genre picture, as an inhuman ordeal or as the victory of man over nature:
everything depends on the artist's view, on whether he speaks as an apologist of the ruling class, a sentimental Sunday tripper, a disgruntled peasant, or a revolutionary socialist.

The subject of work is a recurrent one in Egyptian art, but the content, the meaning of the recurrent theme, changed from stylized 'objectivity' to subjective expression (and the style, or manner, changed too from a measured solemnity to a plebian realism).  

Ancient Egyptian art was not regarded as a worthwhile subject. In medieval miniature (the Breviarii Grimaldi, the work of the Master of Nuremberg) and in Renaissance art (Dürer, Grünewald, Riemenschneider, and others) the theme of work, and particularly the many aspects of agricultural work, began to creep back into art. In a society no longer based on serfdom, the working classes began to make themselves felt in the arts. The peasant's and artisan's working processes began to demand artistic representation. Side by side with this there was a tendency to idealize country life, to make it appear idyllic, in contrast to the sophistications and vices of the great world. This tendency, which was predominantly in Renaissance art, can be traced from Giorgione's sleeping

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excess; he devours himself, for he has no other bread then his fingers. He is densely tired, for there is always a block of stone that must be dragged in this building or that, a block of six or ten ells; always there is a block that must be dragged, this month next, all the way to the top of the scaffold where the bunch of faggots is attached when the house is finished. When the work is quite done, he goes home if he has bread, and his children have been mercifully beans during his absence.

Some of this spirit of social criticism and discontent spread to the visual arts of Egypt and found expression in a striking form of realism. It is to the eternal glory of Egyptian art that it did not only create monuments to the ruling class but also included among its subjects those who worked, the downtrodden and the humiliated; that it answered Bertol Brecht's 'Questions of a Revailing Worker' thousands of years before Brecht wrote them:

Who built Thebes of the seven gates?  

The history books give the names of kings.  

Did kings carry the bumps of rock?

The subject of work is a recurrent one in Egyptian art, but the content, the meaning of the recurrent theme, changed from stylized 'objectivity' to subjective expression (and the style, or manner, changed too from a measured solemnity to a plebian realism).

In the arts of classical antiquity, work was not regarded as a worthwhile subject. In medieval miniatures (the Breviarii Grimaldi, the work of the Master of Nuremberg) and in Renaissance art (Dürer, Grünewald, Riemenschneider, and others) the theme of work, and particularly the many aspects of agricultural work, began to creep back into art. In a society no longer based on serfdom, the working classes began to make themselves felt in the arts. The peasant's and artisan's working processes began to demand artistic representation. Side by side with this there was a tendency to idealize country life, to make it appear idyllic, in contrast to the sophistications and vices of the great world. This tendency, which was predominantly in Renaissance art, can be traced from Giorgione's sleeping
from the 'heart of the people', sensing enormous social changes ahead; he lived before the great storm, filled with the bitter knowledge that he would not live to see 'those better times of clear air' after the great storm'. In those days before the great storm, working people were oppressed and ill-treated (van Gogh was immensely moved by Zola's Germinal and Earth), and only the little time they could spend away from their work allowed them to be human beings at all. Van Gogh's Rabbit is even further removed from Breughel's than Millet's is. The young peasant, his body wrenched and twisted by his work, is completely alone; the motif of loneliness declares itself, the abandonment of the lonely individual struggling to scrape a living, always threatened, never assured.

His face beneath the coarse mop of hair that is as yellow as the corn itself expresses both effort and exhaustion; another moment, and this reaper may become too heavy for his own strength — and then the earth will drag him down, a thing among inanimate things. These things are more powerful than man; it is as though they had awakened to a demonic life of their own. This is no longer the static mass of corn that Breughel had painted; it is a field gripped by a fever, a field aroused and shaken by a strange tremor. Van Gogh was to discover this 'life' of inanimate objects with ever-increasing intensity, to catch them red-handed as it were — the chair that no one is sitting in now (once Gauguin had sat in it), the landscape without any people in it, a world deserted and charged with dynamite — and behind it the immense sun that may, one day, shine upon men as well as things. A great revolution would come, but the painter of this volcanic age would not — of this van Gogh was sure — live to see those 'better times'.

Bowed backs, bent heads, humiliation and degradation of workers and peasants — these, too, were the subjects of the great Mexican painter Diego Rivera. But he also painted those who humiliated and degraded them, with a punishing hatred like that which had inspired Daumier's masterful drawings; he painted the Spanish oppressors and the 'rich man's bread', the American oil barons and dollar kings, the harkens parading their Bibles and the high-class whores flaunting their bosoms.
minimum, namely the degree of likeness achieved. The work of art becomes a mere copy of reality, seen from the outside, devoid of content or ideas, without itself amounting to a new and important reality. It can still be a well-painted picture, and therein may lie its raison d'être — but what is the deepest meaning of a work of art if it does nothing more than copy or record the phenomena of nature, if it does not discover, reveal, catch objects red-handed? In his study on Truth and Verisimilitude of Works of Art Goethe wrote, using as his point of departure the classical anecdote told about a painting by Zemtze:

You rarely remember the birds that flew down to pick the green fruit's cherries. — Well, does that not prove that the cherries were excellently painted? — Not in the least; it proves to me, rather, that those answers of cherries were real sparrows. — But need that prevent me from considering the painting excellent? — Shall I tell you a sores story? — I would generally rather hear a story than a piece of reasoning. — A great scholar of nature possessed among his domestic animals a monkey, which he once missed and later found again, after a long search, in his library. The brute was sitting on the floor and had scattered around itself the copper-plate prints of an unbound work on natural science. Astonished at such sedulous scholarship on the part of his pet, the master approached and found to his surprise and annoyance that the greedy monkey had eaten all the books it had seen depicted here and there. . . .

The greedy monkey will doubtless have discovered to its own “surprise and annoyance” that real beetles surpass painted ones in taste and nutritive value — in other words, that nature is always more “natural” than art, and that art cannot hope to achieve, in this respect, what nature so skillfully performs. And so it clearly cannot be the goal and purpose of art to reproduce nature, and its meaning and content cannot merely be a matter of likeness.

But important as it is to recognize that the meaning and content of a work of art go beyond its subject matter, it is no less essential to grant the subject its due share of importance. The evolution of subjects in literature and the arts is well worth considering, for the choice of subject reflects prevailing social conditions and social consciousness. The change from
SUBJECTIVITY. The world in which El Greco lived and what we know of his own attitude tend to support the second view. I have omitted argument and proof so as not to overload the example. But it seems appropriate at this point to mention the difficulty of arriving at accurate interpretations at any time. One must always ask what the artist himself wanted to say. But even if the answer can be supplied (which is seldom the case), the second question must inevitably be: 'Why did he want to say this?' What external forces, what influences peculiar to his time was he obeying, consciously or unconsciously? Was he not overpowered by his own unconscious? Does not the meaning he wanted to put into the work conceal a deeper one, a meaning that is, in the last analysis, social — and that may contradict the artist's intention? What objective criteria can the observer refer to? A work of art is steeped in the atmosphere of a period and a personality. But does that atmosphere remain unchanged after centuries? Does not the work itself become different in a different world? Is not the judgement of posterity often truer than that of contemporaries? Cannot something that was no more, at the time, than a faint prescientiment of the future, have suddenly and startlingly become today's present? The artistic quality of a painting can be discussed objectively, but its meaning allows of many different readings. There was an 'El Greco' of the sixteenth century; then, for a long time, there was none; today there is an 'El Greco' of the twentieth. Always we reach out for what we need, and a work of art is never a thing in itself. It always requires an interaction with a spectator. We discover the meaning of a work: but we also invent it with one.

But whatever the meaning of the picture (and many works of art allow of different interpretations as times change), it is always more than the mere subject matter (e.g. 'storm clouds gathering over a city'). A naturalistic painter might treat the same subject in such a way that his painting would mean nothing more than a real, 'natural' storm over a real, 'natural' city. The observer would then have no more to do than to acknowledge the accuracy with which the artist had recorded a storm. This reduces the content or meaning of the picture to a minimum, namely the degree of likeness achieved. The work of art becomes a mere copy of reality, seen from the outside, devoid of content or ideas, without itself amounting to a new and important reality. It can still be a well-painted picture, and therein may lie its raison d'être — but what is the deeper meaning of a work of art if it does nothing more than copy or record the phenomena of nature? If it does not discover, reveal, 'catch objects red-handed'? In his study on Truth and Verisimilitude of Works of Art Goethe wrote, using as his point of departure the classical anecdote told about a painting by Zoznis:

You would remember the birds that flew down to pick the great master's cherries. — Well, does not that prove that the cherries were excellently painted? — Not in the least: it proves to me, rather, that those amusements of cherries were real sparrows. — But need that prevent me from considering the painting excellent? — Shall I tell you a newer story? — I would generally rather hear a story than a piece of reasoning. — A great scholar of nature possessed among his domestic animals a monkey, which he once missed and later found again, after a long search, in his library. The brute was sitting on the floor and had scattered around itself the copper-plate prints of an unbound work on natural science. Enamoured of such analogus scholarship on the part of his pet, the master approached and found to his surprise and annoyance that the greedy monkey had eaten all the beetle it had seen depicted here and there. . . .

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But important as it is to recognize that the meaning and content of a work of art go beyond its subject matter, it is no less essential to grant the subject its due share of importance. The evolution of subjects in literature and the arts is well worth considering, for the choice of subject reflects prevailing social conditions and social consciousness. The change from
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mythical to 'profane' subjects, the penetration of the world of kings and noblemen by the common people, the secularization of sacred subjects by the depiction of daily life in town and country, the discovery of human beings at work as a fit theme for the arts, the replacement of 'noble drama' by 'bourgeois tragedy' - all these new social subjects indicate a new content and demand new forms, such as that of the novel. This kind of development is not governed by any rigid formula and does not follow a regular sequence of events: first a new subject, then a new content, finally a new form. Rather it is a matter of complex and multiple mutual influences, and artists of genius such as Giotto or Cervantes may advance the process suddenly, leaving out several stages. The staying power of traditional subjects (especially religious ones), the continuing influence of an old style, a variety of social, clerical, and ideological conditions which may assist each other or temporarily cancel each other out, the lucky accident of a great artistic personality, all are factors that may retard or accelerate development, so that new meanings and new forms may emerge either gradually, painfully, and with many contradictions, or easily and all at once. When we analyse any specific work of art, any artistic movement or period in the arts, we must beware of preconceived opinions. But when we survey the general features of the history of art as a whole, we cannot fail to observe that changes in the content and form of the arts are, in the last instance, the outcome of social and economic changes. Ultimately it is the new content that determines new forms.

Not infrequently a new content may find expression in old forms; it may also destroy the old forms with an almost explosive violence and bring new ones into existence. The Swiss critic Konrad Fasner quotes Christian art during the period of late antiquity as an example of a new content temporarily borrowing old forms. This art, he writes, made use of old pagan forms to express a new, no longer pagan content. Christian artists had to use old forms in order to present the new content in the most direct way possible, since these forms corresponded to familiar ways of seeing - and the prime concern of the early Christians was to make the Christian message widely known.

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in order to create a new world. Generations of artists had to come and go before a new form corresponding to the new content was found, for new forms are not suddenly created, nor are they imposed by decree - which, incidentally, is also true of new content. But let us be clear about it: the content, not the form, is always the first to be renewed; it is content that generates form, not vice versa; content comes first, not only in order of importance but also in time, and this applies to nature, to society, and therefore also to the arts. Wherever form is more important than content, it will be found that the content is out of date. At the end of the Middle Ages it was scurrilous Gothic, at the time of dying absolutism it was mannered Rococo, and at the time of the decaying bourgeois it is empty abstraction.

No one can deny that Christianity brought new ideas into the world. But we should not overlook the fact that, in the early centuries of our era, it belonged to antiquity even so far as its content was concerned. It competed with similar religions, such as the cults of Mithras, Isis, and Serapis - religions which also went far outside local boundaries and attempted to satisfy the Roman Empire's thirst for religious unity. And Christianity, especially in its Alexandrian version, was extremely anxious to establish itself as a movement within antiquity and to associate itself both with the arts and the philosophy of antiquity. But none of this is directly relevant to our argument. Fasner's main point, with which we must agree, is that new ideas may use old forms in order to express themselves in works of art.

Early Gothic saw a tremendous wealth of new forms and means of expression resulting from a new social content and the rise of new social classes. The process had begun even earlier, in the late Romanesque period. The formal Romanesque world of feudal order was revolutionized. The rigid hierarchy in which there were no human beings but only ranks and classes collapsed. The unapproachable solemnity of feudal lords upon their thrones yielded to the familiar composure of early Gothic and the late Romanesque art. Christ suffering and tormented, Christ akin to the common people in his poverty and ugliness, displaced the feudal ruler of the heavenly host. Mary the Maid,
defender of the insulted and the injured, took the place of the Queen of Heaven seated in splendour. And in late Romanesque sculpture, Laurasus was already a central figure, an incident of the arrogance of the rich and powerful, of the glutons and the voluptuaries, of the flesh with its pride and its vice. Dogs lick the festering wounds of Laurasus, but the angel is approaching who will lead him into paradise, and death and the devil are preparing a ghastly end for Diwes, the rich man. The death of Diwes is depicted with a fury of avenging fantasy: a demon snatches his soul out of his mouth, another taunts him with his moneybag, an infernal swarm of monsters, birds, dragons, serpents falls upon him to carry his accursed body down to hell. Friedrich Heer wrote in The Rise of Europe:

Other carvings close by [on the portal of Michael] depict the punishment of rich men and other sinners in hell. There is the miser writhing on the ground and crouching on his hands and feet like a quadrupod; his back is twisted towards the ground, his moneybag is at his side, whilst a basin made up of both human and animal limbs and attended by two devils sinks a claw deep into his body. ... The faces are savage, naked, with noses and mouth seething at her breasts, is a frequent motif in the propaganda of this popular art as the embodiment of the vice of avarice. ... Friedrich Heer, a Catholic writer, fully understood how the new art that swept away both the content and the form of feudal Romanesque traditions was conditioned by the social changes and upheavals of the age. Many thousands of landless peasants were on the move, and with them all kinds of other 'wandering folk': runaway monks, pilgrims, students, and vagabonds. The growing power of money was undermining the very structure of feudal society. A new, self-confident class of townspeople, forerunners of the bourgeoisie, was growing up; a new stratum of society, that of the minor gentry, was beginning to develop; large numbers of working men were concentrated for the first time in the workshops of the early medieval textile industry; the social movement of townsmen and wealthier minor gentry, peasants and proletarians turned the Bible into a weapon against the rulers of the world and created a militant heretical body; Abelard and others invoked the Holy

Ghost in their struggle against feudal conformism and appealed to the traditions of antiquity against dogmatism and the power of the hierarchy; the influence of Arabic culture further added to the ferment of minds; the embryo of the bourgeois revolution began to stir in the womb of Christian Europe.

The creation of urban building festivities was one of the symptoms of the new age, and the freemasons themselves became the transmitters of a new style. Here may be exaggerated when he claims that 'in the crusading enthusiasm of the building movement, the old world of the feudal Middle Ages was melted down and recast'. But the significance of this movement as an element in a broader social trend is self-evident. Heer points out that 'the great turning-point can be seen in individual works and also in the range of subjects'.

At St-Julien-en-Bocage, two stone-masons confine us: exactly realistic faces with tough-browed features. ... For the first time in the history of Europe, new states of society demand to be heard, or at least, to be seen. ... The dynamism of a new 'people', of new masses, struggles for expression. And now we begin to find representations of real coined scenes -- as for instance in the crypt of the cathedral at Clermont-Ferrand. Common people of all kinds, big and small, crowded round Christ who is performing the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Their hands are outstretched for the bread he is giving them. These figures are drawn with a drastic realism, their garments and faces contoured with large, deep strokes. Here the mild, study, kindly Christ is already a true 'people's Christ'. ...
social movements and upheavals. The new classes' need for expression demanded new means. If we observe the spread of Gothic we see that realistic or even naturalistic methods were used wherever the common people began to play a part in the visual arts. The findings of modern research seem to indicate that the art of primitive classless society started with a primitive naturalism; 'stylisation' and abstraction gained the upper hand only in the later Stone Age and were prominent thereafter in all aristocratic systems of government, while contrary movements always originated among the plebeian strata. In Gothic - the first 'bourgeois' movement in art within the still-existing feudal system - the result was highly contradictory: on the one hand a violent, extremely daring realism, on the other a fervent longing for a spiritual, non-material life, for escape from the 'valley of tears' into the beyond. The towers of the Gothic cathedral pointing towards infinity are in themselves ambiguous - an expression of heaven-storming defiance and, at the same time, of an ecstatic yearning for redemption. The social strata dreaming of deliverance were still bound to the feudal system and its traditions. This is what gave rise to the profoundly contradictory nature of Gothic art, so much admired for its boldness, so much abused for its 'barbarian' absurdities. But above all Gothic meant the humanisation of sacred themes, although this essential element is partly obscured by grim devillish monsters and a passionate transcendentalism.

Giottost

Giotto was the first master of the new humanism. In Giotto, Christ is truly the son of man. Sacred events have become earthly, the beyond has become a human world. Even the soft gold of the saints' halos is no longer an echo of the embalmed supernatural backgrounds of older paintings, but has been transformed into an aura of pure humanity. These frescoes do not proclaim a rigid, immutable world. Everything is shown in movement, as encounter of men with other men. No longer does a revelation beyond and outside history demand unconditional obedience. The story of Christ is told as some-
unanswered: why did Gothic take the particular forms it did — the pointed arch, the flying buttress, cross-vaulting? Why did the two-dimensional image begin to become three-dimensional? How did social, technical, and ideological elements combine to create a new style?

Arnold Hauser, in his stimulating book *The Philosophy of Art History*,* puts a number of such questions:

What was it that first set in motion the change to the Gothic...? Which came first, cross-vaulting or the idea of vertical composition? Did the builders of the Gothic cathedrals get their ‘vertical’ conception from the means that had become available for its realization, or did a new vision of height, the Gothic sense of elevation, writing from the craftsmen the means needed for the translation of this vision into stone and glass?

We must look to specialist studies such as Hauser’s for the answers — and even the finest scholars will sometimes be hard put to it to supply absolutely precise answers, for the causes are many and closely interwoven, and it is difficult to judge at what point quantitative changes developed into qualitative ones. We may therefore agree with Hauser when he writes:

Objections to social history of art as a method of interpretation result mostly from attributing to it aims that it neither can nor will carry out. Only the very crudest type of social history would seek to represent a particular type of art as the homogeneous, conclusive, and direct expression of a particular form of society. The art of a historically complex age can never be homogeneous, if only because the society of such an epoch is not homogeneous; it is just as much more than the expression of a social stratum, of a group of persons with some common interests, it will exhibit simultaneously just as many different stylistic tendencies as there are different cultural levels within the relevant society.

But since social classes are the most enduring and most effective ‘groups of persons with some common interests’, the needs and means of expression in art are class conditioned (though we must allow for the fact that a social class is not a windowless fortress, that even antagonistic classes influence one another, the social forms and conventions developed by an old ruling class can influence the rating new classes, and that changes and developments take place even within a single class). Hauser is therefore right when he says:

Social history of art merely asserts — and this is the only sort of assertion which it can seek to substantiate — that art-forms are not only forms of individual consciousness, optically or orally conditioned, but also expressions of a socially conditioned world-view.

We should add that even ‘optically or orally conditioned’ forms of individual experience are not evolved independently from social development. New ways of seeing or hearing are not simply the result of improved or refined sensory perceptions, but also of new social realities. For example, the rhythm, noise, and tempo of great cities stimulate new kinds of seeing and hearing, a peasant sees a landscape differently from a city dweller, and so forth. The point is, however, that social conditions rarely find direct reflection in the arts, and new artistic forms and ideas do not completely coincide with a new social content.

Yet is not what we call ‘style’ the uniform expression of an age, a social era, in art? Is not the same ‘style’ recognisable in a general attitude extending to clothes and politics, morals and manners, music and poetry? Is not ‘style’ the most unequivocal expression of a society? First of all, if we examine the phenomenon of style, we find that a system of forms, conventions, and tendencies has been accepted by artists of different kinds and different temperaments as a law by which they freely choose to be governed. Thus a collective element enters the output of an individual, and though individual works may differ greatly depending on the talent or originality of the artist, the common factor (often difficult to define) is unmistakable. Theorists with a filling for the metaphysical conclude from this that art is a mysterious ‘organism’, a ‘living body’ independent from social conditions and developing according to its own laws, either progressing from simple to increasingly complex forms (regardless of whether this contradicts the social developments), or else that art has a life that is subject to a
constant cycle of youth and old age, birth and death, so that each "cultural cycle" produces an entirely new art peculiar to itself, but which nevertheless goes through all the same stages as the art of past "cultural cycles". According to such hypotheses, development in art is solely a question of form and of the internal problems of art itself, and style is not the result of social changes and individual achievements but an autonomous power which governs all. Hence the artist, his patron, and the public which is the consumer of his products are, as it were, the executive organs of art; art is created with their help but it also imposes its own laws upon them. If this view were right, every historical age would have had a completely uniform style, style being a divine substance of which individual works of art are the attributes. But if we survey the separate periods of art history, we find that although the development of the arts in any given period tended towards a uniform style, this tendency was invariably opposed by counter-trends. Some branches of the arts developed while others were left behind; there were artists of extreme individuality who opposed the prevailing general style; different movements clashed and intermingled, heterogeneous elements fought or interpenetrated one another (e.g. realism and transcendentalism in Gothic). The picture in fact is much more complex and contradictory than the principle of absolute unity of style can allow.

No one can deny the staying power of old forms and conventions. Artists have a legitimate wish not always to have to start at the beginning but to carry on from a point already attained, to transform an existing style into something new. If we want to understand the style of a period, we must not consider it in isolation but in the context of the history of art as a whole, as a moment in historical development – but this is true not only of the arts but of all social phenomena. The sudden appearance of a new range of subjects and of new artistic methods resulting from it (e.g. the appearance of the working class in art), or the original achievements of artists such as Giotto, El Greco, Bruegel, Goya, or Daumier, cannot be explained by an "organic" or autonomous development of art. And furthermore the theory collapses when it tries to explain

the temporary appearances and eclipses of realism in art – because it persistently ignores the fact that stylized art is bound up with aristocratic systems and realistic art with plebeian movements, that the epic declined with the age of chivalry and the novel grew up with the bourgeois, that polyphonic music died together with the feudal system and homophonic music developed together with the bourgeois age, and so forth. It would be a complete misunderstanding of the nature of art to assert that formal problems do not exist in art, that all problems are directly connected with social situations. But Hauser is right when he writes:

The greatest danger for art history, and one to which it has been constantly exposed ever since Rigla's historicism laid the foundation of its modern methodology, is that it should become a mere history of forms and problems…

These problems and tasks are real enough; they are neither inventions nor methodological fictions, and any scientific art history must trace them and work them out… The works of art, however, are not brought into being in order to solve these problems; the problems turn up in the course of creating works to answer questions having little connection with formal and technical problems – questions of world-outlook, of the conduct of life, of faith and knowledge.

And so, if we analyse the artistic achievements of a particular age, we must take account of stylistic and formal problems and of the dominant style, but we must also consider the deviations from that style; in surveying the history of art, we must not regard art as an anonymous whole but as the work of individual artists with their own specific gifts and aspirations. Above all, we must study the social conditions, movements, and conflicts of the period, the class relationships and struggles and the resulting ideas – religious, philosophical, and political – in order to see the art of that period in a real, not an imaginary, context. We must beware of reading into every work of art, or element of style, a direct and unambiguous expression of a class or a social situation. We must take care not to judge a writer's, artist's, or musician's work solely according to whether it is "progressive" or "reactionary" (for the two may intermingle, as Lenin pointed out in his analysis of Tolstoy – and besides,
the question of quality must enter into every judgement). But
unless we apply sociology to the arts – unless we examine the
social causes for its changing subjects, forms, and content – we
are bound to end up in a cloud-cuckoo-land of abstract specula-
tion and aestheticism, miles from reality. An analysis of style,
however intelligent it may be and however brilliant in insight
into specific problems and details, is bound to fail unless it
recognizes that content – that is to say, in the last instance, the
social element – is the decisive style-forming factor in art.

**Form and social experience**

Nevertheless it would be foolish to concentrate all our attention
on content and regard form as the status of a secondary issue.
Art is the giving of form, and form alone makes a product into
a work of art. Form is not something accidental, arbitrary, or
innocent (as more than the form of a crystal is any of those
things). The laws and conventions of form are the embodiment
of man’s mastery over matter; in them, transmitted experience
is preserved and all achievement is kept safe; they are the order
necessary to art and life.

To understand natural or social phenomena we must find out
how they came into being. The form of a social object – a
product of work – is directly connected with its function.
Primitive man formed a stone, a piece of wood or a bone to
make it serve his ends; in other words, form is the expression
of social purpose. Countless experiments and attempts at
imitation eventually produced certain permanent forms
embodifying the sum total of past experience in a particular field.
Thousands of years before a standard shape for a pot was
evolved, pots were made for an ad hoc purpose, for the sake of
function, not form. Ultimately a particularly useful and practi-
cal form was retained, both as a model and as a pattern for more
rational production. Form is social experience solidified.

Form is also, to some extent, conditioned by materials. This
does not mean, as some mystics would have us believe,
that a certain form is ‘latent’ in a particular material, nor
that all materials strive towards their own perfection or

**‘de-materialisation’, note that man’s desire to form materials is
a metaphysical ‘will towards form’. But every material has its
specific properties which allow it to be formed in specific
though possibly varied ways. Thus the forms of human
dwellings are largely affected by the material used – by whether
the dwelling is made out of plated grass or rushes or built out
of wood, stone, or clay; i.e. the material most readily available
partly determines the form of the dwelling. Likewise the
proportions and symmetry of a house (or any other product of
work) are not the result of an aesthetic ‘will towards form’ but
are determined by the structure of the material and by the past
experience of the maker. A jerry-built, lop-sided house will
last less well than one that follows certain laws of symmetry.
Just as symmetry in crystals is the expression of an equilibrium
of energy and hence of a saving of energy, so the symmetry of a
house or other man-made object is also an expression of
equilibrium. Primitive man did not, it is true, know the
theoretical laws that govern matter, but he learned them in
practice and came to know the value of measure and order from
direct experience. If we bear in mind that his experience in
other fields of collective activity also confirmed the value of
rhythm and rhythmic repetition, we shall find that the mystical
element often read into primitive man’s respect for order
disappears altogether.

Forms which evolve from collective work processes – forms
which are social experience solidified – tend to be extremely
conservative. If we study the development of production,
building, etc., we find that there is a tendency to preserve old
forms even when a new material has been adopted. Sometimes
indeed the new essential is, as it were, violated by the old form.
Elements of the primitive ‘style’ of grass, mud, or wooden
huts are recognisable in the stone buildings of a later age. The
forms of stone tools still persist in the tools of the Bronze and
Iron Ages, although the new materials lend themselves to more
practical shapes. There is nothing surprising about this
conservative tendency of form: it is an extension of the
tendency of all collectives to hold on to their hard-won social
experience, to pass it down from generation to generation as a
treasured inheritance. A form evolved by the collective was considered a sacred thing and carried an obligation: it shall be thus and not otherwise. To make any change in such forms was sinful and could have dangerous consequences. This conservatism of form was opposed by material production with its constant enrichment of experience, the tendency to make work easier and more efficient by the use of more appropriate tools and materials based on closer observation of nature and increased working skills.

When we speak of efficiency, of which form is the expression, we do not mean only those material structures which we recognize today as efficient, but also the whole enormous range of magic things which, for primitive man, represented the highest form of efficiency. We have already pointed out that man, the productive, nature-changing being, was a magician; that, as he discovered the vast importance of similarity, of "snaking alike", of mastering nature through work, through tools and the human will, he tended to overestimate the immediate possibilities of his conquest of nature and so was led to make a bold attempt at influencing reality by magical means. George Thomson remarks in Anthropos and Athene that primitive magic is based on the idea that reality can be controlled by creating an illusion of controlling it. But at the same time, because magic leads to action, it embodies the valuable realization that the outside world can actually be changed by men's subjective attitude towards it. Hunters whose strength has been revived and organized by ritual amulets are in fact better hunters than they were before.

Discussing the origins and development of totemism, Thomson points out that the totem animal was originally the animal on which the tribe fed. This is made obvious by such facts as that the chief of the Wallaby clan in Australia has to eat some of the totem animal's flesh at his initiation ceremony, i.e. he must "absorb" the animal. When primitive man fed on a plant or on the flesh of an animal, he felt a regeneration, a surge of vitality. Since the processes of metabolism were unknown to him, he naturally supposed that the "life force" of the plant or animal was transmitted to him, that his life merged with that of his prey, that a union of their two lives came about. He "identified" himself through physical metabolism, which he could explain only magically, with the living organism he ate. But when, as a result of improved hunting techniques, the animal which was the tribe's preferred food became too rare or almost extinct, it was protected by a taboo, a set of strict prohibitive rules. The horde divided itself up into tribes, each with its own hunting ground; the foodstuffs, hunted animals, etc., were in a sense shared out; each tribe was no longer allowed to eat one of the animals or plants that had hitherto been part of its diet, and the nourishment of all the tribes was thereby reasonably assured. Thus a certain animal or plant was "taboo" for each tribe, and if the tribe violated the taboo it imperilled the very life of the collective, for the existence of human beings was identified with that of their food. As productive forces developed and new sources of nourishment were discovered, the totem and the taboo lost their original economic meaning, but the forms were by then so deeply rooted that they were retained and, in part, invested with a new content. They now became magic rules for safeguarding the traditional structure of society, protecting the tribes and their social property and therefore also regulating sexual relationships.

This hypothesis is attractive, although I am inclined to believe that totem and taboo had a sexual as well as an economic significance from the start. It seems to me characteristic of the primitive collective to engender sexuality, food, and work as an indivisible whole identical with life itself, a life not yet differentiated by the division of labour. Countless rites suggest that in the mind of primitive man, "metabolism" with the outside world, "metabolism" between the sexes, and physical metabolism assured by work merged into a single vital process. In almost all initiation rites by which youths are assimilated into the collective -- the great collective "body" -- sexual experience is transmitted to the youths together with the principal experiences of work.

We have been speaking of the development of the totems and taboo because a great number of forms evolved from these
magic belief and because we see them as one of the prime sources of art. Only by realizing that primitive man largely identified himself with the animals and plants he fed on, that is to say with nature itself, and only by becoming aware of the importance that form and similarity of form laid for primitive man, can we hope to understand much that would otherwise be incomprehensible. Scholars have pointed this out again and again. I should like to quote a passage from Father Winthuis, although I am by no means in agreement with this anthropologist’s conclusions:

Because of his manner of thinking — a concrete manner addressing itself to the whole, never abstract nor abstracting, never analysing the detail not giving it its due — the decisive element for primitive man is not the inner nature of things but their exterior, their form, what the eye sees. Everything that has the same form has also, to him, the same significance.

Winthuis obviously underestimates the power of abstraction in working human beings whose work irresistibly leads them towards abstraction. But he is right in saying that form was of decisive importance for primitive man.

The magic idea
At this point let us consider a question that is often asked, namely: if the form of human produce represents concentrated social experience, how can we explain the magical cave paintings of the Middle Stone Age, admirable works of art produced by an extremely undeveloped society? We may regard usefulness as the essence of the form of tools or pots or dwellings, but when faced with the Stone Age rock paintings of Africa, Scandinavia, and Southern Europe are we not bound to think that a mysterious, metaphysical, creative power, a divine inspiration, intuition, or idea, compelled and enabled the primitive men of that time to produce such works of art?

I should like to take as my example the Trois Frères cave discovered by Count Rémondet, with its famous animal paintings and the famous figure of the ‘sorcerer’ with the animal mask, on which there exists an extensive literature. No one can deny that the buffaloes in this dark cave in the rock are superbly drawn, nor that the sorcerer enthroned over them, disguised as an elk, is extremely impressive. But side by side with these works based on a precise and profound observation of animals, there exist much weaker, inferior rock paintings, and neither their venerable age nor any desire we may have to admire all that is primitive can wholly disguise their feeble execution.

This point must be made because some scholars tend to see a demonic quality of ‘genius’ in all primitive men: a ‘genius’ which, they claim, civilized man has lost. In reality, however, Middle Stone Age man produced some very mediocre works as well as some outstandingly fine ones.

A comparison with children’s drawings may be helpful. Here, too, side by side with clumsy scrawls and glaring inadequacies we sometimes come across instances of astonishing insight into the forms and shapes of the outside world, a marvellous assurance in depicting animals and objects, reminiscent of prehistoric art. This may have something to do with the freshness of a child’s brain and with the fact that each individual impression is as yet undisturbed by any awareness of social complexities and conventions. A child sees only a small section of the world, but he sees it with great intensity. But such comparisons should be made with care, for prehistoric man lived in a world very different from that of a civilized child. Even at its most direct and naïve, a twentieth-century child is greatly influenced by the structure of a complex society. An animal, say, means something quite different to a child today from what it meant to a Middle Stone Age hunter.

Before we consider the range of experience reflected in cave paintings we must realize that these works were already the culmination, the result of a long process of artistic development. They were preceded by works of art of a much more primitive kind, clumsy blocks of clay over which the hide of an animal was stretched to counterfeit a living animal and so to avert the vengeance of other creatures of that species. Leo Frobenius, an excellent observer although a theoretician of questionable merit, wrote:

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animal's blood. In his conception of magic, primitive man not only accepted the law of *juri pro iure* (a part for the whole), i.e., that you gain mastery of a creature by taking some part of it, but also regarded blood as the true substance of life. This assumption is supported by many facts, of which we need only quote two. The African burning tribes of the Kordofan believes that it has gained complete mastery over its prey if the hunter pours the blood of the killed animals into a magic horn. Frobenius reports of the initiation ceremonies of such tribes:

Either at the beginning of the ceremony or during or after it, an antelope or gazelle is killed and one of its horns broken off; this will in future be filled with the blood of the killed game. A buffalo horn may serve as well as an antelope horn. Cave pictures are painted with the blood of the killed antelope.

Through the blood and through their resemblance to the original, the pictures become "identical" with their models; and if, in addition, a speavhead is painted at the point where one wishes to strike the animal, then the animal is thought to be virtually doomed to death and the success of the hunt to be assured. And indeed, such speavheads can be seen in the buffalo paintings in the Trois Frères cave. Yet how to explain the astonishing resemblance of the image to the animal itself?

This resemblance was a magical obligation. The Stone Age hunter, observing his prey with close attention, was perfectly capable of judging a greater or lesser degree of similarity— and the greater the similarity the more effective he believed the image would be. We are therefore justified in assuming that, just as in the production of tools, patterns gradually came to be made; that the artist working in the cave did not work in complete freedom but was expected to use the most effective available forms, i.e., those having the greatest resemblance to the original. What we call style is, after all, nothing other than the use of accepted, conventional forms. Furthermore, Stone Age man was not only a good observer of his prey; if his hunting was to be successful, he also had to go a long way towards identifying himself with it. And what we call artistic
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insight is only a by-product of this highly practical 'self-
identification'. The hunter imitated the animal; in his hunting
dances, he wrapped himself in the animal's hide and reproduced
every step and every movement, identifying himself with it
to an extent we can scarcely imagine today. And lastly: the
dividing-line between the human and the animal world was not
at all sharply defined in the mind of prehistoric man; in many
ways he still formed part of the animal world and was but
slowly detaching himself from it. The anthropologists
Klaatsch and Hellmuth write:

The suckling of young animals by women is a widespread custom
among primitive peoples. It is as though these savages had not yet
acquired a sense of human dignity but fed themselves to be animals
among animals. . . . Just as an Australian aboriginal woman gives
her breast to the dogs——and Jung points out in this connection that
cases have been recorded where a father has murdered his new-born
child in order to give the mother a couple of young dogs to suckle
——Polynesian women frequently suckle dogs. The same was reported
by Theodore of the Indian women of Canada. In Hawaii, according to
Remy, the mothers used to give the breast not only to their children
but also to young dogs and pigs. Pigs also feed from the women of the
Papuans of New Mecklenburgh and of the Maoris of New Zea-
land. Moreover, the women of several South American Indian tribes
also suckle monkeys, opossums, deer, etc.

When man became a hunter, an abyss filled with blood
suddenly opened between the human and animal worlds: man
was now the murderer of animals, although he still saw them as
being his ancestors or his kin. He had destroyed the unity of life,
and though he tried again and again to deceive himself about
the nature of his crime by pretending that to eat the killed
animal was merely to 'assimilate' it, and that the animal there-
fore went on living within the human organism, he evidently
still feared the vengeance of the animals who were his ancestors
and brothers. The woman suckles the animal, the man kills it;
those many hunting tribes came to believe in a mysterious bond
between their woman and their prey, with all the contradictions
and fears that this implied.

We must take all this into account if we want to understand

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the immense significance of animal images for Stone Age men
and the powerful compulsion under which the sorcerers strove
to gain power over nature by making their images resemble the
originals as much as possible. There was no question here of
aesthetic creative pleasure——the thing was deeper, more
serious, altogether more terrifying than that, a matter of life
and death or of the existence or non-existence of the collective.
The sorcerer, as we have already said, is enthroned above the
buffalo images; he wears an animal mask and stars at all who
enter with a huge and frightening eye. Unless all indications are
deceptive, the Troit Freres cave was a place where initiation
ceremonies were held, where the young members of the tribe
were assimilated into the collective. In these ceremonies, the
experiences of production (i.e. of the hunt) and of sexuality,
and all the rules and obligations evolved by the collective, were
passed on to the youths with cruel thoroughness, accompanied
by tortures meant to be remembered for life. Thus the young
members of the tribe were united with the immortal collective,
with the First Ancestor that lived on from generation to
generation and was in many cases believed to be bisexual.
Frobenius reports of such ceremonies among the Mahabli of
Africa:

The youths may neither enjoy sexual pleasures nor hunt large game
before their consecration. For the purpose of the ceremonies of
maturity they are brought into the bush. There, dances are organ-
ized and confusing noises are made until the boys get into a state of
exaltation. At the climax of their ceremony, a leopad (or a bapead-like
creature) appears. Its appearance is terrifying. The boys are fright-
ened almost to death. This creature throws itself upon the boys and
wounds them, sometimes in the genitals, so that they bear the traces
for the rest of their lives. . . . Days of an orgiastic nature follow. This
is the time when certain buffalo horns are prepared that will hence-
forth have significance for the hunters as magic implements of the
utmost importance, until the day of their death. Into these horns
they pour the blood of the animals they kill. Women are never
allowed to touch these horns; otherwise the killed bears will turn
into very beautiful women to whom the hunter will unknowingly
abandon himself, whereupon they will take blood vengeance upon
him.
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In other tribes, the youths are shut in a cave in the mountains where they must paint pictures on the walls. These pictures are smeared with the blood of a killed antelope. Apparently each youth then has one of his testicles crushed.

The close link between hunting magic and sexual magic is seen again and again in hundreds of similar examples. The prey and the woman merge into one another. The first taboo seems to have been the ban on sexual intercourse during menstruation and pregnancy. A woman in either of these conditions is regarded as both unclean and sacred, a creature from which one reverts to rewass though she is also considered "blessed". George Thomson points out that menstruating or pregnant women in all parts of the world used to smear their bodies with red ochre in order to warn men off and to increase their fertility. In many marriage ceremonies the woman's forehead is marked with red. In Ancient Greece, women who had just given birth were thought to be so unclean as someone who has shed another's blood or touched a corpse. Birth and death became intertwined, a bleeding woman meant death, a pregnant one regeneration.

Among hunting tribes there exists a custom according to which, before the men set out for the hunt, the women must dance and create an atmosphere of sexual excitement; the hunters, however, may not have intercourse with the women at this time but must satisfy their sexual excitement by killing animals.Frazer reports that the Nootka Sound Indians were compelled to refrain from all sexual intercourse during the week of the great whale hunt. A chief who failed to catch a whale was called to account by his tribe for having broken the chastity rule. The identification of women with the prey is partly connected with the beginnings of the sex struggle, which may be described as the first class struggle of history; partly, however, its cause goes back to the ancient way of seeing all similar things as identical. Bachofen points out that when prehistoric hunters had sexual intercourse with their women, they would stick a spear into the ground outside their hut or cave, this spear being the symbol of the phallos. Winthius writes of the dances of Negro tribes:

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In each man's system of thinking, by which he identifies himself with the collective, the spear he holds in his hand is no ordinary spear but the living personification of the phallos. Each man confirms the other in this conviction by exhibiting his sexual excitement.

The sexual act and the piercing of the prey, the bleeding woman and the bleeding animal, merged in the imagination of primitive man into similar or identical elements of the vital process, and this climate of sexuality no doubt affected also the sorcerer who painted animal pictures on the walls of the cave of initiates.

All this leads up to the belief, encountered again and again among primitive hunting tribes, that a dying animal's glance is something to be feared against, and that this glance, particularly affects the genitals and destroys vitality. Fröbenius writes:

"Taking possession of a part gives mastery over the whole. It need not take the form of actual grasping with the hands - it may also be performed by a call or cry, and especially by a look. The look is the most sinister. The eye breaking in death is greatly feared."

The eye of a living creature, organ of light and mirror of reality, is where life manifests itself with the greatest intensity. The far-sea eye of man radiates will-power, and a man pits his will against another's by trying to outstare him. In the eye of a dying animal the hunter senses nature's reproach to the murderer, the destroyer of unity. And this unity of nature fingers on in woman the birth-giver, the source of nourishment: the dying animal and the woman merge into one and the departing life takes vengeance on the sexual organs, which are the organs of life itself. We must bear in mind these interlinking ideas in their entirety in order to understand the image of the sorcerer in the cave and the significant terrifying look he directs upon those who enter.

To sum up: the Trois Frères cave was, unless all appearances deceive us, a magic place where initiation rites were performed. We may assume that it was the duty of the tribe's sorcerer and his assistants to look after this cave: they were the 'artists' who produced the magic images, it was their duty to make the
images resemble reality the greater the likeness, the greater the
certainty that the image was considered important. These artists
had already inherited a series of traditional forms, ‘patterns’
represented because of their likeness, i.e. a traditional ‘style’, and
were therefore not forced to depend on any mysterious
‘suggestion’.

A passage from Herbert Kiln’s The Rise of Humanity

supports this conclusion.

There can be no doubt that the Scandinavian paintings too were
made for magic purposes. The sorcerers produced them. To this
day, Nopp sorcerers still make quite similar pictures in the same style.
In the south-west of Alaska, in an area known as Cape Inlet, and
also in the islands of the Kodiak Group, Henrik de Laguna found
Elekimos pictures which were very similar to the engravings of the later
stage of the Scandinavian group. They show stylized men, birds,
fish, and elk. Elekimos were still living near by, and they were able
to tell the explorer who it was that had painted the pictures — adding
that the painter was the village’s sorcerer. She went on to ask why the
sorcerer painted such pictures, and was told that these formed part
of secret hunting rites and served to put a spell on the animals.
Through the pictures, the sorcerer and the hunters acquired power
over the prey. . . . It is evident that the sorcerers formed ‘book’,
just as in the Ice Age. Sometimes one recognizes the same hand at
work in different places.

The sorcerers were also considerably helped by the fact that
their ‘identification’ with the original — the collective merging
of subject and object — was extremely intense. An atmosphere of
collective sexual excitement increased this ‘identification’ still
further, and a state of collective sexual ecstasy may have pre-
ceded the actual work. Finally, if we bear in mind that the
primitive hunter’s attention was totally concentrated upon the
prey — not upon the specific or individual features of any
particular animal but upon the essential features of the species
he set out to hunt — that, in other words, what mattered to him
were the contours of the animal and not the manifold details of
its appearance — we shall, I believe, have found an adequate
explanation for the works of art of the Stone Age. I am fully
aware that I am trying to reconstruct conditions and processes

concerning which little material is available. It is perfectly
possible that I may be overlooking important factors or
interpreting facts wrongly. But the point I wanted to make is
that no mystical or metaphysical suppositions are needed for
an understanding of the origins of early (and consequently
also of later) art forms. This is why I have devoted a relatively
large amount of space to examining a single example.

Nostalgia for the ‘sorcerer’

Art forms, once they have been established, put to the test,
transmitted, and ‘sanctioned’ in the full sense of the word, have
an extraordinarily conservative character. Even when the
original magic meaning has been largely forgotten, people still
cling to the old forms with awe-struck reverence: all the word
forms, dance forms, pictorial forms, etc., which once had a
specific magic and social significance, are preserved in the art of
advanced, highly developed societies, and the magic-social law
is only very gradually diluted to make an aesthetic one. A new
social content has always been needed in order partly to
destroy, partly to modify old forms and bring new ones into
being. Only in a relatively developed class society, such as
Athenian society at the time of the Persian wars, did it become
possible for the individual to emerge more powerfully from
the clutches of the ancient collective with its strictly prescribed
dance movements and magically ordained forms of speech and
song; the sacrificial rite was then transformed into the
representation of new social events, until finally the religious
and collective elements were completely dissolved in the more
human, and individual one. Without the conflict between
the personality (developing out of commodity production and
trade) and the privileged land-owning class (whether secular or
ecclesiastic), the visual arts would never have been emboldened
to loosen the artistic forms originally designed to serve a
magic purpose, or to shift their attention upon man as an
individual. And the same conflict gave rise to the new lyric
poetry which introduced human and subjective elements into
the magic chant, the collective prayer, the incantation to the
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gods or to the dead. New wine was poured into old skins, and it took a long time for the new content to find new forms of expression. The forms of art, then, are generally found to be conservative, offering resistance to all change. Certain forms in existence today still show traces of the old collective ties and obligations. This is not true of the "open" form of the novel, and scarcely of modern drama, but to some extent of the visual arts and most certainly of music and lyric poetry. The magic function of art vanished long ago, and its forms, after many struggles, have adapted themselves to new social situations and demands. Yet a ghost of the ancient magic of prehistoric times still haunts modern poetry and music.

The deliberate return to the archaic, the mythical, the "primitive" in many works and movements of modern art has also something to do with this. The fetish-like character, not only of the commodity but also of a whole world of technical, economic, and social machinery from which the artist is totally alienated, the infinite specialization and differentiation of the late-bourgeois world, all this creates a nostalgia for the 'source', for a unity complete unto itself. The artist's distrust of everything that is easy, slick, and self-complacent leads him into austerity and harshness, into an archaism that refuses to flatten the senses. The sensose art of the impressionists who dissolved the world in light, colour, and atmosphere was followed by a counter-movement, the denial of the shimmering surface, the desire to get at the structure of things, to capture their permanence, not the passing moment. Formal concentration became the aim; the artist's or novelist's work set out to move people "directly", like music or poetry, not so much through its subject as through its form.

Many factors in this way combined to give a fresh impulse to the romantic longing for the 'source'. In modern lyric poetry there are two opposing tendencies. One sets out to construct the poem in a fully conscious way, free from any 'magic'. The other represents the desire to return to the 'source', to throw off the conventional meanings of words and combinations of words, to restore to them the freshness of youth and a long-forgotten magic meaning. Aragon expresses this in one of his finest poems:

Je dis avec les mots des choses machinées
Puis machinalement que la voix ciegante
Mêle démonialement qu'on lit dans le journal
Et je parle avec le langage des gens
Soudain c'est comme on en touche sur le bistrot
Je dis pour retrouver un million de nos paroles
Innocentes êtres d'un malheur que nous élevons
Un mot choisi au hasard, un mot qui va sa voie...

Que je dis d'infinie et de métamorphose
Je dis d'ailleurs qui se font au fond des délices
Que je dis du vent, que je dis des roses
Ma musique se brise et se mou en souffles

I use words to say mechanical things, more mechanically than those I pass as it falls; words uncoined that you read in the paper, and with them I talk as people talk. Suddenly it's like a penny falling on the sidewalk, that makes us turn back and turn our steps—unconscious echo of a disaster we've hushed up, a word that falls by chance, a word that will not do... And if I speak of birds, of slow changes, of August fading amidst the hollyhocks, and if I speak of wind, of roses, my music breaks and changes into sob.

The poet abhors the word that passes from hand to hand like a copper coin—yet suddenly it falls ringing on the ground, no longer a coin but pure metal, and its resonance awakens associations long buried under the drab of everyday language. A word in a poem has not only objective meaning but also a deeper, in a sense a magic core. The emotion of primitive man who re-created an object by naming it and so made it his own is still implicit in poetry. Many words in a poem spring as it were directly from the 'source'—and their effect is that of having been spoken for the first time here and now, in this particular context, with this particular meaning. A word in a poem is young, clear, unclouded, as though a piece of hidden reality has only just crystallized in it. There are earnest people occupied with useful things who regard lyric poetry as childish and...
place: this makes the poem's form and structure. By seemingly small, unimportant changes in the position of some words, a poem may be rendered ineffective, its structure and form may be destroyed, and the crystallized body may dissolve into an amorphous mass.

The world and language of poetry

In the age of classicism a poem was a vehicle for expressing a thought or an emotion in the most elegant and attractive way. Poetry was a kind of warehouse, a tailor's shop of language, supplying garments made to measure for any given feeling or idea. Consider the confident grace of Alexander Pope:

But where's the man, who counsel can bestow,
Still pleads to teach, and yet not proud to know? ... 
Blest with a taste exact, yet unconfined; 
A knowledge both of books and human kind;
Genius converses, a soul exempt from pride;
And love to prose, with reason on his side.

Or the succinct rhetoric of Racine's morning hymn:

Chantes l'Auteur de la lumière,
Jusqu'en face où son ordre a marqué notre âge.
Et qu'on le bénisse sur toutes autres
Sois pur comme un crâne sans mort et sans malheur.

Let us praise the Author of light, until the day when his command marks our end; and may our last dawn, blessing him, lose itself in a moon without evening or noon.

Then, suddenly, in the midst of this classical scene there appeared the dark and wayward popular ballad. It was a kind of latter-day peasants' rising in a lyrical form, originating from those dispossessed by the early accumulation of capital. In 1765 Bishop Percy compiled the first collection of such ballads. Even earlier, Gray and Macpherson had evoked the old songs of the bards and skalds. Gray admired the precision and clarity of that rhetoric of which Pope was the master; yet at the same
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useless for this very reason; because it does not confine itself to plain statements but deals in magic, because it traffics with words, because it speaks a language remote from the matter-of-fact idiom of our time. Indeed the suspicion persists that the poet's language is not a "normal" language at all, as used for ordinary communication between people; and the suspicion is entirely justified. Every poet has felt the desire either to create a completely new language capable of direct expression, or to return to the "source", to the depths of a language that is ancient, unspoken, magically powerful. Most great lyric poets have added new, hitherto unheard-of words to language, discovered forgotten ones, or restored an original, fresh meaning to words in common use. The attempt of many modern poets to absorb slang terms and technical jargon into their poems is closely connected with this desire. This is true of Brecht, who distilled his language from his native Aengsborg dialect, from the German of L'other's Bible, from the language of fairground ballads, and other sources.

To express subjective experience in language so subjective that all conventions are destroyed and all communication with others is rendered impossible runs counter to the function of poetry. Even the virtually inexpressible experience of one man is still a human experience and therefore, even at the highest degree of subjectivity, a social one. Indeed even the extreme isolation typical of artists today is a social experience common to many. The poet is the discoverer of experience, and through him others are given the power to recognize it - discovered and expressed at last - as their own and so to assimilate it. The discovery of the loneliness of modern cities in Baudelaire's poetry not merely "brought a new tremor into the world" but also struck a note that reverberated in millions of minds already unconsciously attuned to it. In order to produce this resonance the poet makes use of the existing mass of language, but in such a way that every word gains new meaning. The novelty consists in the dialectic, the interaction of the words within the poem and in the fact that each word not only communicates a content but also, as it were, is a content in itself, an autonomous reality. Each word in a poem, like an atom in a crystal, has its place; this makes the poem's form and structure. By seemingly small, unimportant changes of the position of some words, a poem may be rendered ineffective, its structure and form may be destroyed, and the crystallized body may dissolve into an amorphous mass.

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A knowledge both of books and human kind;
God's grace converts, a soul exempt from pride;
And love to pests, with reason on his side?

Or the succinct rhetoric of Racine's mourning hymn:

Chantez l'Auteur de la lumière,
Jusqu'au jour où son ombre a marqué notre fin;
Et qu'on la bénisse avec amour durable
Sois pur et en un mot, sans illustration,...

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time he believed that the one-sided development of the intelligence and the critical faculty, the "rivulets and spouts impatience" of his over-refined age were the first signs of decay of the "glorious arts that rise from the imagination". He spoke of a "Gothic Elyzia", of a "magical, wild enthusiasm", of a "barbaric fancy", of a "striking and profound harmony of words and rhythm", all arising from imaginations that were "at home in the cold bleak hills of Scotland some hundreds of years ago" and waiting to be brought back to life.

The village invaded the cities, not only in the shape of wretched and de-classed peasants who had degenerated into a "mob", but also in fantastic songs and ballads filled with black superstition and ignorance. When Retif de la Bretonne, the son of a peasant about whose novel Maudau Nikola Vilhelm von Humboldt said that it was "the best book that ever existed", came to Paris, he brought with him not only a plebeian defiance of the ruling classes but also the robust sensuality, the superstition, the mysticism, and the dark anger of his native countryside. Guys, another peasant's son, carried in his luggage a sack full of witches and demons which he suddenly emptied, with a fury of hatred, over the heads of the duchesses and grandees who were his letterers.

The Romantic revolt against the rule of the aristocracy and the Church spread to language itself. The rhythm of rebellion threaded beneath the evocations of witches' rides, devil's weddings, and church bells ringing at midnight. The defiance of superstition against enlightenment masked a defiance of the cultivated nobility. Old graves were torn open at this beginning of a new age. Goethe said that Bürger's ballad "Leaves combines all the elements of blood, moonlight, and the eerie breath of the churchyard:

Die Filgel figels hliwed auf
Und der Greber ging der Lauf,
Es lebten Lobbenstarke
Rund um im Mondlichtlein...

The wings opened with a clash, over the graves they raced; somberly gleamed pale in the moonlight... In a 'heart's effusion' on popular poetry, Bürger demanded that the 'imagination and sensibility' of the people should be explored so that the 'magical wand of the natural epoch' might put everything into 'tumult and confusion'. Nature, he said, 'allows the sphere of fantasy and sensibility so poetry, that of wit and reason to a very different lady: the art of verse-making'. Language destroyed the laws of classicalism and turned to the unconscious and barbaric to satisfy a new, uneasy awareness. No longer were thought clothed in verse; no longer were elegance and wit the admired qualities of poetry; image now followed image in dreamlike, irrational, fragmenting sequence. The 'tumult and confusion' of the imagination wrought havoc with the rules of classicism. Lyrical poetry was never again to lose the 'magical wand' of romanticism.

No contemporary responded more fully to this new birth of poetry than the young Goethe encountering Gothic art and folk song for the first time as a student in Strasbourg. In his early poem the images flash exuberantly by, punctuated by the rhythm of riding:

Es zieht mein Herz gruswirdig in Pferde!
Es war ganz fest in Gute,
Der Abend weigte sich die Erde,
Und an der Berge liebt sich Nacht,
Sohn stand im Nebelhaid die Elebe
Ein aufkriecher Rabe da,
Die Freunaus aus dem Gestrinde
Mit hundert schwereyen Augen aus...

My heart was beating; quickly to horse! It was done almost before it was thought; evening was already caressing the earth, and night hung on the moonshine. Already the oak, a towering giant, stood clad in mist where darkness, with hundred eyes, was peering out of the scrub.

The poet's "I" is merged with nature in dream-like associations, in a poetic pantheism; and nature is felt to be instinct with a demonic life whose voice reverberates in poetic language. The same new unity of man and nature expressed itself in a new unity of feeling and language, magically captured by Wordsworth:
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As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Crushed on the field top of an eminence,
Wonder to all who do so the same sight,
By what means it could either come, and whence,
So that it seems a thing ended with sense:
Like a sea-beast carried forth, that on a shelf
Of rock and sand repose, there to sun itself.
Such seemed this man, nor all alive or dead,
Nor all asleep — in his extreme old age...

Unity with nature was frequently identified with erotic union,
amor aprius: that is to say, a union of urban man, no longer capable of naive religious feeling, with an enchanting but at the same time terrifying being. The abandonment to 'pure passion' — which Stendhal considered to be the essential feature of the Romantic age — thus found expression in a feeling of unity with nature, in sexuality, and in the poet's lonely 'I'. The language of passion, not of serene contemplation — a restless, nervous, often violent, always individual language — fitted the new, individualistic bourgeois age.

Nature seen as a vampire, dangerous yet seductive, as in Goethe's ballads 'The Elan King' and 'The Fisherman'; the voluptuous death dances of German Romanticism such as Novelli and Kleist; the startling images and associations of Blake's poetry — all these elements of Romanticism are combined in Keats's magnum 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'. After the full of classicism, lyric poetry became a synthesis of nostalgia for the 'source', a longing for the 'pure' imitation of the birds and skylarks, extreme subjectivism, egotism, and a refinement of language that aimed at achieving perfect harmony between the theme and the technique of a poem. Keats's poem is a perfect example of this synthesis. In the popular ballad it was

"O what can all the knight-at-arms,
 Alone and solely bating;
The sedge is wither'd from the lake,
 And no birds sing."
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In horror and its beauty are divinest, Upon its lips and syrads seems to lie Liveliness like a shadow, from which shine, Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath, The agons of anguish and of death...  

There is a similar feeling in Epictetus, that quintessential song of romantic love:

Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form
Among the Dead! Thou Star above the Storm!

Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror!

Nature itself emerges into the dream mistress, the Holm conjured up by black magic. Rousseau put such images in the midst of nature. Goethe's Faust called up the phantom of Helen from the underworld. Herein heard the ghostly answer:

Du bist nicht leerweise aus dem Grab
Durch deinen Zaubervilla,
Beladest mich mit Wonneglut
Jetzt kannst du die Welt nicht stillen.

Preis deinem Mond auf meinem Mund,
Der macht mich trunken, aber nachthaltig!
Ich trike deine Joeh sau,
Die Taten sind unstreitig.

You conjured me up from the grave by your magic will, you vanquished me with the glow of your desire, now you cannot quench the glow. Press your mouth upon my mouth, the breath of human beings is divine. I will drink your soul, for the dead are insatiable.

A dream within a dream precedes the fatal awakening in Keats's ballad:

'And there she killed me asleep,
And there I dream't I bade betide,
The latest dream I ever dream't
On the cold hill's side...'

The pale-stickness cry 'Ah! woe betide!' shatters the mirror from which the dream woman had stepped, and ghosts that hathcato had remain'd hidden come rushing out of the dark-ness. The dreamer learns from them that he is one of many, one of a host of sensual yet eternal loves, one of the illustrious, elected lie that includes Geoffrey Rush, Tristan, Lancelot, and Henry II:

'I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all:
'They cried—' 'La belle Dame sans Merci
Thou hast in thrall!'...'

Only in a language so fundamentally suited to poetry as English can you find a verse so charged with poetic meaning. The first two lines of soundless imagery are followed by a mysterious cry out of the darkness. Then again two lines of silent, dreamlike vision:

'1 saw their starved lips in the gloam
With hoard warning ga ped wide...'

The lyrical terror, the sheer intensity of 'La belle Dame sans Merci hath thee in thrall!' cannot be surpassed. Then comes the awakening. The end of the poem reverts to the beginning. We are left with the subjective reality to which the narrated, objective events were no more than the pages of a picture book, turned in a dream. In The Life of Henri Brulard Stendhal repeats half a dozen times that memory is like a crumbling freeze—an arm here, a bead there, another fragment somewhere else—so that he does not describe things but only their effect upon him in a sequence of shining images the connection between which is lost in darkness. This association of images and sounds, this absorption of the objective by the subjective, is the method of Romantic poetry. Not until the twentieth century was a new lyrical method developed as a conscious antithesis to Romanticism.

Baudelaire's great poem La Vague obeys the same Romantic principle of associated images. In Keats's ballad, La belle Dame takes shape out of a 'bly... with anguish moist and fever dew' and a 'fading rose'. In Baudelaire, the whole world is evoked through a patchwork of maps and stamps. But what a difference between the folksong life of Keats and the antibiblical

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rhetoric of Baudelaire, the Englishman's spontaneity and the
Frenchman's logic! Classicism in France had been far more
powerful than in England; there had been no country squires
or stubborn nonconformists to set a limit on the absolutism of
the court and the Academy, no glimpse of nature, no wayward
English park; to loosen the geometry of the formal yew hedges.
Compared with English or German, French was almost a dead
language, incapable of change or fancy; and Romanticism in
France was introduced, not by the freshness of a Wordsworth,
but by the grandiloquence of a Chateaubriand. Recalling from
this pomposity, Stendhal stepped himself in the language of
the Civil Code; and Baudelaire, Victor Hugo's disciple, had to
fight hard to rid himself of his master's high-flown style.

More than that: Keats's poem is rooted in the ballads of
bards and shades, in the magic refrains of old chants and
ballads, whereas Baudelaire's is like a speech delivered in a
forum before an inviolable audience. The correspondence of
Keats's first and last verse is that of a refrain in a folk song;
that of the first and last two verses in Baudelaire suggests the
preamble and peroration of a speech. The 'Ah!' at the beginning
of Keats's first and last verse is a cry from the heart: the 'Ah!' in
Baudelaire's third verse is a rhetorical transition from concrete
description to antithetic generalization:

Ah! que le monde est grand à la clarté des lampes!
Ainsi de l'auréole que le monde est plein!

Ah! how large the world is by lamplight! In the eyes of memory,
how small the world!

Baudelaire's poem does not break with the tradition of
Ronsard or Hugo; but the classical pathes is made to break
down upon itself, as the new theme demands that it should, and
this breakdown, achieved with immense artistic skill, this
sudden halt, this alternation of austerity and vehement shock,
of measure and violence, was the 'new terror' that convulsed
the language of French lyric poetry. One of the chief features
of Romanticism was that it unsettled the ordered structure of
classical language and introduced new and startling ways of
combining words and groups of words. But purely in terms of
language it was not until Rimbaud that French poetry attained
the wild originality that Blake in England and Hölderlin and
Kleist in Germany had already achieved towards the beginning
of the nineteenth century.

The second verse of Le Voyage is so clearly and astutely
constructed that it might have been the work of a classical
author: yet within that construction, what a riot of subjectivity,
what a tunnuck of antitheses, what a triumph of rhythm over
metre!

Un matin nous partons, le ciel est plein de flammes,
La mer gros de ronces et de dîtres amours,
Et nous allons, soulevant le rythme de la lune,
Broyant notre infini sur le fond des mers....

One morning we depart, our minds full of passion, our hearts
heavy with remembrance and bitter desires, and we sail forth, swaying
with the rhythm of the waves, crediting our infinity in the finiteness
of the sea.

The last line, like a rainbow over the oceans, arches towards
the final verses — that great elegy of longing and disenchant-
ment, the flight into the unknown and the return to a world
that never changes, of ennui swallowing up all passion with
death looming at the end of everything as the only hope. The
longing for infinity — that greatest longing of Romanticism —
remains unsatisfied, the finite world is condemned and dis-
missed as une aube d'hiver dans un désert d'ornet. Le Voyage
resembles a lyrical summing-up of the whole of Romanticism,
from Goethe's Faust and Byron's Childe Harolde to the vol-
uptuous death dreams of Novalis, Kleist, Nerval, Coleridge,
and Shelley. But the death-wishes in Baudelaire acquire a new
tone of reckless defiance, it is no longer a passive return to
the womb, as in Novalis's Hymns in the Night:

Nieder will' ich
Und jede Pate
Wir'd sehen an Stachel
Das Weltz weiss.
Noh wenig Zeitgen
So kloch ich ihn

T—H
I wander across, and one day all pain will be a sting of voluptuosit- y. A little time more and I am free, and lie drunken in the lap of love. . . . I feel the rejuvenating tide of death. . . .

The longing for nothingness which is such a feature of death-drunk Romanticism is transformed by Baudelaire into a longing for something new, not for eternal peace but for endless unrest; and the work of this "decadent" poet is permeated with a Lucifer-like joy in invention, discovery, and the conquest of new horizons and new realities. Death assumes the figure of the "old captain"; but this Abenserus of the seas, this Ancient Mariner, this Flying Dutchman is no longer yearning for release and redemption — on the contrary, he is a symbol of departure into the unknown. The old captain, awaist with so much impatience (one senses the atmosphere of the quayside, the jolting mare of men, masts, and sails, and suddenly the stillness and the blue distance from which the old man approached), is passionately welcomed like a familiar friend:

O Mort, sene capitaine, il est temps! bonne l'onde! Go pays nous envole, O Mort! Amoreilleme!

O Death, old captain, it is time! let us weigh anchor! This country bears us, Death! Let us get under way!

Rarely has the desire to escape from the here-and-now, from the unspeakable emptiness and boredom of the present, been more tellingly expressed. Death seems to hesitate: he is not the seducer, as in so many Romantic works; it is the poet, eager to be gone, who is anxious to court death:

Si le ciel et la mer sont ailleurs comme de l'eau Nous aurons que te connaître est rempli de repos! Vene-mous tes poisiers pour qu'il vous résiste!

Let the sky and the sea be black as ink, our hearts, which you know, are radiant. Pour us our poison so that it may comfort us!

And then comes the climax of pleading, the Romantic I", the feverish brain that feels itself to be indestructible, more powerful than the universe outside, anticipating immortality because it is insatiable, more ardent even than the heart:

Nous voulons, tout a fois nous vivre la terre,
Plonger au fond du gueule, Esfer en Clé, gu'impératif
Au fond de l'inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!

This fire burns so fiercely in our brains that we want to plunge to the bottom of the abyss, heaven or hell, what matters? to the bottom of the Unknown to find the New!

Many poems by Romantic poets, imbued with a spirit of resignation, and with a melodious cadence. Thus Coleridge's \textit{Dejection}:

O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoted of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

Or \textit{Mörkel's Ophelie}:

\textit{Vor dieser Gotthül blagen,}
\textit{Stib Könige, da die Winter sind.}

Kings, who are they naisten, how before thy divinity.

Baudelaire's way of making the last line a shattering climax is more than mere rhetoric. Few lines in world literature equal the vehemence power of this. "Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!" The "inconnu" is thrusting out of the abyss of the unknown like a vast, steep rock, like the tremendous capital of a solitary column soaring out of a bottomless waste, shoulder- ing the firmament at sunrise. The "pure passion" of Romanticism, recognizing neither law nor morality — "Esfer en Clé, se'impératif" — speaks in these lines.

Baudelaire's state of flux between passion and boredom, adventure and decay, reflects the very contradiction of the bourgeois era.

\textit{Constant} revolutionizing of production [see we read in \textit{The Communist Manifesto}], uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinctly the bourgeois epoch

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from earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their trail of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become anticipated before they can exist. All that is privileged and established melts into air, all that is holy is profaned . . .

"Es trent us Ciel, qu'importe!" The voyage into the New has begun, and may Death be the captain!

In content, form, and language, Le Voyage is the poem of a social turning-point. A breath of decay blows through the bourgeois world. Emptiness passes through wealth, boredom through passion. What to do? Remain where one is, or depart for the unknown? Stand still, or gather forwards? Baudelaire, the Romantic, calls for death. Baudelaire, the Rebel, orders the victory of the New over nothingness. Through the theme, the form, and the language of his poetry, Baudelaire reacts subjectively to an actual social situation.

Music

The problem of form and content in music—the most abstract and formal of all the arts—presents many difficulties. The content of music is conveyed in so many ways and the dividing line between content and form is so blurred that resistance against sociological interpretation has always been strongest in this sphere. The late bourgeois world has a profound distance for any application of sociology to the arts; but where music is concerned this distance is reinforced by what are thought to be powerful arguments.

I should like to quote at typical some remarks of Igor Stravinsky on Beethoven:

It is the instrument that inspires him and determines the manner of his musical thought. . . . But is it really Beethoven's music with which the numerous works devoted to him by philosophers, moralists, and even sociologists are concerned? How immortal is it whether the Third Symphony was arrived at by way of the Republic as part of the Emperor Napoleon? Only the music matters. . . . Men of letters have made a monocacy of their explanations of Beethoven. This monopoly must be taken away from them. It does not belong to them but to those who are used to hearing nothing but music in music . . . In his piano works Beethoven's point of departure is the piano, in his symphonies, his overtures, and his chamber music it is the instrumental score. . . . I do not think I am mistaken when I say that the monumental creations to which he owes his fame are the logical outcome of the way in which he exploits the means of instruments.

Being a mere "man of letters", I should never set myself up to explain Beethoven. Stravinsky is surely right when he says that Beethoven's works should not be examined from a purely sociological viewpoint but must be understood as music. But what is music? Is it only a system of sounds, or something else besides? Beethoven's point of departure is the musical instrument, not the French Revolution. What a colossal antihero! Does a musician know only about pianos and not revolusions? Does one exclude the other? Foolish as it would be to explain Beethoven's music by his sympathy for the Jacobins (for one may be a good Jacobin and a useless musician), it would be still more absurd to claim that his music had its source solely in his knowledge of musical instruments and not in the events and ideas of his age.

To say that music consists of tones arranged in a vast variety of combinations—that it is an abstract and formal art—is thought to be incontrovertibly true. But is it no more than that? Is music deprived of content because it is non-objective? Hegel in his Philosophy of Art provides a significant answer:

This ideality of content and mode of expression in the sense that it is devoid of all external object defines the purely formal aspect of music. It has no doubt a content, but it is not a content such as we mean when referring either to the plastic arts or poetry. What it lacks is just this configuration of an objective other-to-itself, whether we mean by such actual external phenomena, or the objectivity of intellectual ideas and images.

And Hegel points out further:

It is only when that which is of spiritual import is adequately expressed in the sensuous medium of tones and their varied configuration that music attains entirely to its position as a true art, and

* Routledge, 1892.
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irrespective of the fact whether this content receives an independent and more direct definition by means of work, or is performe emotion-
ally realized from the tone music itself and its harmonic relations and melodic animation.

The continual changes in the forms and manner of expression of
music through the centuries, the development of music throughout history, cannot be explained solely by the appear-
ance of new instruments and the increasing subtlety and tech-
nical skill of musicians. Unless we also take into account the
changing course of history, we are faced with an inexplicable phenomenom. (Even the use or rejection of certain instrunents
is in part connected with social circumstances and "ideological"
considerations: for example, Sparta's refusal to accept the
more richly storged Athenian lyre, or the rejection of Oriental
percussion instruments by Alexandre Christoforos, which
only allowed the use of classical sting instruments in the third
and fourth centuries.) Beethoven certainly 'exploited the sound
of instruments' in order to achieve musical effects. But to what
purpose? It is the nature of music, says Hegel, 'to put soul . . .
into sounds arranged in particular tone relations and, to that
extent, to elevate expression into an element made only by art
and for art alone'. This element 'elevated into organized
sound, that is to say the 'content' of music, is the experience
which the composer wants to communicate; and a composer's
experience is not merely musical but also personal and social,
conditioned by the historical period in which he lives and
which affects him in many ways. We should not oversimplify
this effect of historical environment on the composer and his
works; on the contrary, we should try to discover, con-
scientiously and without pedantry, the manifold ways in which
the content and the musical form of a the particular work cor-
respond to a social situation. But to hear 'nothing but music in
music', to dismiss what the composer has 'elevated' into music
as unimportant, is of a baseliness even more gross than to analyze
a work in purely sociological terms without regard for its quality
or form.

What is the meaning of Stravinsky's rhetorical declaration
that it does not matter whether Beethoven, in composing

the Eroica, was inspired by the Republican Bonaparte or the
Emperor Napoleon? If Stravinsky means to say that the
Emperor Napoleon (or any other phenomenon or event acting
against the Revolution) could equally well have inspired a great
composer to produce a great work, the statement is obvious
and no one would dream of contradicting it. No one claims
that revolution alone can be a source of inspiration for great
works. But the fact that the decisive experience for Beethoven
was the French Revolution — not the Empire nor, say,
Metternich's system — certainly does matter to an understand-
ing of Beethoven's work and personality. However great the
content, it will not help a bad musician to compose great music.
But what we admire in Beethoven is not only his mastery of
form but also the tremendous content of a revolutionary age.

The content of music is not so clear-cut as that of literature
or the visual arts: that is why music lends itself so freely to
abuse as a means of blunting the edge of consciousness. And
yet the content of great music is not so easily indefinable that it
does not matter whether — to keep to Stravinsky's example —
that content is determined by the Revolution or by its betrayal.
We find a similar view — the view that music expresses only
general and unmediated emotions — in Schopenhauer. *

Music does not, therefore, express this or that particular and definite
joy, this or that sorrow, or pain, or horror, or delight, or exultation,
or peace of mind; but joy, sorrow, pain, horror, delight, exultation,
peace of mind themselves, to a certain extent in the abstract, that
essential nature, without accessories, and therefore without their
motives.

Accordingly it should be immaterial whether the 'joy' implicit
in a piece of music arises out of a speculative delight at having
made some money on the stock exchange, a child's pleasure at
seeing a Christmas tree, the satisfaction that a fresh bottle of
champagne gives to a drinker, or the joy of the fighter when his
cause has triumphed. The motive and the specific nature of
'joy' are supposed to be irrelevant; only joy in the abstract can

* The World as Will and Idea, Routledge, 1883.
be expressed in music – so that, presumably, the difference between the joy of Beethoven and that of Lehar is only one of quality, not of fundamental principle. Hegel judges differently when he writes:

The purely emotional grasp by the soul of its intrinsic nature, and the play in musical sound of this apprehension is regarded as the mere attachment of mood, ... too general and abstract ... [and runs the risk of becoming] generally empty and trivial. ... If, for example, a song arouses the emotion of mourning, the lament at a loss, we inevitably ask ourselves, what is the nature of that loss? ... Music, in short, is not primarily concerned with the bare form of the inward soul, but with that inward life as explained, the specific content of which is most closely related to the particular character of the emotion aroused, so that the mode of the expression will, or should, inevitably assert itself with essential differences, according to the varied nature of the content.

Stravinsky would have us judge Beethoven's music only by its form, by the totality of its effect at hand. Schopenhauer's attitude is similar, if rather more profound:

If we now cast a glance at purely instrumental music, a symphony of Beethoven presents to us the greatest confusion, which yet has the most perfect order as its foundation, the most vehement conflict, which is transformed the next moment into the most beautiful concord. ... In this symphony all human passions and emotions also find utterance; joy, sorrow, love, hatred, terror, hope, etc., in innumerable degrees, yet all, as it were, only in abstracts, and without any particularization; it is their mere form without the substance, like a spirit world without matter.

Here, too, the 'innermost life as replenished' is turned into a cold and bleak abstraction. Yet this innermost life is not a matter of pure form or pure spirit: it arises out of the very definite and specific manner in which Beethoven reacted to his times; it belongs to the soul in which there is no joy or sorrow in abstracts but only motivated sorrow and motivated joy.

The funeral march in the Elektra is not mourning in abstracts, devoid of any specific meaning: it is heroic mourning charged with revolutionary emotion. That is not the way a man mourns for a dead beloved, nor would such passion befit a Christian mourning for Jesus crucified: the mourning that is expressed in Beethoven's symphony is revolutionary and Jacobin. Hegel's question: 'What is the nature of that loss?' is unambiguously answered by Beethoven's music. And similarly, in the Ninth Symphony, the joy that bursts out in the choral movement is not joy, not joy in abstracts, but a joy born of innumerable contradictions, despite and in defiance of depression and despair, a negation of that despair given infinitely conscious form; and a joy, moreover, that presupposes the urban masses, that has nothing to do with music guilty, harrowing, and paean dances. Or again, if we examine the 'content' of Beethoven's late chamber music, we are bound to find that it expresses a ghastly loneliness – but not loneliness in abstracts, and very different from the loneliness of a pious hermit or of a peasant soored up in his mountain hut; it is the new, urban loneliness that came into being together with the masses of the modern bourgeois-capitalist age and found its first musical expression in Beethoven. In other words, if we give Beethoven's work more than one cursory glance, we do not discover in it all the human passions and emotions 'in abstracts and without any particularization': instead, we find certain highly specific passions and emotions unknown, in that particular form of expression, to earlier times.

To turn now to a modern example: let us consider Hanns Eisler's Cantata on the Thirteenth Anniversary of Lenin's Death. The new and original manner in which mourning is expressed here illustrates again the importance of concrete, socially determined elements in music despite its abstract, formal character. True, Eisler had a text to work on – a text by Brecht, which rejects any trace of traditional pathos. Nevertheless the composer's task was difficult. How do we mourn Lenin? To answer this question in musical form required not only talent but also a high degree of political consciousness and vast artistic experience. As a first step, the composer had to be clear in his own mind about the elements to be achieved. Mourning for Lenin must have nothing to do with sacramental emotion: it must recall neither a religious requiem nor a Baroque
ontario. But neither is the pathos of the Erotico — that of the bourgeois-democratic revolution — suitable to the nature of the proletarian-socialist revolution and its dead leader; and
romantic extravagance or emotional foolishness of any kind
were still more to be excluded. The composer had to find a
completely new style: simplicity, precision, economy, austerity
of musical gesture pointing far into the future — not into a
mysterious beyond but into a brighter material world; not
‘Death and Transfiguration’, not resurrection and ascension,
but the effect of Louis living on within the working class
whose teacher he had been. This problem of content led on to
that of form: the interaction of the tender solo violins and their
tremendous and overpowering echo takes place within the
strict order of the twelve-tone system. In its formal construc-
tion, the Louis Cantata is entirely new: but this is not form for
form’s sake, but form determined by a new content.
I am trying to illustrate the problem of content and form in
music, but I do not wish to gloss over its difficulty. In music
intended as an accompaniment to words, the ‘content’ is
more or less given by the text — although even music of this
kind may divorce itself from the text or may dominate it, and
indeed it may achieve a specially powerful effect by contradic-
ting the text rather than underwriting it. But how to define the
‘content’ of instrumental music? The metaphysicists have a
relatively easy time of it: for Schopenhauer, music is ‘entirely
independent of the phenomenal world’; it is the ‘copy of the
will itself’; and that is precisely why the effect of music is so
much more powerful and penetrating than that of the other
arts, for these speak only of the shadow, but music speaks of
the essence. For Hegel, music has ‘the innermost subjective
free life of the soul for content’ — although Hegel, the master of
dialectics, has much more than Schopenhauer to say about the
concrete and specific elements in music. A dialectical materialist
cannot easily say what is to be regarded as the ‘content’ of
music, above all he cannot define it with a general formula; he is
forced to examine each work in many concrete ways and to
concern himself in detail with the historical development of
music, the changing functions of music as a whole, and those of
individual musical forms. This work still remains to be done. I
am not a musical theoretician, and can only throw out a few
hints. Any correction will be welcome.
It was the purpose of music from the start to evoke collective
emotions, to act as a stimulus for work, orgastic gratification,
or war. Music was a means of calming or exciting the masses,
of spell-binding or stirring to action; it served to put human
beings into a different state, not to reflect the phenomenas of
the outward world. We cannot therefore ask what was the ‘content’
of early music. False questions breed senseless answers. The
third of the drum, the rattle of pieces of wood, the jangle of
metal is without content: the effect of organized sound upon
human beings is its sole meaning. The social function of music
was to exercise this effect, not to represent a reality. As Hans
Elßler points out, ‘automatic associations’ arise out of certain
definite rhythms, tone sequences, and sound images. To this
day much of the effect of music is achieved through ‘automatic
associations’ of this kind (military marches, funeral marches,
dance rhythms, etc.), which give a possibility of direct participa-
tion even to an un schooled listener. This power of music to
produce collective emotions, to make people emotinally equal
for a certain time, has been particularly useful to military and
religious organizations. Of all the arts, music is the most apt to
cloud the intelligence, to intoxicate, to create ecstatic obduracy,
or, indeed, a willingness to die.
All religious institutions — and the Roman Catholic Church
more than any other — have systematically exploited this
peculiar power of music. The Catholic Church in the early
Middle Ages did not demand of music that it should be
‘beautiful’, but rather the contrary. The function of music at
that time was to transport the believers into a state of object
contemplation and utter humility, to crush every trace of
individuality and weld them into a submissive collective. True,
each man was reminded of his individual sins, but music
allowed him to sink back into a sense of universal sinfulness and
a universal desire for redemption. The ‘content’ of such music
was always the same: you are a worthless, helpless, sinful
creature; identify yourself with the sufferings of Christ, and
you will be saved. Hegel wrote of this function of old church music:

In old church music, take the moment of the crucifixion as an example, we find that the profound meanings unfolded in the central idea of the Passion regarded as Christ's suffering, death, and burial are severely so conceived that it is not simply one's merely personal feeling of sympathy or individual pain over these facts that is expressed, but along with this the very facts themselves, or in other words the depth of their significance is moved by the humanity of the music and its melodic progression. It is, of course, true that even here the impression is one which acts upon the emotion of those who hear it. We do not actually perceive the pain of the crucified, we do not merely receive a general idea of it: the aim is throughout that we experience in the depth of our being the ideal substance of this death and this divine suffering, that we absolve with heart and soul its reality, so that it becomes as it were a part of ourselves, permeating our entire conscious life to the exclusion of everything else.

In other words, this powerful church music does not arouse an indefinite feeling that allows for many different associations within the individual mind (as for instance modern symphony music); on the contrary, it forces upon the listener a definite reaction that tolerates no subjectivity.

The 'content' of church music of this kind is, then, determined by the liturgical text and the associations produced by it—divine suffering, human sinfulness, and so forth. But there is another important element: the congregation themselves, who are by no means a mere 'audience' but a genuine community. The sensibility of these listeners is 'acted upon', as Hegel says, not to produce an indefinite subjective feeling but a uniform, collective emotion. The purpose of such music is to create a definite and intended state of mind, to work consistently towards that state of mind; its function is not so much to 'express' a feeling as to produce it. It might be said (with some caution) that the 'content' of such music is not only within it but also outside it; it is the sum of expression and effect, of moving sounds and moved listeners. The same is true of profane dance and march music. Dance music in itself is without content; its function is to stimulate the desire to dance, and it acquires a content through the movement and excitement of the dancers. The specific nature of the dance, be it ritual dance or minuet, Viennese waltz or rock-'n'-roll, is socially determined, the curious fact being that the social element finds expression in the musical form alone—i.e., that social 'content' is conveyed purely through form—whilst any other kind of content is only rarely present. The same applies to military marches, whose form is socially determined, but whose 'content' is contributed by the marching soldiers. But when musical forms of this kind are absorbed into a symphony or concert piece, they appear—because of their 'automatic associations'—to have 'content' in themselves, to have acquired a life of their own. And so we find that in music, that most permeating of the arts, content is always transforming itself into form and form into content. Social content may manifest itself in the musical structure alone, or again, new content may make use of old forms by bestowing new functions upon them.

It is essential to distinguish between music the sole purpose of which is to produce a uniform and deliberate effect, thus stimulating an assembly of people to collective action of an intended kind, and music whose meaning is, in itself, expressing feelings, ideas, sensations, or experiences, and which, far from welding people into a homogeneous mass with identical reactions, allows free play to individual, subjective associations. Sacred music in the early Middle Ages fell into the former category, so that we may say it had an 'objective' character, in contrast to the 'subjective', expressive character of secular music whose rise coincided with that of the bourgeoisie. If we examine the long and contradictory process of the secularization of music we are bound to admit that music is an exceedingly social phenomenon: that, although it consists of organized sounds, the very organisation of those sounds corresponds to the organization of society at a particular time. The secularization of music, starting with the troubadours and the great heretical movements—i.e., with the incipient opposition of the knights and burghers—spread gradually to sacred music itself, so that even religious music eventually became worldly. Old
Church music had been inseparably tied to the church; it received its 'content' from the liturgy and served, with severe and impersonal magnificence, not the listener's pleasure but his subjugation, forcing him to identify himself, kneeling, with the divine cause. But consider the Stabat Mater of Pergolesi: its gracefulness, pleasurable worldliness is all the more striking by contrast to earlier church music; this work is no longer tied to the church; it can be performed in any hall and has almost assumed the character of an opera. The 'content' is still given by the religious text, but now the music begins to play with the text, to transpose its meaning into the human and subjective, to stimulate many varied associations. Still later, the great cantatas of Bach and Handel—emigrants, and not by chance, from the church to the concert hall—represent a tremendous humanization of religious content, and, instead of swapping the bearer's subjectivity, strengthen and confirm it. What a difference between the worldly ambiability of a Haydn mass and the cranking, inexorable power of the old church music! The secularization of sacred music is finally completed in Beethoven's Missa Solemnis, too vast for any church. To perform this work in a church would be against reason; its expressive subjectivity makes nonsense of the rigid framework of any religious site. There is not the merest breath of license in this work, not the faintest cloud of the beyond; in defiance of the very text it uses, it does not speak of God, of sinfulness, or contrition, of genuflection or humility, but only of man standing upright and proclaiming his pain and joy, his greatness and his triumph. The 'content' of this mass is not God but man in a revolutionary age.

The progressive secularization of music can also be seen in changing musical forms. Broadly speaking, polyphony may be defined as the music of a feudal age, of an order in which every voice has its apportioned place, one following the other without competition, in strict contrapuntal regularity; while homophony is the music of the rising bourgeoisie, of an age of social change in which first the principle of competition (the Mannheim School) and later that of the class struggle demanded that music should express a growing antagonism between themes. The character of music was now no longer shaped by a single theme polyphonically treated, but by a struggle between themes, by hitherto unknown tensions and contrasts, by expressiveness and sensibility. Music was no longer addressed to a homogeneous community but to a heterogeneous audience. This did not happen all at once but ripened in the lap of the old music, just as the bourgeoisie had ripened in the lap of the old feudal system. The principle of harmony crept into the still existing polyphony, so that—for instance—Bach still appears to obey the law of polyphony, whereas in fact he was the first great exponent of harmony. Indeed it might be said that wherever harmony and expressiveness make an appearance in music, the bourgeoisie is knocking at the gate, sublimating mercantile competition in the competition of musical themes.

The secularization of music meant domination by the bourgeoisie; it was as though the merchant had displaced the priest. Music was no longer the expression of a stable religious order but of secular conflicts. The symphony developed out of monothematic Baroque music as a new form of contradiction; the unity of earlier epochs gave place to competition, to struggle between contrasts. A revolutionary element had penetrated music.

The new content was very clearly present in some works, but remained ambiguous and indistinct in many others, expressing itself rather as a general attitude, as one or another of the tendencies of its time, as an underlying mood, sometimes social, at other times individual (confident humanism, heroic optimism, disillusionment, loneliness, melancholy, etc.), as willful subjectivity in the mastering of a formal task. One of the distinguishing features of this secularized music was that it addressed itself more and more to the connoisseur, in contrast to sacred music which presupposed, not the educated music-lover, but a multitude of believers eager for religious rather than aesthetic satisfaction. At first glance this would seem inconsistent with the nature of a music rooted in the real world of men, often incorporating popular dances and folk songs. This popular element (which we are sometimes apt to over-estimate) and the weight of automatic associations that
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come to the listener's aid, together with the expressiveness and sensibility of the new music, made it possible even for works with a formal structure too complex to be grasped by an untrained ear to exercise a direct effect on large audiences. For example, the last movement of the *Eroica*, with its direct appeal to the plebeian masses, is one of Beethoven's formally most difficult works. The way in which the baroque foreshadowing of the *Passacaglia* is here incorporated into a symphony that bursts the confines of Baroque tradition must inevitably escape the understanding of an average audience; only the connoisseur can appreciate it.

Hegel was the first to note this peculiarity of the instrumental music of his times.

The ordinary person [he wrote] likes best in music an expression of emotion and ideas that is at once intelligible, that whereas the content is obvious, his predicament is consequently for music under the mode of an accompaniment. The composer, on the contrary, who is able to follow the relation of musical sounds and instruments as composition, enjoys the artistic result of harschand modulation, and its intervening melodies and transitions, on its own merits. . . .

The composer is able, it is true, on his part to associate with his work a definite significance, a content of specific ideas and emotions, which are expressed articulately in movement that excludes all else; conversely he can, in complete indifference to such a scheme, devote himself to musical structure simply. . . . More penetration of character may be assumed where the composer even in instrumental music is equally attentive to both aspects of composition: in other words, the expression of a content, if necessarily less defined than in our previous mode, no less than its musical structure, by which means it will be in his power at one time to emphasize the melody, at another the depth and colour of the harmony, or finally to fuse each with the other.

The abstract and formal character of music that was no longer sacred, no longer bound up with religion, demanded virtuosity, originality, and subtle invention. There were dangers inherent in this. Much instrumental music has become exclusive, capable of enjoyment by the connoisseur only. As a result, two kinds of music have developed: "highbrow" music alienated from the people and "lowbrow" entertainment music, generally of little value. Although the gap between the two has become a serious problem in the late bourgeois world, this development should not be sociologically oversimplified. We must not forget that many important works by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms were never "popular" and are enjoyed to this day by only a small section of society. (To enlarge this section is one of the aims of systematic musical education.) In order to do justice to musical experimentation and to recognize its artistic necessity, we must bear in mind two things. A composer, as much as any other artist, ultimately serves a social need. But there is also his own individual need as an artist to take pleasure in what he is doing. In sacred music this pleasure was excluded or forced to conceal and disguise itself; in secular music, released from bondage, it insists upon its rights. When Hegel says that the composer may be concerned, quite apart from the content, "with the purely musical structure of his work and with the wit and grace of such architecture", he recognizes the sheer pleasure that any artist takes in exploiting the complex and manifold possibilities of his art. (As an example, I have already quoted the last movement of the *Eroica*, where Beethoven, putting aside the emotionally charged, revolutionary character of the symphony, plays with formal possibilities and abandons himself to the pleasure of exerting his supreme artistic skill.)

The apparently carefree pleasure that the artist finds in mastering intensely difficult problems of form contains a deeply serious moral element which we must not overlook when we speak of the nature and essence of art. In mathematics, it is possible to solve a problem and yet to dismiss the solution as unsatisfactory if it has been clumsily achieved. Mathematicians speak of "elegant" solutions and formulas, elegant because they are not only correct but also aesthetically pleasing by their formal perfection. The same is true, to the highest degree, of art: an "elegant" solution of formal difficulties is in itself a major quality. The form of a work of art is more than just a suitable vehicle for its content: it is an original, "elegant" solution of difficulties arising not only out of the content but also out of the artist's sheer pleasure in mastering them. Form
is always a kind of triumph because it is the solution of a problem. Thus an aesthetic quality is transformed into a moral one.

A composer cannot work for the layman alone, for this would lead to impoverishment and stagnation, above all in instrumental music. He must always tackle formal problems whose solutions can only be appreciated by specially schooled listeners, who must, however, in order to achieve maximum enjoyment, pay as much attention to the content—however elusive—as to the formal structure of the music. Solute form and solutions may escape the layman, indeed they may strike him as strange and disagreeable; yet they are essential for the richness of the work and for the development of music (or any other art). And it is precisely this formal inventiveness, this very serious 'playing' with means of expression, that may sometimes constitute the quality of a work of art. In his essay on *How to Make Poetry*, Mayakovsky refers to a 'rhymed street song' which he wrote for Red Army men defending Petrograd, and remarks: 'The novelty that justifies the making of this song is in the rhyme... [he then quotes a particular rhyme]. This novelty makes the whole thing necessary, poetic, typical.' We may assume that the Red Army men can scarcely have been aware of this formal innovation: and yet the great part of the proletarian revolution tells us that it was precisely this that made his Red Army song into poetry and gave it a quality of its own. The same is still more true of music, where form and content interpenetrate: each other in so many ways that they can hardly be separated.

Because the formal element in music is so strong, 'formalism' is liable to occur. But just because music is the most formal and most abstract of the arts, we must beware of distorting particular works or trends as 'formalist' without sufficient grounds; otherwise we may find ourselves detecting traces of formalism in polyphonic Baroque music, in Bach's piano works, and even in some works by Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms.

First: self-complacent virtuosity which exists for its own sake, that is to say virtuosity not concerned with solving structural problems in music but only with technical brilliance, with bravura, with stunning the audience. Formalistic virtuosity of this kind, far from setting itself at a distance from the listener, is actually dependent on his admiration; hence the charge against it is not artistic arrogance but applause-seeking vanity.

Second: gross imitation, slavish repetition of old canons, cloaking harmony and sweetness in a world of dissonances, romantic pastoral tunes designed to muffle the roar of jet bombers overhead. This kind of 'modern' music lives solely on interest from the capital of the European musical tradition. Its formalism is the formalism of loss: a banquet of bankrupts, opened by the 'Marchissale' (played not as a parody by Offenbach but to make the gluttons else to their feet for that instant and pay homage to a debased and dishonoured past). This kind of music lives off a context that has been lost, off forces that have no strength or meaning left, off the emptiness of what had once been full of life and vigorous. It goes on serving up in pretty airs as if nothing of significance had happened in the last hundred years, as if the composer's function in the mid twentieth century is to keep chewing over the classical and romantic music of the bourgeoisie. It was great music once; to imitate it under changed conditions, instead of learning from it in a creative way, is formalism of the dullest and most wretched kind.

Third: the forcible removal of all warmth and feeling. Necessary as it was after a period of hysterical effervescence in music to carry out a cold-water cure, to get rid, as it were, of the surplus fat of music so as to reintroduce lost discipline and dignity, we cannot accept the principle that music has nothing to do with the expression of feeling but is only the embodiment of pure form. Even if we assume that it is possible, by eliminating all feeling, to capture the 'music of the cosmos', the language of stars and crystals, atoms and electrons, the principle would still be unconvincing. Let us not exclude the possibility that the laws of inorganic matter can be expressed in musical form; by so means let us reject experiments in this direction. But neither should we be prepared to abandon the
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The character of music as an expression of feelings, sensations, and ideas. Sacred music, which recognized no subjectivity and claimed a socially conditioned 'objectivity', was splendid music: but the deep-frozen, intellectualized pseudo-religious quality of some modern music, its artificial, labouredd, contrived return to a 'sacred' element profoundly incompatible with the content of our age, can only be interpreted as a symptom of extreme alienation. This is conscious, demonstrative formalism, trying to deceive us in vain with a hidden 'cosmic' content.

In trying to explain, very briefly, the problem of form and content in music, I am well aware of the inadequacy of my attempts. Simplification is extremely dangerous here. The content of music is manifold and, unlike that of the other arts, extremely elusive. But just because this is so, the future development of music will be determined by the degree to which it expresses a new attitude, a new sense of life, a new intelligence, a new collective: the attitude, the sense of life, the intelligence, and the collective of the working class.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LOSS AND DISCOVERY OF REALITY

Ludwig Tieck, the German Romantic, first spoke of the 'loss of reality' in the preface to his edition of Heinrich von Kleist's works. This 'loss of reality', only dimly sensed in the Romantic age, has grown into a central problem in the highly industrialized late capitalist world.

The industrialized, commercialized capitalist world has become an unseeable world of impenetrable material connections and relationships. The man living in the midst of that world is alienated from it and from himself. Modern art and literature are often reproached with 'destroying reality'. Such tendencies exist; but really it is not the writers or the painters who have abolished reality. A reality belonging to the day before yesterday, a reality that long ago became its own ghost, is being conserved in a rigid framework of phrases, prejudices, and hypocrisies. The end-product of a vast machinery of research, investigations, analyses, statistics, conferences, reports, and headlines is the comic strip, the embodiment of an illusory world of Everyman and No-man. Illusion displaces contradiction. The outcome of a multitude of 'points of view' is a hideous uniformity of minds. The answer precedes the question. A few dozen clichés, some of which were once reflections of reality, are served up again and again. Today they are as much like reality as an oil king is like a holy picture.

'I am convinced,' wrote the Austrian satirist Karl Kraus, 'that happenings no longer happen; instead, the clichés operate spontaneously.' Things have become too much for people, the means too much for the ends, the tools too much for their producers.

Once again [Karl Kraus wrote about the French] a tool has got out of our control. We have set the man who is meant to report the fact—a man who should surely play the most subordinate part in the whole
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Once again [Karl Kraus wrote about the Press] a tool has got out of our control. We have set the man who is meant to report the facts—a man who should surely play the most subordinate part in the whole
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That was written half a century ago. Since then the process of "destroying reality" has made alarming advances. Many of the sincerest and most gifted artists and writers in the capitalist world are conscious of this loss of reality. They refuse to be led astray by outdated formulas and catchphrases. They refuse to accept the system forced upon them by the ruling 'public opinion' as reality; they insist on seeing things 'as they are'. They reject all forms of propaganda, distrust all ideologies, they go out in search of reality beyond the illusory world of pseudo-facts, phrases, and conventions. They are determined to speak only of what they can see, hear, touch, or directly perceive. They cling to the smallest detail, the visible, audible, unchallengeably 'real' detail. Anything that goes beyond such details is suspect to them. Out of them they try, cautiously and without comment, to reconstitute reality. The widespread movement of neo-positivism is not wholly negative: it corresponds in part to a wish for unprejudiced sincerity.

In his fight against the falseness of the late bourgeois novel and in his search for economy, purity, and lightness of form, Franz Kafka developed a narrative method whereby tiny details are linked together to make faint contours that hint at reality. Kafka once wrote of a woman he loved: 'Outwardly— at least sometimes— all I can see of her are a few small details, so few that they could easily be counted. That is what makes her image so clear, pure, spontaneous, defined yet airy at the same time.' That is the principle according to which he drew his characters and situations.

This principle of allowing the status of reality only to the 'small true fact, the true detail', as Nathalie Sarraute never tires of repeating, has been carried to an extreme in the French 'anti-novel'. Detail follows detail, two-dimensionally, without perspective, without ever going beyond the Here and Now. Consider this passage from Cazou's 'L'Etranger':

In the evening Marie came to fetch me and asked whether I wanted...
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formulated, the nature of man must now be grasped afresh, and
dialectical materialism must now be expanded and made more
precise. Machines which, it has been calculated by cybernetics,
are possible and which, in part, have already been made,
frequently behave as though they had consciousness, although
in fact conscious machines cannot and do not exist. Leading
cyberneticists therefore consider consciousness to be irrelevant
or even fictitious; what they describe is solely the behaviour of
a system. W. Ross Ashby, who with Norbert Wiener is the leader
of modern cybernetics, writes in Design for a Brain:*

Throughout the book, consciousness and its related subjective
elements are not used, for the simple reason that at no point have I
found their introduction necessary... Vivid though consciousness
may be to its possessor, there is as yet no method known by which he
can demonstrate his experience to another.

I do not wish to recapitulate here all the arguments between
neo-positiveism and dialectical materialism, but only to point
out how closely the 'anti-novel' corresponds to these neo-
positiveist ideas and to what a striking extent the people in
these novels are reduced to the 'black box' of cybernetics,
where only the relations of input and output matter and never
the nature and essence of man. False philosophical conclusions
from the revolutionary discoveries of cybernetics have linked
up with a literary method which, in certain individual instances,
may be as useful as behaviourism is in science but which, as a
whole, not only describes the dehumanization of man but
actually invests this dehumanization with the character of
inexplicable finality.

The method of the 'anti-novel' does not regain lost reality. In
place of empty phrases and prefabricated conventional associa-
tions it puts forward details drawn of all meaning and entirely
disconnected sensory impressions. In rejecting the pseudo-facts
of newspaper headlines, this literature has discarded facts
alongside all that is concrete andalive; figures grope in a
chaotic primordial fog, and there is for them no forwards nor
backwards but only a timeless, directionless 'existence'. The
* Chapman & Hall, 1956.

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official illusionary world has been replaced by a private yet no less
ghostly one. The intention is to represent incomprehensible
being, the 'disembodied' being of man in a timeless darkness. But
'being in itself is not yet real', wrote Hegel; 'only what has
been comprehended is real'. And Marx: 'Only the compre-
prehended world as such is reality.' A literature which deliberately
rejects comprehension lacks the decisive edge of reality. The unreal-
ity that is its content may have come out of protest against the
standardized illusionary world: but in fact it is only the shadow of
that world.

Some writers who also set out from the precisely observed
detail nevertheless go beyond a world where everything has
been frozen into an object or a fixed state. J. D. Salinger is such
a writer. He too uses the behaviourist method, portraying the
behaviour of people through a sequence of petty details. Here is
a passage taken at random from Franny and Zooey:*

Ten or so a.m. on a Monday morning in November 1951, Zooey Glass,
a young man of twenty-five, was seated in a very full bath, reading
a four-year-old letter. It was an almost milky-looking letter, typewritten
on several pages of record-sheet yellow paper, and he was
having some little trouble keeping it propped up against the two
dry islands of his knees. At his right, a dampish-looking cigarette
was balanced on the edge of the bulb-in-enameled soap-catch, and
evidently it was burning well enough, for every now and then he
picked it off and took a drag or two, without quite having to look
up from his letters. His ashes invariably fell into the tub water,
either straightway or down one of the letter pages. He seemed
unaware of the messiness of the arrangement. He did seem aware,
though, if only just, that the heat of the water was beginning to have
a dehydrating effect on him. The longer he sat reading— or re-reading
—the more often and the more obviously he used the back of his wrist
to blot his forehead and upper lip... .

Yet out of such a mosaic of details, gestures, matches of
conversation, faintly outlined situations, Salinger creates a
maximum of atmosphere and discovers fresh aspects of
psychological and social reality. His stories are without
comment and without propaganda, yet they are exciting and

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The search for a new "world picture" is common to them all. Where they differ is not in their method but in their perspective.

Walter Benjamin's "Theories on the Philosophy of History" includes the following passage:

There is a picture by Klee called "Angels' Noon. It shows an angel looking as though it were riding from something it is starting at. Its eyes are wide open, its mouth agape, its wings outstretched. The angel of history must look like that. It has turned its face towards the past. Where we distinguish a chain of events, it sees a single catastrophe incessantly piling ruins upon ruins and hurling them down at its feet. It would surely like to stay there, awaken the dead and make the murdered ones whole again. But a storm is blowing from paradise, a storm that has caught the angel's wings and is so strong that the angel can no longer fold them. This storm drives it inexorably towards the future, to which it turns its back, whilst the heap of ruins before it grows sky-high. That storm is what we call progress.

The same angel inspired Proust and Joyce, Kafka and Eliot: the shattered fragments of the past, the past as reality, grew vast before the eyes of their creative imagination. In the film "L'Anné dernière à Marienbad," for which Robbe-Grillet wrote the script, the present is composed of miasms, ghosts, and the sound of footsteps in the sand, the future is shrouded in complete darkness, and only the story images of memory are real. The angel of Mayakovsky and Brecht is different. It has a second face, turned forward. This different "Angle du Noyeur" sees not only what lies in ruins but also what is as yet incomplete, sometimes scarcely discernible, sometimes obscure, sometimes strange. This other, different angel's range of reality is not only what has already become fact but whatever is possible. The realities and the essential situations it discovers are not idle; but they are encouraging; they are not soothing, but they show the way forward.

Kafka dreamed of an angel that suddenly turned into a dead thing, "not a live angel but only a painted wooden figure from the bow of a ship such as you see hanging from the ceiling in sailors' taverns. Nothing further... . It was a ghastly dream
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obtain all living things turning into objects. Eisenstein, in The Battleship Potemkin, discovered the opposite situation. When the guns that are pointed at the rebel ship unexpectedly change sides, the victory of man over the power of these lifeless things overwhelm the onlooker. The free decision of men communicates itself to objects. One of the great functions of art in an age of immense mechanical power is to show that free decision exists and that man is capable of creating the situations he wants and needs. Chaplin, too, in his grotesque parodies of everyday life, hints at this victory: not a revolutionary event like Eisenstein's but a victory all the same, the victory of man enslaved by the machine over the machine itself. Picasso, using the painter's means, showed a world blown into a million pieces, not as an expression of anonymous fate or as a cosmic event, but as Caesarism, as human existence threatened by Fascist dictatorship. This magnificent painting does not merely represent reality in its most concretized form: it siding with tortured humanity, writing its accusation in the light. If there were a case of so-called 'formalism', Picasso would not have called his work Carmen but Expulsion, Destruction, Under the Sign of the Bull, or something of that kind. No anti-Fascist should ask, 'What is there to understand in this picture?' The question is better left to Fascists as they guiltily look away. When hundreds of genre paintings and academic historical canvases that hope to pass as realistic have long been forgotten, our great-grandchildren will recognize a chronicle of our times in the bitter, extreme reality of this tremendous work.

And then Brecht. In his work, the new situation is often the very reverse of the old, familiar one. In The Caucasian Chalk Circle, for instance, the judgement of Solomon that belonged to a patriarchal age is changed into a more humane one: the child is not awarded to its mother but to the woman who is truly motherly. Or the situation in Galileo: the man who knows yet who refuses to be a hero, the opponent of intolerant superstition who is willing to oppose in the dirt in order that his work may endure him. These portrayals of new, essential situations will increasingly create a total image of the new reality as its struggles against clichés, dogmas, phrases, the illusory world of lies and pseudo-facts, prejudices, conventions, and everything officially celebrated as 'reality'.

This total image cannot be attained without the dialectical philosophy of Marxism. But non-Marxist artists and writers are also taking part in the discovery of the world in which we live and in the artistic expression of many of its aspects. Every effort to present reality without prejudice – that is to say, with all sincerity – helps us all to advance. Not that sincerity alone can represent the complex reality of our age in anything but a fragmentary way. But without it nothing can be done at all.

Art and the masses

The efforts of socialist literature and art to discover new social realities were temporarily inhibited by bureaucracies, and even today these efforts are liable to run into bureaucratic opposition from time to time. The problematic nature of the transitional stage through which we are living today has deeper causes, however, than simple bureaucratic interference. The decisive task of contemporary socialist literature and art – that of representing the new reality through the means of expression appropriate to it – is intimately linked with another contemporary problem: the entry of millions of people into cultural life.

When Goethe wrote Faust, ninety per cent of the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Weimar were illiterate. Art and literature were the privilege of a narrow élite. Industrialized society, however, needs people who are able to read and write. Knowledge, and with it the need for further knowledge, grew together with industry. 'It has always been one of the most important functions of art,' wrote Walter Benjamin, 'to create a demand for the complete satisfaction of which the hour has not yet struck.' And André Breton has written: 'A work of art has value only if it tremors from the future run through it.' But apart from this anticipation of future needs by the avant-garde, there also exists a present need to cover lost ground, and this chiefly takes the form of a demand for entertainment. The deriving of profit from this demand is the main object of the
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producers and distributors of 'mass art' in the capitalist world. The immense possibilities of mechanical reproduction allow good books to be distributed on a mass scale, good pictures to be printed in large quantities, good works of music to be 'canned', and good films to be shown to millions of people. But on the other hand, the capitalist world has discovered rich possibilities of profit through the production of artistic opiates. The producer of these opiates starts with the assumption that most consumers are troglodytes whose barbarian instincts he must satisfy. And on this assumption he actually arouses those instincts, keeps them alive, and systematically stimulates them. The dream-image is commercialized: the poor girl marries the millionaire; the simple boy overcomes, through sheer brute strength, all the obstacles and opponents of a hostile, sophisticated world. The fairy-tale motif is brought up to date and mass-manufactured. And all this at a time when artists and writers are struggling against the cliché and painfully experimenting for means of reproducing a new reality.

The discrepancy is alarming: on the one hand, the necessary search for new means of expressing new realities, an awareness that 'our artistic means are worn out and exhausted; we are bored with them and we probe for new ways' (Thomas Mann); on the other hand, masses of human beings for whom even old art is something wholly new, who have yet to learn to distinguish between good and bad, whose taste must still be formed, and whose capacity to enjoy quality must still be developed. The composer Adrian Leverkühn in Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus believes that all art needs to be set free 'from being alone with an educated elite, called "the public"', for this elite will soon no longer exist, indeed it already no longer exists, and then art will be completely alone, alone unto death, unless it finds a way to "the people," or, to put it less romantically, to human beings'. If that happened, art would once more see itself as the servant of a community, a community welded together by far more than education, a community that would not lose culture but which would perhaps be one... an art on intimate terms with mankind'.

In the Soviet Union there is an intensive striving to achieve...
THE NEEDESSITY OF ABY
in the Soviet Union— the conservative clinging to forms of expression no longer appropriate to the times—is only a problem of transition.

The first motor-cars were designed like horse-drawn carriages. But the new core—the engine—was stronger than the old shell; new forms developed out of the demands of increasing speed; technology became the midwife to a new kind of beauty. The taste of every victorious class usually starts where that of the fallen class has left off, and tends to build a new life behind an old facade. The rise of the English bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century meant that Gothic architecture suddenly became ‘modern’ and ruined a sought-after attraction. The bourgeoisie wanted to disguise its capital in fancy dress, to own a castle—more than that, the ruin of a castle—as a symbol of a noble past. In 1760 a merchant by the name of Sterling had a ruin renovated with such consummate art that ‘you believed it was going to collapse over your head’. A hundred years later, the rise of the German and Austrian bourgeoisie led to similar phenomena. An architecture of triumphant hypocrisy, a pasticcio’s Neo-Gothic, came into existence. Banks postured as castles, railway stations as cathedrals. Adolf Loos, one of the pioneers of modern architecture, called such ornamentation a ‘crime’ and saw in the pretentious successions house-fronts of gloomy offices and dwellings the architectural expression of the bourgeoisie’s inherent hypocrisy.

Similarly, many workers, having achieved political victory, begin by adopting the taste of the petty bourgeoisie. As a result there is at first a discrepancy between the artistic ideas of many progressive intellectuals and those of most of the working class. It can even happen that the gap between what is socially progressive and what is modern in the arts becomes so absurdly large that the very word ‘modern’ becomes a term of abuse on the lips of certain officials. The younger generation gradually overcomes this curious contradiction; it wants to be not only progressive but also truly modern; it looks for a modern style of living—that is to say a style appropriate to the times—and watches out for innovations of all kinds. A struggle between the old and the new thus begins in the sphere of culture, and apologists of the old may frequently invoke the ‘healthy instincts of the simple man’. I must confess that such talk makes me thoroughly uncomfortable; I cannot help hearing overtones of condescension in it. Does he still exist, this much-praised ‘simple’ man, this ordinary, unsophisticated reader, listener, or gallery visitor? And if he does, is he really the highest court of appeal, the full and many-sided personality that Communism sets out to form? The ‘simple man’ belonged to primitive social conditions which produced works of art compounded of instinct, intuition, and tradition. Such people are becoming increasingly rare in our industrialized, town-dominated civilization. The combination of spontaneity and curious characteristic of the hordes of feudal times has been lost; industry and the town have had a disintegrating effect. Man in industrial society is exposed to many different stimuli and sensations. His taste is not idée fixe—it has been affected by all the mass-produced commodities that have flooded his life since childhood. His artistic judgment is in most cases a prejudice. The Viennese operetta would triumph over Mozart in almost any plebeianise.

The ‘simple man’ belongs to an illusory world of clichés. He exists as little as ‘the worker’ or ‘the intellectual’. Even in the capitalist world with its commercial tendency to level out all cultural differences, the differences are in fact infinitely greater than simplifiers allow. The effect of inferior mass-produced commodities is great, but spontaneous opposition is by no means lacking. An exhibition of drawings and paintings by Austrian railway workers was held in Vienna recently. Contrary to all expectation, only about a third of the items shown were the familiar mixture of naturalism and false sweetness; two-thirds showed the influence of van Gogh, Giuglini, Cézanne, Picasso, and modern Austrian artists. It would be quite wrong to assume that ‘the workers’ or ‘simple people’ instinctively reject modern art; the percentage of workers who prefer conventional art is probably no higher than that of businessmen, company directors, or politicians.

The major task of a socialist society, where the ‘art market’...
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is no longer supplied with commodities mass-produced by capitalist speculators, it is therefore twofold: to lead the public towards a proper enjoyment of art, that is to say, to arouse and stimulate their understanding; and to emphasise the social responsibility of the artist. That responsibility cannot mean that the artist accepts the dictates of the dominant taste, that he writes, paints, or composes as so-and-so dictates: but it does mean that, instead of working in a vacuum, he recognises that he is ultimately commissioned by society. There are many cases, as Mayakovsky pointed out long ago, when this general social commission does not coincide with the explicit commission of any particular social institution. A work of art does not have to be understood and appreciated by everyone come from the start. It is the function of art to break down open doors but rather to open locked ones. But when the artist discovers new realities, he does not do so for himself alone, he does it also for others, for all those who want to know what sort of a world they live in, where they come from, and where they are going. He produces for a community. This fact has been lost sight of in the capitalist world, but it was taken for granted in ancient Athens and in the age of Gothic Art. The desirable synthesis - freedom of the artist's personality in harmony with the collective - cannot be achieved all at once; it requires much undogmatic thought and experimentation. Every great revolution is an explosive synthesis; but distinctions in the dynamic equilibrium always occur again and again, and new synthesis have to be re-established under changing conditions. The romantic and individualistic credos of the young Mayakovsky drew its great content from the Revolution; personal and collective experiences were merged into one. Such unity is not static and cannot be preserved, least of all by decree. But socialist art must always draw strength from this very task of re-establishing unity, so that finally, through a slow and painstaking process, all the symptoms of alienation are eradicated.

All kinds of misunderstandings are liable to arise. The demand for art in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies cannot be fully satisfied either by enormous editions of the classics or simply by the works of outstanding socialist artists and writers. The drive for one-at-a-time 'artistic' or 'entertaining' is legitimate, and side-by-side with the more original innovations there is bound to be a large number of 'average' artists. The boundary between entertainment and serious art cannot be clearly drawn, even if it is desirable, least of all in a society that deliberately sets out to educate the entire people, towards knowledge and culture. Entertainment should not come with: Does any more than serious art should come bored: both the people's education and the rising social consciousness should proceed along similar lines. Communist readers are asked many books, plays, and musical works that are entertaining and easy to grasp, yet at the same time also serve to educate both emotionally and intellectually. But this need carries with it the danger of backhanded oversimplification and crude propaganda disguised under a high moral tone. Steendal wrote as a young man: 'Any moral intention, that is to say any self-interested intention of the artist's, kills the work of art.' No socialist artist can work without moral intention, but he should always endeavour not to allow it to become 'self-interested', not to over-simplify it in terms of propaganda, but to elevate and purify it in terms of art. This should be the motto, too, of artists producing 'entertainment', i.e. working purely for the needs of the day. In a socialist world, works of entertainment, like all other art, are addressed to mature human beings. They are entirely failing in their purpose if they patronise their public.

It would be foolish to designate those who produce decent, unobjectionable literary or musical works by the dozen. But it would be a much more serious error to set them up as an example to those who are trying to express new realities with new artistic means. We can understand why many socialist artists cling to old styles during difficult transitional periods; even a socialist society, whose very essence is novelty, has need of certain conservative tendencies, if only so that, in the struggle against them, the new should grow stronger and more resolute. But it is the original artists who create new styles - artists like Mayakovsky, Eisenstein, Brecht, or Eisler - and it
it should use 'amplifiers' in order to grasp what at first seems incomprehensible, and, having grasped it, submit it to close examination and analysis.

Often all the artistic means of expression discovered since the middle of the last century are lumped together and dismissed as 'decadent'. It is certainly true that the late bourgeois world is a declining world and therefore by its very nature decadent. But it is by no means homogeneous — on the contrary, it is exceedingly rich in contradictions, not only between the bourgeoisie and the working class, but also within each social stratum; the struggle between the new and the old rages with particular violence among the intelligentsia. What is new is not of course 'free arts' on the side of the working class. It is more complicated than that. On the one hand, many workers have been infected by the decadence of the bourgeoisie; on the other hand, the capitalist world is incessantly influenced by the existence of the socialist world, and this influence itself is full of contradictions in that it not only provokes anti-Communism but also stimulates intellectual inquiry. The protest of artists against the capitalist world, their direct or indirect reactions to the fact of Communism, their discovery of a highly complex reality, all give rise to new forms and means of expression in which the decay of what is old is inseparable from the fermentation of what is new. In many cases it is impossible for us to distinguish between what is useless and what may be of future value. But to dismiss all modern elements in the literature and arts of the capitalist world as 'totten' is like Lassalle's idea, condemned by Marx, that the working class confounds a uniformly reactionary mass. Such compact uniformity does not exist in literature — still less in the arts of any period, let alone ours.

The persistence of conservative elements in the socialist world on the idealized figure of the 'simple' man as the final arbiter in all artistic matters is a retrograde tendency. It is part of the irresistible advance of socialism that the 'simple' man gradually turns into a subtle and highly differentiated man. The structure of a people can change more quickly than the minds of certain administrators. Already the dividing line between
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the qualified worker and the intellectual technologist is beginning to blur; the working class and the intelligentsia are beginning to overlap; the highly educated sons and daughters of the working class are acquiring a taste for intellectual adventure, for daring artistic experiment. They smile when their fathers shudder at the names of Moorer, Léger, Picasso, or when they dismiss Reinhardt, Yeats, and Klee as ‘obscure’, or say that twelve-tone music is the work of the devil. The younger generation in the socialist world will not be deprived of their right to know these things. Nor will they stop there. There are new Soviet films and the works of certain young writers, sculptors, and painters which justify the belief that we are about to see a flowering of Soviet art in which socialist content will be triumphantly expressed in a truly modern form.

Between rise and decline

The late bourgeois world is still capable of producing art of importance (and the existence and challenge of the socialist world, the moral and intellectual issues which it poses, are of considerable help here). But in the long-term view socialist art has the advantage over late bourgeois art. The latter, although it has much to offer, lacks one thing: a large vision of the future, a hopeful historical perspective. Despite disappointments, this vision still belongs to the socialist world. It is far more than a question of broad and space rockets, prosperity and technical perfection: it is a matter of the 'meaning of life', a meaning that is not metaphysical but humanist.

Despite all the conflicts it has undergone, socialism remains convinced of the unlimited possibilities that exist for man. The vision of the future expressed by many of the most gifted and sincere artists and writers in the late bourgeois world is negative, indeed apocalyptic. Superficial optimism cannot provide a counterweight to these gloomy views, for it is true that, for the first time in history, the suicide of the human race has become a possibility. Many years ago, one of Karl Kraus’s aphorisms anticipated this: ‘The modern end of the world will come about when machines become perfect and, at the same time, man’s inability to function reveals itself.’

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Human consciousness has lagged far behind technical progress. Socialist artists and writers cannot, therefore, argue lightly against the grim vision of the future depicted in bourgeois art and literature. Even if there were life left after an atomic war, this life, the infected air of a moon landscape, would have nothing whatever to do with the vision of a socialist world.

To prevent war is therefore the duty of all reasonable men under all social systems. Those who despair of the power of reason believe the catastrophe to be unavoidable; and the pale shadow of destruction falls on their work. Against this possibility of the end of the world, the socialist artist sets another possibility, that of a rational and therefore humane world. The second possibility is not predetermined any more than the first is inescapable. The choice, as never before, lies with the individual, and Hebbel’s lines are truer than ever:

Die hast nichtlebt gerade jüngst dein Schicksal in den Händen
und kannst es wenden, wie es dir gefällt.
Für jedes Menschen kommt der Augenblick
in dem der Lecher seinen Sinn im häßlichsten
Ziegel verheißt …

Your fate perhaps is in your hands at this very moment, and you can turn it as it please you. For every human being comes the moment when he who guides his star presses the reins into his own hands …

In a world in which the concentration of power is so great and the workings of that power so obscure, many people are inclined to think that their personal decision does not matter and, therefore, they surrender to ‘fate’. In such a situation, the central problem of socialist art is to portray the men behind the nameless objects and to present the possibility of man’s victory over them — without grandiose phrases or over-assertive optimism. William Faulkner’s tremendous novel Sanctuary — a tragedy about the impotence of human beings who, when they try to break out of their allotted social situation, are destroyed in the
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Different social systems pursue different aims and ideas. We live, after all, in one world. And our world needs Russian as well as American literature, Russian as well as French and Austrian music, Japanese as well as Italian, British, and Soviet films. It needs the modern Mexican painters as well as Henry Moore, Brecht as well as O’Casey, Chagall as well as Picasso.

The political struggle between the two social systems will continue. That it should take place in peace, not war, is a condition of the existence of us all. And that men on both sides should not speak in a vacuum but should understand each other’s problems, aims, and desires has become one of the greatest functions of contemporary literature and art.

The dream of the day after tomorrow

An opposite line of argument might go something like this:

"What confidence! What makes you so certain of the necessity of art? Art is on its last legs. It has been driven out by science and technology. When the human race can fly to the moon, is there any real need of moonstruck poets? The aeroplane is swifter than the gods, the car more efficient than Pegasus. The astronaut can see what the poet merely dreamed of. Remember Byron’s Cain flying through space with Lucifer:"

‘Cain: Oh god, or demon, or whatever thou art, is your earth?"

LUCIFER: ‘Dust thou not recognize tho the dust which fromst thy father?"

Cain: ‘Can it be?"

Try small blue circle, revolving in far ether."

With an invisible circle near it still, which looks like that, which lit our earthly light?"

As we move, like sunbeams onward, it grows small and smaller."

And as it waxes little, and then less, gathers a halo round it, like the light, which shone the roundest of the stars, when I beheld them from the skirts of Paradise."

‘Are not Gogmag’s, Titov’s, or Glenn’s space reports even..."
more overwhelming than this vision in verse? Is art not something that belonged to the childhood and poverty of mankind? Can it not be dispensed with now that we have reached maturity?

"It is clear that capitalism is no longer capable of producing a new renaissance of the arts. But socialism? Is it conceivable that another Homer or Shakespeare, Mozart or Goethe will be born? And if he is, will society need him? Is art not an enchanting substitute, a magic invocation of reality by men and for men who cannot cope with it? Does it not presuppose a mental passivity that is prepared to accept the dream for the deed, shadow for existence, and a cloud for Juno? Within the foreseeable future we shall have perfect cybernetic machines capable of handling reality with mathematical precision. No feeling will lead them astray, no passion will tempt them into error. What use is art, what use is Helen's giddy veil in an age of total automation, unlimited productive forces, and unlimited consumption?"

In future, machines will eventually relieve men of all mechanical labour, which will come to be regarded as unworthy of human effort. But as machines become more and more efficient and perfect, so it will become clear that *imperfection is the greatness of man*. Like cybernetic machines, man is a dynamic, self-perfecting system—but never sufficient unto himself, always open towards infinity, never capable of becoming a creature of pure reason obeying only the laws of logic. "Good non natum est, inpetus uno faust," wrote Ovid. This passion, this *inpetus*, this creative imperfection will always distinguish man from the machine.

"Agreed," my invisible opponent may say. "The perfect machine will have no urge to express its suffering, because it will not suffer; outside joy or suffering, it will carry on with solving the mysteries of reality. But even if man will never possess the absolute infallibility of the machine, why should he need art in a Communist society? You have said that the mission of art is to help us, half-men that we are, fragmentary, wretched, lonely creatures in a divided, incomprehensible, terrifying class society, towards a fuller, richer, stronger life—

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enlightenment and propaganda. But when the third, Communist, period is reached - when the individual and the collective are no longer in conflict, when classless society exists in an age of abundance - the essential function of art will consist in neither magic nor social enlightenment.

We can only dimly imagine such an art, and our visions of it may well be mistaken. Marxism rejects any ideal Utopia with all the severity of science; yet Utopia is its golden background. And so we may be allowed, as we dream of the future, to evoke a picture of a world where human beings, no longer exhausted by labour, no longer weighed down by today's cares and tomorrow's duties, have time and leisure to be 'on intimate terms' with art.

We need not fear that a prosperous and highly differentiated society will mean an impoverishment of the sets. The differentiation will be between personalities, not classes; between individuals, not social masks. Everything will encourage the interplay of the intimate and the universal, the fanciful and the problematic, reason and passion. Highly developed means of art reproduction will allow the public to become individuals, each becoming familiar with art in his own home. At the same time, public festivals and competitions of all kinds will encourage direct participation. It may well happen that apart from the novel, whose essential function is to analyze and criticize society, there will be a revival of the epic, for the epic is the literary form that affirms social reality. Tragedy will doubtless continue to exist, because the development of any society - even a classless one - is inconceivable without contradiction and conflict, and perhaps because man's dark desire for blood and death is inexhaustible. Our own appetite today for the grotesque and scurrilous in art may not only be the consequence of the juxtaposition of the terrible and the comic in modern life; it may also be the forecast of a rebirth of comedy. Hitherto comedy has generally meant criticism - destructive laughter, or, as Marx put it, 'a merry farewell to the past'; in a distant future it may reflect the life of sovereign man, his freedom, gaiety, and spirit.

Perhaps it is more than personal taste that links the names of...
and just in Bech. And Mozart is the epitome of such art. Mozart in whose music tension is so delicately adjusted that the slightest variation produces a non plus ultra of delight. The magic wand that Prospero dropped is passed on from generation to generation. The abundance of life (not only of consumer goods) promised by Communist will affirm, gladly, without sadness, that ‘we are such stuff as dreams are made on’.

The Romantic yeasting for the ‘universal’ work of art – itself the expression of a deeper longing for man’s unity with the world and with himself – may find fulfilment (in contrast to Wagner’s theories) in a new kind of comedy that will make use of all the possibilities of the theatre and create a synthesis of word and image, dance and music, logic and harlequinade, sensuality and reason. Martyrdom and sacrifice, the smell of blood and incense, the trying of art to religion, all this belongs to the prehistory of mankind. And it may be that comedy will be the most apt expression of man’s liberation.

In one of his dialogues motiled On Impulsity in Art, Hans Eidt writes: ‘The whine of the disappointed petty bourgeoisie, of the hard-done-by shopwalker – that exists in music, too. And in music under capitalism it seems to be the typical characteristics.’ We can expect that music in a Communist future will free itself of all romantic whimpering and smug silliness, all hysteria and all ham-handed propaganda: that it will presuppose listeners who are neither nervously over-stimulated nor sentimentally dabbly; that its effect will be to refresh rather than to stun, to illuminate the mind instead of dimming it – and that, although it will use many new means of expression and never try to imitate the past, it will nevertheless have something of Mozart’s serene richness and Mozart’s wise audacity.

The function of painting and sculpture will no longer be to fill museums. These will be patios, both public and private, and halls, squares, stadiums, swimming pools, universities, airports, theatres, and blocks of flats will each have sculptures and paintings to fit their character. The visual arts will probably not conform to a uniform style as they did in previous periods of class and imperial domination: the idea of a uniform style...
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The reality surrounding him. Those of us who simply enjoy art do not often run such a risk; but our limited 'I' is also marvelously enlarged by the experience of a work of art; a process of identification takes place within us, and we feel, almost effortlessly, that we are not only witnesses but even fellow-creators of those works that grip us without permanently tying us down. And so it is a little true to say that what art offers us is a substitute for life. But let us try to realize how much the unsatisfied man of today, identifying his sad ego with princes, tough gangsters, and irresistible lovers, differs from the free and self-aware man of a future society. This man will no longer need primitive mass-produced ideals but, because his life will be full of content, will strive for a content that is grander and richer still. Art as the means of man's identification with his fellow-men, nature, and the world, as his means of feeling and living together with everything that is and will be, is bound to grow as man himself grows in stature. The process of identification, which originally covered only a small range of beings and natural phenomena, has already extended beyond recognition, and will eventually unite man with the whole human race, the whole world.

In his novel Wilhelm Meister Goethe created the marvelous and enigmatic character of Makarie, the strange woman who identifies herself with the solar system and whose magic unity with the universe is watched and verified by a master-of-fact astronomer. Goethe wrote:

Makarie stood in a relationship to our solar system that one hardly dares to name. She does not clearly contemplate and cherish it in her mind, her soul, her imagination — no, she is, as it were, a very part of it; she believes herself to be drawn along in those heavenly cycles, but in a very special way; since her childhood she has been travelling round the sun, and more precisely, as we have now discovered, in a spiral, moving further and further away from the centre and declining towards the outer regions... This property of hers, glorious though it is, was nevertheless imposed upon her from her earliest years as a heavy task... The superabundance of this condition was in some degree mitigated by the fact that she, too, seemed to have her night and day, for when her inner light was dimmed she strove most faithfully to fulfill her out-

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ward duties, but when the inner light blazed afresh, she yielded to a blissful rest.

This curious description, reminiscent of the reports of certain mystics, expresses Goethe's pantheism. Makarie is a symbol for the world unity of creative man, and the astronomer at her side is a personification of science. True, the 'superabundance of her condition' lacks a social element, that of the creative human being's unity not only with the natural world but also with the rest of mankind. Such 'superabundance' in society as we have known it until now has been the lot of the heavy burden of only very few men and women; but in a truly human society the springs of creative power will gush forth in many, many more; the artist's experience will no longer be a privilege but the normal gift of free and active man; we shall achieve, as it were, social genius.

Man, who became man through work, who stepped out of the animal kingdom as transformer of the natural into the artificial, who became therefore the magician, man the creator of social reality, will always stay the great magician, will always be Prometheus bringing fire from heaven to earth, will always be Orpheus enthralling nature with his music. Not until humanity itself dies will art die.
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How are we to regard William Morris? As a brilliant designer who wasted time dabbling in other subjects? As first and foremost a poet? As a political thinker? Or as a successful blend of all these—the last 'universal man' in the Renaissance tradition? Certainly no one label is adequate for Morris. This selection shows the full range and diversity of his interests-literary, artistic, social, and political. His vitality as a writer emerges throughout, whether he is discussing art or social reform.

"FROM NATURE," the clearest statement of Morris's vision of the Good Life in Utopian terms, takes its place among more ephemeral letters and pamphlets. Morris's poetry is also represented.

Finally, a fully illustrated supplement, prepared by Gertrude Slutzkland, presents Morris the designer, with examples of his tapestries, carpets, wallpaper, and furniture.

THE CONTEMPORARY CINEMA
Penelope Houston

The cinema is uniquely of the twentieth century—an art which has earned its place alongside the novel and the theatre, but which it also a great international industry, tied to the economic laws of supply and demand.

Of the total history of the cinema one quarter belongs to the years since the war. The Contemporary Cinema thus ranges from two-reelers to the new wave, from On the Town to five years of South Pacific, from the Goldwyn-fIlm of the Sporting Life; and the directors include not only Antonioni, Truffaut, and Andoncino, but also Resnais, Rohmer, and de Sica; not only Ford, Hitchcock, and Hawks, but also Kubrick, Ray, and Cassavetes.

In a sustained, imaginative survey of the whole post-war scene, Penelope Houston shows how the cinema has adjusted itself to meet a new audience which approaches films more critically than before, but in doing so encourages new talent. At the same time she makes clear the industrial problems (in particular, the fight to co-exist with TV) which are inseparable from the business of making, distributing, and promoting a very expensive product to a highly unreliable market.

The individual talent, the business decision, the screen, and the audience are all placed firmly in perspective by the Editor of Sight and Sound. This is what the cinema since the war looks like now. The book is illustrated with over 50 plates and a check list of films provides a guide to more than one hundred directors.
LITERATURE AND CRITICISM
H. Crossley

Literature and Criticism is concerned above all with the bricks and mortar of writing—words. There are chapters on Rhythm, Rhyme, Imagery, Poetic Thought, Feeling, and Diction. Both poetry and prose are discussed, and there is an appendix of passages as exercises.

The bare contents, however, give little idea of the excellence of this introduction to literary appreciation. For here is a sound and unpretentious teacher who knows how little most of us know and who can help us, without scarecrows or pedantry, to tell sense from nonsense, sincerity from affectation, and beauty from dead decoration.

"Excellent chapters on Rhythm, Rhyme, and Imagery and a really splendid one on Feeling" — Times and Tide

"A very useful book for sixth forms, first-year undergraduates, and adult education classes... A sensible and sensitive book" — The Times Literary Supplement

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