MODERNISM AND THE CRISIS IN ART:

THE STRUCTURE OF FINE ART PRACTICE,

A SOCIOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

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In the inescapable flux, there is something that abides; in the overwhelming permanence there is an element that escapes into flux. Permanence can be snatched only out of flux, and the passing moment can find its adequate intensity only by its submission to permanence.

Whitehead, A.N.

Process and Reality

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CHAPTER I

SEARCHING FOR ART

Until the early 1970's, there appeared to be some semblance of order in the world of fine art production. But, when we look back over the past decade and a half, order eludes the eye. The stylistic chain - Abstract Expressionism, Formalism, Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptualism - in the 'seventies seems to break and fragment. No new style comes to the fore as the vanguard of the 'New'. Instead, diverse fragments coexist, failing to find a new synthesis.

One art critic, after compiling a glossary of terms applied to late-Modernism, remarks:

> After the early 'seventies words fail us; the glossary dissolves. The lines of influence and threads of history get so tangled that there are no more terms that really work. (1)

This may project an overstated view of a situation in which continuities are indeed discernible, if somewhat confused, distorted and fragmented. What these words of Levin's do indicate, however, is a sense of loss of direction to be found in the art world (2): a loss of direction felt by artists, critics, and the art public at large. When Hauser remarks that the crisis in art reaches its culmination in the late 'sixties, and from this time on:

> ... artists despair of art and fix their eyes upon its end. (3)

he captures the sense of loss that pervades the following decade, even though he sets the scene for a tragedy that may never be played out. What turned into a rejection of art by the Modernist avant-garde of the

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1 Levin, K., 'The State of the Art', *Art Journal*, vol.140, no.1/2, 1980.
2 The term 'art world' is used to refer to those involved in the production, presentation, consumption and criticism of works of art.
3 Hauser, A., *The Sociology of Art*, London, 1982, p.668. For discussion of Hauser's views on this crisis in art, c.f. Ch.VII.

twentieth century (4), was from the beginning simultaneously a search forart, for authentic expression and communication. Much of the power and dynamics of Modernist art can be found in the act of self-negation perpetrated by the avant-garde. By the early 'seventies there seemed little left of art to undermine; the avant-garde was spent. All that was left was a sense of loss. At first, the loss was the experience of absence of a movement, a group or style to provide direction, the illusion of progress; but then came the realisation that perhaps art itself had slipped away.

Writing in 1969, Helene Parmelin expresses her distaste for the decline of serious artistic intention and critical concern with quality:

> Something extraordinary is happening in the world of art. The situation, which was already strange, is now approaching a bizarre climax.
>
> It is a situation where anything goes and all is forbidden, where everything is both open and closed, teeming with life and at the same time in the throes of death, a situation in which art has every right, is losing its every means, and is discovering other means. It is praised to the skies and thrown to the dogs. It is made out of every conceivable material, and out of nothing. Its 'revolutionaries' are innumerable and form innumerable opposing camps. They repudiate it, they execrate money and they make a pile. Non-art proclaims its raison d'être, and the reason it should cease to exist. The 'cultural guerillas' have pronounced the era of commercial galleries and museums at an end; they want to strew the city with neon squares for all. (5)

These 'cultural guerillas' have done a good job on art, whilst leaving intact the institutions that were their prime target. The critics, the galleries and museums, have thrived on rejection. What has been lost in this head-long rush of the artist (6) towards the 'point zero' of art, is the original objective, that of an uncontaminated form of expression, a pure communication of meaning. From the beginning, this process of cultural cleansing asserted a possibility that could only be approached, but never fulfilled. From the time of the Romantics and the Rousseaunian assertion of the divide between human potential and cultural distortion

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4 I refer here to the 'anti-art' element within the avant-garde. As shall be demonstrated, in Chs. VI and VII, the avant-gardist thematic within Modernism is very broad-based, though different theorists of the avant-garde have tried to identify a 'progressive' movement that can rightly claim the function of an avant-garde.

5 Parmelin, H., *Art, Anti-Art; Anartism Explored*, London, 1977, p.5.

6 I have described this feature of late twentieth century art elsewhere. C.f. Hincks, A., 'Marxism and Art', *Economy and Society*, vol.II, no.1, 1982, pp.71-2. What the anti-artists did not realise was that their success must also be their extinction.

(7), art has been essentially a critical discourse. In the 'seventies, art's liberatory function (8) apparently degenerates into sham, a direction discernible, as Pamelin indicates, prior to the 'seventies collapse of style.

Writing at the end of the decade, Robert Hughes remarks:

> The seventies are gone, and where is their art?' (9).

In similar vein, Edward Lucie-Smith writes about the abolition of the 'dialogue of styles', that has blurred the distinction between high art and other activities to which the term 'art' may now be applied (10). In the 'sixties, he remarks, the art critic could see things as either 'art', 'anti-art' or 'non-art'. One did not find the category to which they belonged by looking at the object or examining the act, but by

> ... interrogating the artist about his intentions. The declared intention of making art was enough to validate any work as such. (11)

Art prior to the 'seventies could acceptably take one of two forms: it could aspire to art, or it could be purposefully negational, anti-art. This dualism presents itself as a corruption of the critical function of art in society. To this I shall return. What may seem more surprising about Lucie-Smith's comments on the critic's view of art prior to the 'seventies, is his assertion that one distinguished art from non-art on the basis of the artist's declared intentions. Where is the traditional aesthetic (12), and what are the implications of its apparent absence for art practice? It seems that the negation of art has already largely taken place. In the 'seventies comes this realisation. With the collapse

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7 C.f. Rousseau, J.J., 'A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences', *The Social Contract and Discourses*, London, 1975. 'Before art had moulded our behaviour, and taught our passions to speak an artificial language, our morals were rude but natural.' (p.6) This is a call for cultural cleansing.

8 The notion that art has a 'liberatory' function is particularly associated with phenomenologically inclined Marxist accounts (c.f. Ch.11). It is, however, a conception that originates in Neoclassical art theory (c.f. Ch.VI).

9 Hughes, R., '10 Years that Buried the Avant-Garde', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 30th Dec. 1979. Norman Lynton gives an indication of the direction taken by art in the 'seventies, by entitling his final historical chapter, 'Beyond Painting and Sculpture', *The Story of Modern Art*, London, 1980. In the 'eighties, there has been a movement back to 'traditional art media'.

10 C.f. Lucie-Smith, E., *Art in the Seventies*, Oxford, 1980, p.8. Harold Rosenberg pointed to this process of 'de-definition', in which the nature of art becomes uncertain, in the early 'seventies - c.f. *On the De-definition of Art: Action Art to Pop to Earthworks*, London, 1972.

11 Lucie-Smith, E., op cit, p.8.

12 By traditional aesthetic I refer to the notion of art as, in some sense, indicating a timeless essence, a universal dimension of human experience.

of the dialogue of styles, however temporary a situation this may turn out to be, the critic and public are left with no other guidelines as to the identification of art, and therefore criteria for pronouncing on aesthetic judgement, than the artist's own declaration of intent. For the artist, the possibilities are limitless. It is the results of these unlimited horizons for artistic involvement that lead Robert Hughes to pose his question. The artist has been handed the leadership that for so long had been proclaimed. But, by the end of the decade:

> ... the idea of the avant-garde had gone' (13).

In this chapter I shall take a critical look at the art of the past two decades, in order to establish discontinuities and continuities with the Modernist tradition. The art of this period has been variously described as Postmodernist, Late-Modernist, Pluralist, viewed as a period of transition, or of fundamental crisis (14). In the art and commentary of the two decades can be found a consciousness of loss: of the Modernist tradition, of aesthetic or other criteria for indicating value, of art itself. This consciousness has begun to metamorphose in a new search for authentic art, hesitant and faltering, but indicating that perhaps something can be saved from the ruins of the Modernist dream. In the period since the late 'sixties, contradictions inherent in the Modernist tradition have surfaced, forcing a re-evaluation of fundamentals. It is these contradictions that I shall begin to uncover in the following pages. I intend to concentrate on developments in fine art, predominantly painting and sculpture, in order to impose a limit on research. However, the contemporary situation is such that boundaries between 'arts', and even between art and productions for a mass audience - advertising, pop videos, film, etc. - are impossible to maintain. Nonetheless I shall focus on fine art and its tradition throughout this thesis, using examples from other arts where appropriate, returning to the issue of fine art's relations to mass culture in the final chapter. I deal with Happenings, Conceptual art, and other non-traditional art forms in this

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13 Hughes, R., op cit, p.18.
14 The term 'Postmodernism' in particular has been used by art critics to describe a new departure in art, and, more broadly, in culture and society in general. I shall return to a discussion of the literature of Postmodernism in Ch. VII. Applied to art, the term 'Postmodern' is often ill-defined; as Ferenc Fehér comments on this notion and that of 'the end of art', their conceptual content is 'more often than not obscure'. Fehér, F., 'What is Beyond Art? On the Theories of Post-Modernity', Heller, A. and Fehér, F. (eds.), *Reconstructing Aesthetics*, Oxford, 1986, p.60.

chapter because they derive their arts status from the fine art tradition; they are presented as alternatives to painting and sculpture, while their producers claim for themselves the status of 'artists'. What exactly it is that the label 'artist' confers on the producer will be a major theme of this work.

THE PLURALITY OF STYLES

The coexistence of diverse stylistic fragments can easily give the appearance of the absence of any underlying unity in the art of the past decade and a half. Such a unity has often been claimed for the successive styles of the preceding decades down to the turn of the century. Modernism has been used as an overarching concept for styles as diverse as Dada and Formalism, Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, Surrealism and Conceptualism. In postulating a Modernist era, it has been to an elucidation of the thematics that have produced this diversity that art historians have turned - an analysis of abstraction, dehumanisation, the avant-garde, nihilism, subjectivism, individualism,... all themes that are central to an understanding of the dialectics of style this century. Are these themes suddenly less important in the art of the 'seventies and 'eighties? Have they worked their way through to a conclusion or crisis, and are ready to yield up their central position to a new set of themes? It is the existence of a plurality of styles that has led art critics to pose such questions. It is not that other periods of history have always avoided plurality; it is the extent of the diversity and the lack of a dominant perspective that have led to a general acceptance of the validity of all that distinguishes modern pluralism. Pluralism dissipates the energy and purposefulness of art, leading to a passive acceptance of anything that is brought to the attention of the art audience. Above all else, there is the apparent loss of the avant-garde as the manufacturers of style, the absence of a movement with its assertions of stylistic supercession, its anti-artism, and promotion of the 'New'. Suddenly in the 'seventies there is no 'movement' promoting a dominant style, no avant-garde.

It is the coexistence of stylistic fragments without an apparent centre, a focus for critics and public to rest their attention on, to say, 'This is what art is about,' that presents a dilemma. It is no longer acceptable to say that one art form is new and progressive, while another is outdated and superseded. When we do find a critic committing himself to a style or artist, it tends no longer to be at the expense of others. There are few critics who will openly take a stance against a particular art form. If a position is taken, it is usually from a socially or

politically committed perspective (15). It is this lack of an identifiable progressive and representative style, the failure of a 'movement' to emerge to claim ascendence, and the general acceptance that perspectives on art are relative and therefore cannot be prescriptive, that has led to the use of the epithet 'pluralism' to describe the contemporary situation.

The situation has given the artist almost unlimited freedom to explore the realm of the traditionally non-artistic, and to dip freely into the melting pot of the Modernist tradition. The artist can afford to be eclectic. He can take full advantage of the 'value relativism' that is the hallmark of pluralism.

This 'value relativism' is clearly espoused in the following statement made by a critic in a discussion taking place among members of the American section of the International Association of Art Critics, in 1978:

> I think that one question in criticism can have a number of correct answers. That is, different value judgements can be equal. I think that there is a new situation and that critics should ask themselves several questions: How equal are critical values? Are value judgements the pinnacle of art criticism? If not, why not? If so, why? And how? (16)

Within a pluralistic art universe, the critic is in a difficult position; his function becomes primarily descriptive as value judgements are largely to be avoided. It is much easier for a critic if he has a cause to fight. Like the artist, the critic is placed in a position where it is no longer acceptable to view a work of art as a representation in opposition to another style, thus giving to the work positive attributes called forth in the process of negation. The dialogue of styles had previously facilitated an escape from relativism.

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15 An exception to this is Harold Osborne, who has argued on aesthetic grounds for a distinction between art and non-art to be made, regarding claims to art status. C.f. Osborne, H., 'Aesthetic Implications of Conceptual Art, Happenings, etc.', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.20, no.1, 1980.

16 Stubbs, A.L., at a discussion forum in the School of Visual Arts, New York, Nov. 1978. C.f. 'Pluralism in Art and Art Criticism', *Arts Journal*, vol.40, no.1/2, 1980, pp.378-9.

Pluralism and relativism now go hand in hand. If there is no single standard by which to measure artistic value, then there is no reason why there should be conformity to a single stylistic norm. Pluralism is both a recognition that there is an inability within the world of art to agree upon a set of standards of quality, and it is a recognition that standards are relative and therefore not to be agreed upon. Pluralism raises the question of relativism as a major dilemma confronting the artist and the art world. This century, more than any other period in the history of art production, has seen style used as a rule to guide the critical eye. Few have openly advocated style as a measure of quality, but most critics have used it in this way. Fundamental elements of quality in one style are brought to attention through contrast with the otherness of the preceding style. Much art history operates in this way, deriving qualitative value from contrast (17). What this has meant is that, until very recently, attention on style has limited the effects of relativism, giving an appearance of objectivity to critical commentary. Relativism has been a latent component in art criticism since the turn of the nineteenth century.

Pluralism opens up vast areas of possibility for the artist. It is with this challenge to art critical conventions that the art of the past, no longer viewed in terms of its 'otherness', can be plundered at will, and even elevated to a place in the present. Alongside this opening up of Modernism, artists have sought new ground in areas of life traditionally far removed from the concerns of art. In the 'seventies, they took on the garb of the geographer, the scientist, and the sociologist, and subsumed these under the aegis of artistic practice. It appears that the artist can make any object an object of art simply by bringing it to the attention of the art world. Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) was the first to see the challenge that aesthetic relativism held for art (18). His 'readymades' gave concrete form to the possibilities and contradictions inherent in twentieth century art production, but their potency as

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17 This approach is not entirely without validity, as the consciousness of style and the search for the new have provided an important internal dynamic to art historical practice. In the Modern period, art has become increasingly 'autonomous'.

18 For Duchamp, the 'readymade' was originally non-art, not simply anti-art. In 1913, he placed a bicycle wheel upside down on a stool and called it *Bicycle Wheel*. This and later 'readymades' were, however, accepted into the category 'art'.

critique was stifled, as they were themselves consumed by the prevailing orthodoxy of style. The significance of Duchamp's *Urinal* only becomes realised when it can be viewed for its possibilities as art object.

Pluralism brings to the fore a deep-rooted contradiction present in contemporary art practice. Artists since the 'seventies have sought to show that art has no limits, that art and life blend imperceptibly into one another. In this, they have not only pushed the possibilities of Modernist art to their limit, they have also brought into question the validity of art as a distinct area of social practice. Artists, to the extent that they have merged art and life, have undermined their own position as artists. The relativism inherent in Modern art removes the ground upon which art is socially constituted. The dominant form of aesthetic theorisation until the 'seventies had been based on the axiom that art possesses a universal and timeless essence. Even when all due account has been paid to the particularistic character of the art object, its contextual embeddedness, there has always been the assumption that its status as art is tied to its ability to transcend the realm of the particular. Much aesthetic theorisation still maintains this theme, but this theorisation has become increasingly removed from the actuality of art practice. Attempting to come to terms with the challenge to aesthetic theorisation presented by Conceptual art, Happenings, Environments and art involving spectator interventions, Harold Osborne rejects the dominant view that these presentations are indeed art; this phenomenon may be socially reputable, he argues, but:

> what is wrong - and dangerous - is its association with art, aesthetics and creativity. (19)

This stand against relativism is atypical. When aesthetic theorisation does take a close look at the contemporary art scene, which is not often, there is usually an attempt to incorporate all the diversity of art presentations. This has led some aesthetic theorists towards an analysis of the context, and away from serious consideration of the object. Art is viewed as a label, and aesthetic theory concerns itself with the labelling process which triggers an aesthetic awareness of the object (20). This

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19 Osborne, H., op cit, p.22.
20 C.f. Dickie, G., *Art and Aesthetics; An Institutional Analysis*, New York, 1974. This is to be considered in depth in the following pages.

contrasts with the traditional aesthetic, the aesthetic upon which art practice has been sustained in its different formations since the Renaissance. This traditional aesthetic is encapsulated in these words of John Fowles:

> All art both generalises and particularises; that is, tries to flower in all time, but is rooted in one time. An archaic statue, an abstract painting, a twelve-tone sequence may mainly generalise (all time); a Holbein portrait, a haiku, a flamenco song may mainly particularise (one time). But in the portrait of Ann Cresacre by Holbein I see one sixteenth-century woman and yet all young women of a certain kind; in the austere and totally unrooted concatenation of notes by Webern I hear nonetheless the expression of one particular twentieth-century mind. (21)

Pluralism, in emphasising the particularistic, loses sight of the general. In this, it presents a challenge to artistic practice. It is not simply that pluralism allows styles to coexist; this in itself is not problematic. It is rather that pluralism is incapable of supplying a standard, a generalising aesthetic norm, to place order in diversity. Even when aesthetic theorisation takes its point of departure from the neo-Kantian notion of an aesthetic attitude (22), which many modern aesthetic theories do, then it has maintained the traditional perspective of the universality of the experience by concentrating analysis on the categories of knowing applied by the apprehending subject, aesthetic attention responding to stimuli in the objective world. When such theorisation discards the object, and, further, views the categories of aesthetic attention as themselves relative - institutionally defined as in the case of George Dickie's 'Institutional Analysis' (23), or 'historically' defined as in the theory of Jerrold Levinson (24) - it removes all possibility of art, in the traditional meaning of the word.

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21 Fowles, J., *The Aristos*, St. Albans, 1981, pp.177-8.

22 Aesthetic attitude theory emphasises the attitude of the mind of the observer of the work of art to the understanding of the aesthetic effect; aesthetic contemplation is usually viewed as involving a 'disinterested' art. This notion of disinterestedness is often seen to have derived from Kant, but Kant's aesthetics is too often over-simplified. Aesthetic experience, for Kant, was pre-conceptual, and beyond the grasp of concepts, and its source was not the attitude, but something 'lying beyond the confines of experience'. C.f. Kant, I., *The Critique of Judgement*, 1790, trans. Meredith, J.C., Oxford, 1978, pp. 175-6. For discussion of Kant's views on art, c.f. Ch.VI.

23 Dickie, G., op cit.

24 Levinson, J., 'Defining Art Historically', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.19, no.3, 1979, pp.232-50.

Let me expand further on the institutional analysis of art argued by George Dickie. It would seem a logical step to make, to acknowledge the limitless possibilities that present themselves as objects of art under pluralism, and to shift aesthetic attention from the object to the contextual. This is what Dickie does in concentrating his analysis on the institutional construction of the object as art. An art object gains its status through being presented for consideration as such, and having conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by persons acting on behalf of the art world (25). The status of art is conferred when one person, often the artist, who may be the only person to see a particular work, treats:

> ... [an] artefact as a candidate for appreciation. (26)

The work of art may never actually be 'appreciated', that is, be viewed from the perspective of aesthetic attention, but being labelled 'art' it lays claim to such appreciation. We see here the centrality of the artist, not only as producer of the object, but also as definer of object as art. Under pluralism, this definition does indeed appear to be all that is required for the gaining of art status. It fits the reality of boundless possibility.

However, acceptance of Dickie's analysis involves a commitment to a separation between art object and aesthetic awareness. This, I would argue, reduces the concept of art to a meaningless abstraction. Surely, to confer the status of art does not simply involve the application of a label, devoid of content, awaiting an act of appreciation. Already in the labelling there are qualities being defined and appreciated. It is not possible to make the kind of clear separation between status as art and the act of appreciation that Dickie is suggesting. The very working of the materials and the thought processes involved in the construction of an art object are imbued with an aesthetic, cognitive and sensual, however poorly articulated in the consciousness of the producer. In considering the nature of aesthetic appreciation, Dickie's position is straightforward:

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25 Dickie,G., op cit, p.34.
26 ibid, p.38.

> ... the aspects of the work of art which belong to the aesthetic object of that work of art are determined by the conventions governing the presentation of the work. (27)

Aesthetic qualities are defined institutionally (socially) by the art world, at any given historical moment. It follows that aesthetic experience is itself simply the experience gained from selective attention towards these aesthetic qualities. Although, taking aesthetic attitude theory as a starting point, perversely, institutional analysis denies the subjectivity of the individual, reducing experiences to a reflection of convention. For the art world is not only the definer of the object as art, and of the aesthetic aspects that are the focus of appreciation, but also of the subjective experience to be had when confronting the object. Yet, strangely, Dickie is more cautious concerning the aesthetic experience that confronts us in the natural world, where he acknowledges that there 'may well be some' recourse to convention in aesthetic appreciation (28).

In many ways Dickie's theory is very much in tune with the prevailing pluralism. The theory accepts as its point of departure those same institutional definitions of which it seeks to provide a critique. In so doing it is incapable of making a statement on aesthetic value; in fact, aesthetic value becomes a meaningless concept. Dickie has recently argued that we should give up using the term 'aesthetic experience', because of its historical association with the notion of 'disinterestedness' (29). He suggests, in its place, the term 'the experience of art', which is neutral and allows description of the experience of art as it actually occurs. Although the paper in which Dickie suggests this is titled, 'Evaluating Art', it actually demonstrates the impossibility of doing this. One can only record 'the experience of art', which will vary with the presentation and with the conventions that define the aspects of the work that are to be appreciated. Under pluralism these conventions are limitless. The plurality of styles makes a range of demands - from formal analysis to cognitive leaps, from involvement to shock, distaste and withdrawal. Each work, art object, can

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27 ibid, p.147.
28 ibid, p.200.
29 Dickie, G., 'Evaluating Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.25, no.1, 1985, pp.3-16.

claim its own mode of appreciation, state its own terms of validation (30). Dickie's theory is caught in the same dilemma as contemporary art, with its plurality of styles; either art can be everything and anything, in which case it is difficult to see how it can be special or in any sense worthwhile, or art is non-existent, a pure myth or reification, which amounts to the same thing. If this is so, why should we even bother to record our experience of art? Why should we be concerned with art at all?

This view that art is to be 'recorded' is strongly upheld by the pluralist mentality. It would not be misleading to say that the art object has largely become a 'document' of an experience. It was always the case that the art object in the Modernist tradition was viewed in this way, but the work was always more than this. The traditional notion of art and aesthetic experience, which is still upheld by the majority of the art public, stressed the centrality of the art object as the outcome, or end product, embodying the creative process, and the essence of its focus of attention, reality. As such, it was seen as the quintessential moment. With pluralism, attention has moved towards descriptive accounts of the process. Devoid of greater significance, the art object documents the individual creative process, and has become secondary to that process, which is the individual experience of the artist, and seems to have little to offer that is more universally significant. This move towards documentation and focus on the experience of the artist-creator has been located by Harold Rosenberg in action painting:

> Action painting had indicated a new motive for painting in the twentieth century: that of serving as a means for the artist's recreation of himself and as evidence to the spectator of the kind of activities involved in this adventure. (31)

I think that Rosenberg is right in identifying a shift in perspective in Modernism, at a time when the centre of art activity had moved to New York. I shall explore this further in the final chapter. But the emphasis on the process of creating has its roots in the eighteenth century, and can be traced in the increasing importance placed on working

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30 As Harold Rosenberg states: 'In our time values must be created alongside the art which they propose to evaluate.' Rosenberg, H., *Art on the Edge*, London, 1976, p.144.
31 Rosenberg, H., *The Anxious Object*, London, 1965, p.259.

rapidly from life situations, and of sketching as art-work (32).

The artist presenting his work as art is not left untouched by the apparent freedom that pluralism gives to define and pursue artistic inclination. If one's work is 'recognised', coming to the attention of critics or exhibited in galleries and sold to the public, then this provides some assurance and validation that the direction taken is worthwhile. But only some assurance, for the distaste shown by the avant-garde for the machinery of consumerism in the past, still has a strong hold on the consciousness of the contemporary artist. It has always been a contradiction within Modernism that the artist is bound to seek 'recognition' and a livelihood in the world of consumerism, while rejecting the very institutions and social conventions that sustain artistic practice. Within pluralism, the controls imposed by style, dictated by the market, indirectly through the promotion of the 'New', dissolve. The market is still present, but now more blatantly so, for there is a lack of a stylistic convention to mediate between artistic practice and the cash nexus. The artist in the past could avert his attention from the marketing of his work, by focusing this consciousness on style and intent. Under pluralism, the notion of an art-for-art's-sake is eroded, as art becomes anything and everything. To sustain a belief in the validity of any particular form of artistic endeavour becomes more and more difficult.

Artists under pluralism are confronted by what Suzi Gablik has termed:

> ... [the] tyranny of freedom. (33)

The absence of a normative framework within which to work forces the artist back onto his own self, whereas in the past there was always a recourse to tradition and style. The isolation that Modern art has increasingly suffered, from the wider community, with pluralism becomes more intense and directed at the self. The art world itself is fragmented and lacks a centre, and freedom becomes a question-mark.

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32 It was in the eighteenth century that the sketch became accepted as art work. The interest in the 'picturesque' seems to have advanced the public's regard for drawings executed on location - usually rapidly done and left unfinished. There is a 'Romantic' element in the value given to 'spontaneity', though this concern predates the art historical period.

33 Gablik, S., *Has Modernism Failed?*, London, 1984, pp.73-87.

What is art? Where is art? Gablik is right to point towards - and here she uses a concept of Fromm's - the 'anguish of choice' (34), that confronts the artist. The artist must call forth meaning and purpose from within, to sustain his endeavour. But it would be wrong to overstate this anguish. The artist can still gain some sustenance from critics, galleries and sales of works, even though he may profess to reject these. As I hope to demonstrate, pluralism does not effect a clear break with Modernism, as some theorists using the term 'Post-Modernism' have implied; many artists have proved unwilling to give up the mantle of avant-gardism even though this itself has become part of the institutional orthodoxy (35). And, of course, in raising the question - what is art? - already a purpose is born: a new, or renewed, search for art is surfacing. This may prove to be the paradox of pluralism: that it both denies and calls attention to art. For this reason, it cannot be the end of art.

In their search for art, artists still strive for a form of expression or symbolism that is to them meaningful. They do not produce works of art without purpose, although they may fail to find a shared symbolism. This striving for art has become individualised and less oppositional; artists in a pluralistic context seem more willing to accept that alternatives to their own artistic direction may be taken, and validly so, by other artists. As I shall demonstrate, artists have tended to follow one of four paths in their search for art, showing that contemporary art does have a structure, that there are dimensions to pluralism that structure the apparently chaotic stylistic universe.

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34 ibid, p.78, and c.f. Fromm, E., *Fear of Freedom*, London, 1960, esp. Ch.IV, 'The Two Aspects of Freedom for Modern Man'.

35 Joseph Beuys (1921-86) was an outstanding example of an avant-gardist, charismatic figure, whose art was very much a response to personal convictions, on social, political and environmental issues - his art and public life were, alike, performances, statements. C.f. Tisdall, C., *Joseph Beuys*, London, 1979.

BETWEEN MEANING AND DOCUMENT

The work of art this century has progressively shed its claim to meaning. By meaning, I refer to two related levels of meaningfulness, both of which are implicitly present, if not explicitly theorised, in the vast majority of literature on art. At one level, there is art's claim to what I shall term 'absolute' meaning, where art is seen to possess meaning by virtue of its ability to tap an essential reality, a reality incarnate in the existential realm. Such an absolute may be theorised as universal or otherwise. Usually art is seen as uniquely privileged in providing access to absolute meaning. There is also meaning at the level of adequacy in communication, where meaning refers to art's ability to convey a message, usually from artist to audience: a message possibly, but not necessarily, unique to the art process. Meaning here requires the existence of a shared system of signs, a language common to artist and audience. We can refer to this level as 'communicative' meaning, because meaning lies in communicative competence.

In referring to absolute meaning in art, we are dealing with an aesthetic question. The belief that art possessed absolute meaning can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance (36), but it was the eighteenth century that elevated art to a position akin to a religion, and gave to art a purpose uniquely its own. The concern that the twentieth century has with absolute meaning in art is very much a legacy of its past. However, being a legacy does not prevent it being an influential force in the individual's will to produce and partake in the artistic experience. Van Gogh writes in 1883, expressing his faith in art:

> I have found in my work something to which I can devote myself, heart and soul, and which gives inspiration and significance to life. Of course my moods vary, but there is an average of serenity. I have a sure faith in art, a sure confidence that it is a powerful stream, which bears a man to harbour, though he himself must do his bit too. (37)

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36 As I shall argue in Chs. III and IV, the Renaissance saw the theorisation of an aesthetic meaning. Prior to this, the object of representation had a mediatory function, a didactic and inspirational purpose.

37 In a letter from Vincent van Gogh to his brother, 1883, quoted in, Roskill, M., (ed.), *The Letters of Van Gogh*, Glasgow, 1963, p.188.

Van Gogh stood at the gateway to what is usually viewed as the Modern period, but midway between the historical extremes of the period I shall present as the Modern (38). His claim for art would not be disputed in its essentials by Romantic or contemporary artist.

The loss of an absolute and the spectre of nihilism have provided a powerful creative theme in the Modernist epoch. It is a theme that art has explored, and in turn it has exploited art. Edward Munch's *The Scream* (1894) encapsulates the tension and the hopelessness of modern man's condition, but it conveys meaning and hope in its appeal to a common humanity.

> Art is no longer regarded as religion, as absorption of man into the divine world, as man's supreme purpose. Art has now become the expression of man's estrangement, his isolation in the world, of the ultimate futility of human life and the history of humanity. Art is seen then no longer against a pantheistic but against a nihilistic background. I say this as diagnosing, not as moralising. It is this nihilistic background that enables us to raise the question of art and meaning today in a wholly new, an ultimate radicalness. (39)

Kung suggests that art can still be meaningful even in a context viewed as meaningless. The work of art can symbolise meaninglessness in a way that is completely meaningful.

> The work of art is thus an expression meaningful in itself of the actually existing meaninglessness. (40)

For Kung, the theologian, futility need not be the message. The artist can adopt a different attitude:

> ... he can hold fast to the fundamental meaning of his life and the world as a whole. (41)

> The very fact that a painter continues to paint, continues despite everything, can be the expression of an ultimate sustained basic trust. (42)

For Kung, art holds out a possibility for a different future; it brings critical awareness of the meaninglessness of the present, offering at the same time a hope for the future of Man - an aesthetic theory not far

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38 C.f. Ch.VI.
39 Kung, H., *Art and the Question of Meaning*, London, 1981, p.29.
40 ibid, p.33.
41 ibid, p.32.
42 ibid, p.33.

removed from that of Herbert Marcuse (43).

The dialectic of meaning and nihilism gives form to much that is presented in Modern art. Even when it is being denied, there is a continuing presence of absolute meaning expressed through the will of the artist, and as anticipation in the minds of the art public. There is an expectation that art should participate in a meaningful reality. Some modern artists, such as Rothko (1903-70) and Barnett Newman (1905-70), have consciously sought this absolute reality, with, some would claim, a high degree of success. Rothko has a chapel erected in his name to house some of his works, in Houston, Texas. (44)

Absolute meaning has been theorised in aesthetic discourse as an ideal or material reality, but more often a union or confusion of both these categorical projections of human social cognition (45). For Paul Weiss:

> A work of art is created by shaping resistant materials into a new kind of space, time or way of becoming, (46)

a perspective owed to Aristotle. The artist approaches God through the act of creation, producing an object that embodies

> ... an ideal, telling us something about the world beyond. (47)

He asserts that art is more than mere aesthetic experience, that it is to be grasped by recourse to an aesthetic attitude: it is existent and reaches to an existence beyond itself. Such a religious purpose can be found in the mystical abstraction of a Rothko painting, or the nature mysticism of Casper David Friedrich (1774-1840), though separated from each other by a century and a half of social and artistic transformations. A not too dissimilar perspective is presented in

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43 Marcuse, H., *The Aesthetic Dimension*, London, 1979. 'The transcendence of immediate reality shatters the reified objectivity of established social relations and opens a new dimension of experience.' (p.7)
44 Rothko's work is exhibited at the Tate Gallery, London, in such a manner that it is easy to enter that contemplative mood that the paintings evoke.
45 Durkheim has convincingly argued the abstracted nature of categories such as material and ideal, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London, 1954, pp.13-20. Durkheim's sociology of knowledge outlined here grounds concepts in social experience without being reductive. 'Their social origin rather leads to the belief that they are not without foundation in the nature of things.' (p.19)
46 Weiss, P., *The World of Art*, Illinois, 1961, p.10.
47 ibid, p.5.

Collingwood's notion of the 'Monad', the work of art as:

> ... [a] windowless and self-contained world which mirrors the universe from its own unique viewpoint. (48)

According to Collingwood, in art and its transformations can be found the work of history, of spirit unfolding, becoming in the world: an Hegelian dialectical idealism.

Not all theories of the absolute in art are so idealised. Arnheim's aesthetic theory which sees art in terms of Man's striving for order in a universe that is moving towards disorder - the theory of 'entropy' contained in the second law of thermodynamics - is less easily consigned to the idealistic (49). The forces that he identifies are physical forces, but they enter into every domain of existence (50). Gombrich has also recently stressed Man's need to order the world around him:

> Organism is active agent reaching out towards the environment, not blindly and at random, but guided by its inbuilt sense of order. (51)

Art is seen as developing through variations on the inherent laws of the organism itself. The notion has some affinities with Ernst Fischer's materialistic aesthetic, which differs, however, in setting the origins of art in Man's collective existence, in ritual and practical collective endeavour (52).

A more recent attempt to provide a materialist aesthetic is that of Peter Fuller, who argues that recognition of human biological and psychological constants provide a basis for a critical Marxist aesthetic (53). In an

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48 Collingwood, R.G., 'Outlines of a Philosophy of Art', *Essays in the Philosophy of Art*, Indiana, 1964, pp.66-7. This article was first published in 1925. Only by viewing the work of art as self-contained, and thus 'disinterestedly', can the work of the imagination be contemplated. C.f. also his *The Principles of Art*, London, 1974.

49 Arnheim, R., *Entropy and Art*, Berkley, 1971. Anrheim's theory of art differs from Collingwood's in its stress on essential union of art and social life - Modern art seeks order in a chaotic social universe. The theme of 'order', in art and the universe, is developed in a different way, emphasising the persistence of order, in *The Power of the Center*, Berkley, 1982.

50 ibid, pp.3-4.

51 Gombrich, E.H., *The Sense of Order*, London, 1979, p.4. A more interactive model is provided by John Dewey: 'Art is organism active in environment', ordering the environment and in turn being ordered: *Art as Experience*, New York, 1955, p.23.

52 Fischer, E., *The Necessity of Art*, Harmondsworth, 1978. I shall return to this theme, and Fischer's aesthetic in Ch.II.

53 Fuller's work is discussed in some detail in Ch.II. C.f. articles contained in his *Art and Psychoanalysis*, London, 1980.

article on Patrick Heron's painting, following the artist's retrospective at the Barbican, London, Fuller described the artist's recent work, referring to a painting entitled *December 4* (1983), as 'biomorphic', in which can be found the presence of an integrating force acting between observer and observed (54). Clearly there is a whole spectrum of theorisation concerned with absolute meaning, even though this term in some instances would be denied. All I have tried to do here is to establish its presence, this century, in the Modernist epoch, and to give an indication of the variety of its theorisations (55).

Absolute meaning has to be communicated. Even if absolute meaning is not theorised, some form of meaning is envisaged in the act of production and sought in the act of appreciation. Henry Moore (1898-1986) justified his shift from representational to abstract forms by reference to what I have termed 'communicative meaning'.

> My sculpture is becoming less representational, less an outward visual copy, and so what some people would call abstract; but only because I believe that in this way I can present the human psychological content of my work with the greatest directness and intensity. (56)

In this case, the message was of the nature of an expressive component, but it can equally be cognitive or purely formal. The term 'human psychological content' takes the reference for meaning beyond the sculpture itself; it does not tell us whether meaning is of an absolute and generalising kind, or a particularistic intention. For example, the artist might want to communicate an experience of fear to the audience through the work of art. The work is thus born as an embodiment of fear, which is particularistic in being the expression of a particular experience. Only if we give this experience universality does the meaning conveyed take on the form of an absolute. As the twentieth century has advanced, so the absolute has been shed as a point of reference in art. The denial of an absolute has tended to isolate the communicative element as meaningful in its own right.

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54 'Biomorphic' refers to a decorative form representing living substance. Fuller, P., 'The Innocent Eye', *Artscribe*, no.54, 1985a, pp.40-4.
55 This theme, of art possessing an aesthetic quality, signifying an absolute meaning, which gives to art a 'special' place in society, shall be returned to again and again in this thesis.
56 Moore, H., 'On Sculpture and Primitive Art', Herbert, R.L., *Modern Artists on Art*, New Jersey, 1964, pp.145-6, first pub. as 'Notes on Sculpture', *The Listener*, XVIII, 1937.

Art has come to be seen as a language that can be freely manipulated to convey a variety of diverse meanings. Political, social and religious comment always has been part of the content of art; the articulation through art of the very processes involved in production and the properties of the medium itself is a more recent project. With the erosion of absolute meaning, art has balanced uncertainly between four polar points. Art could take the subjectivist route, and convey meaning embodied in the artist's own experience; or it could take the objectivist path, towards imitation of a perceived objective reality. On another plane, art could concentrate on content to the exclusion of form, the content being the limit of meaning; or it could withdraw into form, an analysis of the medium itself, which becomes the all-important meaning. The unifying principle of an overarching absolute meaningful reality once eroded, opens art to fragmentation of style. It was the overarching principle of the absolute and universal that had contained these polar tendencies. As long as absolute meaning was sustained, there was a basis for common discourse between factions; with its loss, these forces could spiral away from the centre.

Formalism

(Meaning contained in the properties
of the medium itself)

Subjectivism _____ Objectivism

(Meaning lies in subjective
experience - depth)

(Meaning lies in objective
experience - surface)

Textualism

(Meaning lies in the message.
The emphasis, therefore, tends towards the idea)

In the 'seventies and 'eighties these fragments coexist, lying along all points from the centre, but they seem to have spiralled beyond any hope of meaning, even at the communicative level. Levi-Strauss expressed the problems confronting the art of 'Late-Modernism' in the following manner:

> The great danger threatening art seems to me to be two-fold. First, instead of being a language, it may become a pseudo-language, a caricature of language, a sham, a childish game on the theme of language, which does not succeed in achieving signification. Secondly, it may become a total language of the type of articulate language except for the material it uses, and in this case, it may in all probablity signify but it cannot at the same time be accompanied by any real aesthetic emotion. (57)

The aesthetic component is seen by Levi-Strauss to be essential to art. If it is absent, then art becomes just another, alternative, way of signification, losing its peculiar power to raise the message above the ordinary by aestheticising it. Recent Modernism has been notable for its hostility towards aesthetic theorisation, and has gone out of its way to de-aestheticise art. In so doing, it moved in the directions indicated by Levi-Strauss, towards articulate language or a caricature of language, - most often the latter.

In 1924, Ortega y Gasset, commenting on the evolution of art since the time of Giotto (1267-1337), identifies in Cézanne's (1839-1906) Cubism the essence of Modernist painting:

> From him onwards painting paints only ideas - which, indeed, are also objects, but ideal objects, imminent to the subject or intrasubjective. (58)

The painting is a vehicle for the idea. These subjective images of the mind, detached from the natural world or from an aesthetic absolute to give them meaning beyond their own subjectivity, provide the basis for the loss of all meaning in the work of art. In the Art and Language Movement (59) of the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, the 'idea' displaced the art object - the concept that gives rise to the work of art itself is held up as art. In his book, *The Painted Word*, Tom Wolfe has

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57 Claude Levi-Strauss, speaking to G. Charbonnier, recorded in Charbonnier, G., *Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss*, London, 1970, pp.122-3.

58 Ortega y Gasset, J., 'On the Artist's Viewpoint', *Velazquez, Goya and the Dehumanisation of Art*, London, 1924, p.3.

59 The Art and Language group originally consisted of Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell. From the mid-'sixties, their aim was to examine the conceptual field of art, insisting that art is grounded in concepts.

satirically traced the historical passage from the avant-garde rejection of the literary in art during the nineteenth century, the rise of the ideal of art-for-art's-sake, and its demise with art's increasing reliance on 'theory' to convey the message (60). Wolfe picks up on a statment by the critic, Hilton Kramer, that:

> ... frankly, these days without a theory to go with it, I can't *see* a painting. (61)

With this statement, says Wolfe, it dawned upon him that:

> Modern Art had become completely literary: the paintings and other works exist only to illustrate the text. (62)

The art of the 'seventies, it appeared, had become the reverse of the avant-garde's intention.

From Abstract Expressionism onwards, it is 'theory' that dominates art. Greenberg's influence is paramount in constructing theoretical space for a style to emerge - Formalism. On the surface, Greenberg's theory of art is a descriptive account of an historical process:

> The history of avant-garde painting is that of the progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium; which resistance consists chiefly in the flat picture plane's denial of efforts to 'hole through' it for realistic perspectual space. (63)

It is this process that rid art of 'literature' and purified painting, according to Greenberg, and yet this theory is itself an imposition on art. From the earliest conception of art-for-art's-sake, the potential for the denial of all meaning other than that instrinsic to the medium's own qualities was present. As art became perceptually more 'meaningless' to its public, so theory became more necessary, to the point where art documents the theory. After Conceptualism's reduction of art to the idea, the justification for this being that an art object can only record imperfectly the idea that gave it form, the documentary significance of art became paramount.

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60 Wolfe, T., *The Painted Word*, London, 1976.
61 ibid, p.6.
62 ibid, p.6.
63 Greenberg, C., 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', Franscina, F. (ed.), *Pollock and After*, London, 1985, p.43, first pub. *Partisan Review*, vol.VII, no.4, 1940, pp.296-310.

Ortega y Gasset offers an account of this progressive movement towards the art of the concept, in terms of the changing viewpoint of the artist since the Quattrocento, an 'evolution' of Western painting consisting of:

> ... a retreat from the object towards the subject, the painter. (64)

This theme is developed more fully in his essay on 'The Dehumanisation of Art' (65). The new style, he writes:

> ... tends towards the dehumanisation of art; to an avoidance of living forms; to ensuring that a work of art should be nothing but a work of art; to considering art simply as play and nothing else; to an essential irony; to an avoidance of all falsehood; and finally, towards an art that makes no spiritual or transcendental claims whatsoever. (66)

Such striving of the artist towards a dehumanised and stylised art form, Ortega y Gasset sees as both 'inevitable' and 'fruitful' (67). To remove human content is to focus on pure art form. Whereas Romanticism enhanced the human content, played on the emotions, and in doing so minimised the art aspect of the work, Modern art dehumanises its content and allows concentration on the work as art. Romanticism is seen as a democratic art, allowing human beings to identify and locate the passions portrayed in the world around them - no aesthetic attitude is called for, just an extension of everyday involvement in the world. If Romanticism is for the democratic masses, Modernism, by contrast, is an act of privilege, of 'an aristocracy of instincts' (68). This distinction, however, depicts a false dichotomy; Romanticism in some of its forms is far from democratic, and 'Modernism', if we are to accept this term for the art of the twentieth century, is not all inherently an act of privilege (69).

The analysis of Modern art presented by Ortrega y Gasset is insightful, in identifying most of those Modernist themes that were to be isolated and developed by later historians and art critics. On the theme of the 'New', he writes that, since Baudelaire (1821-67), art has moved to the

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64 Ortega y Gasset, J., op cit, p.25
65 Ortega y Gasset, J., 'The Dehumanisation of Art', *Velazquez, Goya and the Dehumanisation of Art*, London, 1924, pp.65-83.
66 ibid, p.70.
67 ibid, p.69.
68 ibid, p.66.
69 As I shall demonstrate, Modernism and Romanticism are more intricately related than Ortega y Gasset's developmental theory allows. The distinction between democratic art and élitist art runs through both art historical periods. C.f. Ch.VII.

position where:

> ... today the profile of modern art consists almost entirely of a total negation of the old. (70)

It is Futurism more than any other movement that evoked this tendency, making of it an artistic and political creed, but it has been a central force in all Modernisms. What Ortega y Gasset realised, and what many later historians have been blind to, is that in this negation of the old lies the seed of art's self-negation:

> ... ultimately, to assault the art of the past is to turn against art itself; for what else in actual fact is art, but a record of all that the artist has achieved up to the present. (71)

The art of the past soon becomes all art, for, in its completion, art stands as a record of the process that brought it into existence. Already, at its conception, it is obsolete; art can do no more than document a moment of creativity, a moment in time. Ortega y Gasset, in attempting to maintain a positive perspective on Modernism, deals with the irony of self-negation by alluding to 'farce'. If Modern art mocks art, then we should laugh with it, see the farce for what it is, and enjoy the game.

> Art has never better demonstrated its magical gift than in this mockery of itself. Because it makes the gesture of destroying itself, it continues to be art, and, by a marvellous dialectic, its negation is its concolation and its triumph. (72)

We come to love art, according to Ortega y Gasset, once we see it as farce.

> To be an artist, is not to take man as seriously as we do when we are not artists. (73)

But perhaps the final irony lies in the fact that the artist himself does not see his art as farce; he may expect his public to laugh at him, ridicule and reject his work, but it requires a faith in art's purpose to sustain artistic practice. Negation itself may have been an important

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70 ibid, p.78.
71 ibid, p.79.
72 ibid, p.80.
73 ibid, p.80.

component in the Modernist consciousness of purpose, but having achieved a point in its development where the art object has been replaced by the concept, or idea, where next? This is the position that art practice arrives at towards the close of the 'sixties, where some art does indeed appear to resemble farce and where many artists set out to entertain. - Is this not the case with the living sculptures of Gilbert and George? - It appears that art itself is not enough; the artist has become the major commodity. To some extent, within Modernism, this had always been so; it was the 'movements' of artists projecting their will into the future that determined the direction of art practice - style, as embodied in the art object, was always something to be overcome. It was in the person of the artist that the creative force was manifest.

From the 'sixties onwards, negation does not seem to be such a conscious project. There is no new 'movement', but in its place each artist seeks to present a unique perspective, to innovate in a stylistic vacuum.

> Today everybody innovates. Deliberately, methodically, (74)

writes Greenberg, his own dream of a purified art shattered by Pop Art, and only dimly re-awakened by Minimalism. For Greenberg, the history of style led to a pure art Formalism, where the medium became the object of aesthetic attention. This same process of purification for Ortega y Gasset led also to the dehumanisation of art; but it was not the medium, it was the 'concept' that he identified with this purity. In fact, the potential for art lay in both directions, each direction equally devoid of meaning and purpose, once abstracted from human concerns. As examples of dehumanised art, there is little to choose between the Formalism of Kenneth Noland, or the Conceptualism of Joseph Kosuth. An example of a work of art that is a mixture of formal and conceptual, but nonetheless dehumanised, is Carl André's *Equivalent VIII* (75). What kind of message is it, or are they - for the 'Tate Bricks' are one of a series of eight sculptures - trying to convey to the public? Here is the Tate's own account of the sculptures:

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74 Greenberg, C., 'Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties', Smith, B. (ed.), *Concerning Contemporary Art*, Oxford, 1975, p.12

75 There was something of a public outcry over the purchase of this sculpture by the Tate Gallery in 1976. I shall return to this aspect of the 'Tate Bricks' in Ch.VI.

> [The eight sculptures] were all composed of 120 fire bricks arranged in two layers in different combinations (3x20, 4x15, 5x12 and so on), which made rectangular shapes which were visually surprisingly varied but, of course, occupied exactly the same volume. Here André uses the brick as an object whose form is prescribed, to build shapes where a perceptual whole is made up of units simply laid together, and where the lowness of the shape contrasts with the upright and vertical orientation of most traditional sculpture. (76)

From the description, it is clear that the message presented in sculptural form is concerned with the physical properties of the object, with the relationship between mass and shape - alter the shape while retaining the mass, and the sculpture takes up a different physical space. This message is refined by the addition of limits imposed on the possible forms produced by working with a set number of bricks of uniform shape and mass. Hence, we arrive at eight possible sculptural forms. Now, it is true that sculptors at all times in history and in all cultures have had to have some awareness of such relationships, intuitively, if not conceptually. But it is not until the Modern period that such properties, which have always been part of the code with which the sculptor works, have been elevated to the status of the signified. What André is doing is to analyse his own artistic medium, and in this he is both confirming and advocating the 'physicalist' theory of art associated with Greenberg.

> Each art had to determine, through the operations peculiar to itself, the effects peculiar and exclusive to itself.
>
> It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. (77)

It would seem that André could, with some justice, claim to be dealing with universals. The mathematical and physical axioms with which he is working are possibly the least relativistic of concepts available to modern western man, and the fact that he uses mathematical rules to structure his work could be seen as placing him in the 'Classical' tradition - wrongly so, for the classical sculptor the axioms were not mere propertires, they embodied truth, morality, love, the very essence of life and purpose of humanity; they were presentations of absolute meaning, which embodied human concerns however abstractly conceived.

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76 *Tate Gallery Catalogue*, London, 1980.
77 Greenberg, C., 'Modernist Painting', Battock, G., *The New Art*, New York, 1973, p.68.

The question of meaning addressed by the bricks is restricted to the level of communicative meaning. The meaning is contained within the sculptural form, and does not go beyond this; it is a message concerning the nature of the code used to transmit the message, a message about the message. Its total concern with the language aspect excludes the aesthetic and any human content.

Carl André's bricks, because of their location in a gallery, offer themselves up to aesthetic contemplation and comparison with other works of art. *Equivalent VIII* claims a place within the tradition of artistic expression, but the fact that without the 'theory' we cannot understand its message - partly because of its lack of human content, but also because the aesthetic that it carries is not the common property of its audience - places it in the category of the 'document'. It is, in Tom Wolfe's terms, the 'sculptured word' (78).

This tendency towards documentation flows in part from the central position held by the art museum in the Modern period. The art museum has collected art as document, and presented the history of art through this documentation. The art gallery or museum is, thus, not a neutral environment; it is a theoretical construct, an illustration of an idea that is the history of style. Perhaps the most influential history of Modernist style is that presented by Alfred Barr, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, founded in 1929. Barr saw Modernism in terms of its impulse to abstraction, identifying two traditions that emerged from Impressionism (79): one tradition having its origins in the art of Cézanne and Seurat (1859-91), and continuing through Cubism towards geometric abstraction; the other, originating in the art of Gauguin (1848-1903), passing through Fauvism to Abstract Expressionism in the work of Kandinsky (1866-1944). The two traditions touch and overlap at times, but are nonetheless distinct. They correspond to an Appolonian and a Dionysian mode of being in the world (80), and, as such,

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78 Wolfe, T., op cit.
79 Barr, A.H., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, first pub. 1936, London, 1975.
80 The Apollonian/Dionysian distinction, as made by Nietzsche (1844-1900), *The Birth of Tragedy*, contrasts measure, order and harmony, with non-rationality and passion. He believed that all arts contained a mixture of these opposites, but that one tended to become dominant in the historical and psychological process of 'being' in the world.

have their roots much deeper in history and the human psyche. It was not a new theory of history, but, applied to the development of Modernist style, it became a guiding principle. Under this theory there was to be no room for the 'realism' that made itself felt in the 'thirties, and that provides a strong undercurrent throughout the Modern period.

Of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Hilton Kramer writes:

> ... so central has been its role in defining both standards and the scope of modern art that the museum's own activities and ideas have in themselves come to constitute a distinct chapter in the cultural history which MOMA was originally conceived to monitor, to document, to pass judgement upon, to preserve. (81)

Add to this the influence of the other museums and galleries that emerged in its wake, and it is possible to begin to see the hold of the museum over art, not least through the purchasing power it wields (82). A work of art is purchased because it is a good example of a particular style, of an individual's work at a particular time - as document.

Artists did rebel against this documentation. The Futurists wanted to burn down the museums precisely because they represented the power of tradition over the present (83). With MOMA, the museum of Modern art was born; it was no longer the past that held sway, but the present (84). However, artists realised that in consuming the present, the museum was nullifying the potential that art contained, forcing objects of art into existing categories, containing them in an aesthetic cage. Instead of artists rejecting a society that refused to accept the new, they found that they had to reject acceptance itself. A culture that consumed the new could not be shocked or shaken, but maybe it could be avoided. The sculptor, Walter de Mario, in an avowed attempt to avoid the orthodoxy of museum and gallery art, sunk a hole 1km deep and inserted a 1km long

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81 Kramer, H., 'MOMA: Touchstone of Taste', *Dialogue*, vol.69, no.3, 1985, pp.34-47.
82 The role of private museums and galleries, as well as that of art magazines, is discussed in Nairne, S., *State of the Art: Ideas and Images in the 1980's*, London, 1987, pp.59-87. These are the creators of economic value and fashion in art. Artists have to show their work, gain access to the art institutions in order to sell, to gain recognition.
83 Futurism was an Italian movement, founded by Marinetti, a poet, in 1909. It glorified the machine and power, wanting to turn these forces of progress to the destruction of the past and the institutions that kept it alive. For Marinetti's 1909 Manifesto and later Futurist texts, c.f. Apollonio, U. (ed.), *Futurist Manifestos*, London, 1973.
84 Modern art became much more collectable and valuable as large public and private institutions entered the market for art.

brass rod, covering the top with a metal plate - a work he entitled *Vertical Kilometer* (1977). Not only was this work not to be displayed in a museum, it was not to be seen at all. If it was meant as an act of avoidance, it was futile, for it did no more than intensify the documentary aspect of the work - in fact, the work is almost pure document: it asks to be viewed as an act of rejection, as a statement. And, of course, it is documented in books, articles, pictures. Nor can it be seen as the action of an 'outsider', when we consider the cost of over £150,000 incurred in the work's construction (85).

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85 This work was paid for by the Dia Foundation, New York, a trust acting as a tax loss for the de Menils, a Texas oil family. As Robert Hughes points out, the head of the Dia Foundation was a German art dealer, Fredrich, who was also Walter de Mario's agent. The publicity from the *Vertical Kilometer* was certain to increase the demand for de Mario's works. C.f. Hughes, R., op cit, 1979, p.43.

POINTS ON A COMPASS

Earlier in this chapter, I presented a directional model representing stylistic tendencies moving outwards from a central locus of meaningfulness. The divorce between these points on a compass and their centre has been taking place throughout the Modernist period. With only the occasional glance back to the centre, Modern art has striven for landmarks on the horizon - the new, a pure art, political and social reform, negation as an end in itself, abstraction, self-realisation, involvement, detachment. In the 'seventies, the landmarks begin to appear as the tail of a rainbow, and when the artist looks round he no longer finds the centre. The certainty of purpose, the faith in art as a meaningful reality, with which Modernism set out, has been eroded.

Cézanne is often cited as the source and inspiration for later Modernist trends, and, even if we qualify the authority given to his work by reference to its social and historical context, the significant advances made by the other artists who have become known as 'Post-Impressionists' (86), and the debt owed to Impressionism, his achievements still loom large. More that any other artist of the Modernist period, Cézanne managed to capture in his painting the possibilities of Modernism, giving balance and harmony to the points of the compass within an aesthetic discourse of the sensual (87). For Cézanne, formal and contextual aspects within the painting were not antagonistic; he sought a delineation of form as it impressed itself on his senses in interaction with the landscape (88), but he also recognised that form was experienced through an expressive involvement in the world (89). Form was the meeting point of objective surface appearance and subjective depths. He recognised the complex dialectic at work as the artist both sought and imposed form. Form itself was never a completely abstract quality; it arose out of the

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86 Post-Impressioinism is a term first used by Roger Fry in 1910, organising the London exhibition, 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists'.

87 Sociology is more at ease investigating rational phenomena; the sensual element in aesthetic experience tends to be overlooked. Sociology's inherent project of demystification fails to penetrate to the sensual aesthetic level of art experience. Balfe, J.E. has tried to overcome this limitation in an analysis of the subline as a category of experience, by locating it in social experience: 'Sociology and the Subline', *New Literary History*, vol.XVI, no.2, 1985, pp.237-249.

88 It is for his landscapes, undertaken in the region of Aix-en-Provence, that Cézanne is best known.

89 This expressive component is brought out clearly in *The Three Skulls*, 1900-4, Art Institute of Chicago.

context - the meeting-point of Man and nature. Cézanne's painting could neither be imitation of, nor abstraction from, the landscape - it was the experience of landscape. As such, his art was conscious of structure and process, of persistence and change, as mediated through the experiencing being. To capture this reality on canvas was the sole object of his art.

> He travelled towards reality along the traditional road of European painting. It was in what he saw that he discovered a sublime architecture haunted by the Universal which informs every Particular. He pushed further and further towards a complete revelation of the significance of form, but he needed something concrete as a point of departure. It was because Cézanne could come to reality only through what he saw that he never invented purely abstract forms. Few great artists have depended more on the model. Every picture carried him a little further towards his goal - complete expression; and because it was not the making of pictures but the expression of his sense of the significance of form that he cared about, he lost interest in his work so soon as he had made it express as much as he had grasped. (90)

This passage of Clive Bell's captures the totality of the experience that Cézanne sought - 'the expression of his sense of significance of form'. His paintings of landscape, of still-life, and his portraits, give the viewer a sense of involvement, an identification with the work. One is not viewing an empirical reality of objective forms, but an equivalent (91) and human dialectical construct. Cézanne himself writes:

> To achieve progress nature alone counts, and the eye is trained through contact with her. It becomes concentric by looking and working. I mean to say that in an orange, an apple, a bowl, a head, there is a culminating point; and that point is always - in spite of the tremendous effect of light and shade and colourful sensations - the closest to the eye; the edges of the objects recede to a centre on our horizons. (92)

Cézanne's horizons are human horizons. When he writes these often-quoted words:

> ... treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone,... (93)

he is neither identifying Classical ideals in nature nor calling for a replacement of nature by an abstract universe. He is interpreting the human experience of nature as form.

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90 Bell, C., 'The Debt to Cézanne', *Art*, first pub. 1914, London, 1931.
91 Richard Shane has argued that Cézanne's idea in painting was to produce, 'an equivalent rather than an empirical representation': *The Post-Impressionists*, London, 1980, p.108.
92 Cézanne's letter to Emile Bernard, Aix, July 25th, 1904, reproduced in Goldwater, R. and Traves, M. (eds.), *Artists on Art: From the 14th to the 20th Century*, London, 1976, p.364.
93 Letter to Emile Bernard, Aix, April 15th, 1904, ibid, p.363.

How does the art of the 'seventies and 'eighties compare with Cézanne's Modernism? The points of the compass are still there, but they are not contained; they are reaching out to extremes, no longer confident in being art, let alone having a purpose.

Conceptualism and Minimalism continued into the 'seventies, but their heyday was the late 'sixties. In 1963, Robert Morris had made his *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal* (94) in connection with a Minimalist construction entitled 'Litanies'. By the late 'sixties, the word, in fact many different presentations of the word, was an object in its own right. In 1969-70, an exhibition of 'Concept Art' toured the major European cities. Also in 1969, the journal, *Art Language*, began publication in England (95). There was no limit to the claims made by the exponents of Art Language - Joseph Kosuth asserted that it was a new philosophy, a replacement for religion (96). Most of its presentations, however, were in the form of repetitions of words, definitions of concepts, and esoteric pseudo-philosophical statements that lacked signification (97). Art Language, as well as making the concept the focus of attention, consciously removed the need for the critic - at least in theory; in practice, the public are left in a greater state of confusion, for the presentations of Conceptual art, and this includes Minimal art, are only rarely self-explanatory. 'Pier and Ocean' was an exhibition held at the Hayward Gallery, London, May-June 1980. Barry Barker's introduction to the exhibition claimed for the art presented a new direction:

> 1968 marks an important turning point when many artists responded to conditions at that time in such a way that a succession of changes took place which radically altered classical conceptions of art. (98)

In fact, no such turning point had occurred; instead the Conceptual and Minimal art of the 'sixties spilled over into the next decade, taking the

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94 The statement read: 'The undersigned, Robert Morris, being the maker of the metal construction entitled Litanies, described in the annexed Exhibition A, hereby withdraws from said construction all aesthetic quality and content and declares that from the date hereof, said construction has no such quality and content.'

95 *Art Language*, edited by Tony Atkinson and Michael Baldwin.

96 Kosuth, J., 'Art Language', *Art International*, Oct-Nov, 1969.

97 An example of this is Kosuth's enlargements of dictionary definitions, such as the word, 'Nothing', displayed at Gallery 669, Los Angeles, in 1966.

98 Hayward Gallery, *Pier and Ocean: Construction in the Art of the 'Seventies*, London, 1980, p.1. (Exhibition 8-22 May).

'de-aestheticisation' (99) of art beyond the confines of the traditional arena of the museum and gallery. The exhibitions were organised under the heading 'Space', 'Chance System Endlessness' and 'Gravity'. Some of the work in the exhibitions attempted to define space by creating 'Environments' (100). Other works were notable by their replacement by a document of the event - photograph and description - for example, the *Spiral Jetty* of Robert Smithson, constructed in Utah, USA (101). The works described under the heading of 'Chance System Endlessness' tended to impose their own possibilities by conformity to mathematical formulae (102), or rules that are constantly repeated (103). In the 'Gravity' section, could be found the *Horizontal Sculptures* of Carl André. None of this work could truly be claimed as a radical shift of perspective, but it does demonstrate the extent to which art in one area of practice had come to be dictated to by the concept., The concept here is the 'message to be conveyed', which makes it a 'textual' component.

Textualism is one point of the compass that in the 'seventies reaches to extremes. The exhibits in 'Pier and Ocean' were conceptual, but they introduced other textual components - the laws of physics and mathematics, relationships in space, 'Earthworks', which were present as a record only, because by their nature they tend to be too vast and immovable, attempt to relay messages about the environment, as well as being consciously 'de-aesthetic' and 'anti-museum'. In a recent issue of *Art Journal* devoted to 'Earthworks', the editor, Robert Hobbs (104), claims for this art form:

> ... [a] new epistemological assumption about the nature of art. (105)

He states:

> Earthworks present a relatively recent approach to the art object, an approach that denies the traditionally conceived work of art its customary autonomy

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99 A term used by Harold Rosenberg in an article of that name, 'De-Aestheticisation', Battcock, G., op cit, pp.178-87, first pub. *The New Yorker*, Jan 24th, 1970.
100 The work of Sandbeck and Turttle.
101 This work is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. There are similarities between Smithson's work and that of the English artist, Richard Long, who also works with the 'experience of environments' and presents his work as photographic documentation.
102 The work of Maro Merz.
103 The work of Donald Judd.
104 Hobbs is author of a book on Robert Smithson and and organised a recent exhibition of Smithson's work which toured Europe. For Smithson's views on art, c.f. Holt, N. (ed.), *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, New York, 1979.
105 Hobbs, R., 'Earthworks: Past and Present', *Art Journal*, Fall, 1982, p.129.

> because it views art more as interactive systems than as isolated examples, more as historical artefacts than as icons, and more in the light of contextualism than as formalism. (106)

We still see the aesthetics of negation at work in this statement, still the desire for the 'New', and clearly an advocacy of textualism and art as documentation.

In the 'Earthworks' edition of *Art Journal*, Hobbs has collected together articles to give his 'new aesthetic' substance. The textualism that he advocates is in direct opposition to formalism, with its tendency to dismiss the contextual, both its influence on the reading of the work as aesthetic object, and as it informs the construction of the work - the notion of pure form is anathema. Textualism gives emphasis to, indeed creates, the work of art, out of the relatedness of art and environment, as interactive process. Thus, historical, social, political, ecological, relatedness is acknowledged as the basis of meaning. This new epistemology, Hobbs asserts, has links with Marxism and semiology in its:

> ... emphasis on the matrix in which art is made. (107)

Textualism opens up an unlimited artistic space - anything can be studied textually. One article deals with 'The Semiotics of Andean Terracing' (108), and analyses the 'step' symbolism in Andean culture, from the rise of stepped terraces for cultivation to the horizontal and vertical boundaries that structure the consciousness of the Andean peoples. A duality is posited between horizontal and vertical space, that clearly shows the influence of structural anthropology. This anthropological influence is also present in an article entitled, 'West African Earthworks':

> In attempting to trace the continuum in which symmetrics (and asymmetrics) of an anthropomorphic space and the human body interface with topological space through the earthworks medium, we have presumed, along with many others, that man's existence is dependent upon the establishment of meaningful, coherent, environmental images of space. (109)

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106 ibid. p.192.
107 ibid. p.192. There is indeed a common theme of de-aestheticisation to be found in Marxist and semiotic texts. C.f. Ch.II.
108 Nickal, C., 'The Semiotics of Andean Terracing', *Art Journal*, Fall, 1982, pp.200-3. The article attempts to demonstrate the conceptual/symbolic spatial orientation that pervades geography, landworks, pottery, weaving, rituals and cosmology.
109 Prussin, L., 'West African Earthworks', ibid. p.209.

In this art anthropological perspective Man re-enters the art form as a collective being; consciousness is constitutive in interaction with the environment. However, it is a big leap from studies of collective consciousness in traditional communities to a constitutive environmental activity by a single artist in the contemporary world. For meaning to arise out of a modern Earthwork there would need to be collective or universal categories of meaning in its symbolism: a shared symbolism - this is what art has sought throughout the Modern period. Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), made of stone, constructed on the Great Salt Lake, Utah, extending from the shore into the lake to form a spiral, is an example of a modern Earthwork. Another example is Walter de Mario's *Mile Long Drawing* (1968), consisting of two parallel chalk lines, twelve feet apart, extending for one mile in the Mojare Desert, California. James Pierce has undertaken a number of Earthworks at Pratt Farm, Clinton, Maine, including *Stone Ship* (1975), *Altar* (1977), and *Serpent* (1979). Unlike the 'art' in the anthropological studies discussed above, these Earthworks, as with all modern Earthworks, never have and never will provide a collective human environment. If they embody a collective or human species symbolism, it is so because the artist cannot himself step outside his own culture - but to this extent all activities are symbolic. It is our culture that has lost the means to interpret, as this symbolism has become more complex and fragmental. In the final analysis, Earthworks are essentially conceptual and dehumanised. The context itself is a theoretical construct of the artist, who often grasps at traditional symbols such as the altar, places himself in archaic settings such as deserts or mountains where he can create modern monuments. Richard Long travelled to Peru to walk back and forth along a plotted line until he had worn a path, to return home with a map and photograph as document (110).

Compared to textualist art, formalism has kept a low profile since the early 'sixties. Formalist art, although it depends upon a theorised ontology, speaks for itself through its formal arrangements. Patrick Heron, after writing about the distorting effect of words used to explain painting, continues:

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110 'Walking a Line in Peru', 1972, recorded by photographs. The experience can only be documented for the art audience, for whom the document has to stand as art, but this provides little sense of the experience of the environment.

> Painting's role in civilisation is that of man's laboratory for the disinterested exploration of visual appearances as such, an exploration carried out uninhibited by any practical demands whatsoever. The painter is and always has been in search of one thing only; and that is, a new abstract configuration, a new but purely formal significance, a new pattern emerging out of the very mechanics of physical vision itself, a new shape in the organisation of colour. (111)

Heron's painting developed out of the Abstract Expressionism of the 'fifties, clearly influenced by Greenberg's theory. In a series of paintings throughout the 'sixties he moved progressively towards a more clearly defined colour formalism, the paintings becoming more organic - *Scarlet Verticals* (1957), *Yellow and Reds with Violet Edge* (1965), *Dark Red, Scarlet and Venetian* (1972). Recently, the outline of the formal components has become blurred, giving a chiascuro effect. It is this effect that Fuller has described as 'biomorphic' (112), in the painting *December 4* (1983).

Two artists who showed work at the 217th Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy (1985), Victor Passmore and John Hoyland, can also be classified as formalist. John Hoyland's painting, *Moving On* (1984), contains some of the 'unfinished' quality of Abstract Expressionism. The concern is less with pure colour than with contrast and mass. Passmore's painting, *Burning Water or Harmony of the Natural World*, can fairly be described as biomorphic and organic; blocks of colour and vertical division contrast with natural rounded forms. These defined outlines are themselves placed against a background where colours drain into one another. The effect is to contain the dialectic of form within the frame of the painting. Unlike in the painting of Cézanne, there is no external reference in the painting of John Hoyland. But Passmore's forms can be seen to indicate the world outside the picture frame, although they do not arise, as did Cézanne's, from the analysis of nature itself. They are primarily abstract, where Cézanne's are natural forms enhanced.

Formalism contains an aesthetic of art-for-art's-sake (113). As such, all

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111 Heron, P., 'The Shape of Colour', Smith, B., op cit, pp.154-80. First given as Power Lecture, Sydney University, 1974.
112 Fuller, P., op cit, 1985a.
113 'Art-for-art's-sake' refers to the notion that art is self-sufficient, that it contains its own means and ends. This view of art developed in an extreme form in the nineteenth century, when this 'aestheticism' was advocated first in France by critics such as Théophile Gautier, and towards the end of the century in England by Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde.

abstract works that restrict the aesthetic to an interaction between the art object and the disinterested viewer are formalist. In the 'seventies, some formalist art sought to capture not harmony, but confusion. Bridget Riley has continued to produce her Optical art, paintings in which form is interactive. Frank Stella has produced a series of painted sculptures, collages of shape that have little to do with the 'flatness' advocated by Greenberg, that possess no 'frame', but are nonetheless formalist in intent. These have come to be referred to as 'raucous tropicana - glitter structures'. In these works, formalism approaches the decorative, as in the 'pattern painting' of Mirium Shapiro.

Mirium Shapiro's *Garden of the Night* (1979), is a fabric collage with acrylic on paper, having a similarity to a traditional patchwork quilt. In sharp contrast to this 'pattern painting' formalism is 'minimal painting', which has continued to be produced, by artists like Robert Marigold and Peter Joseph, throughout the 'seventies.

The point of the compass to which I have given the name 'objectivism', is defined by a concern with the reproduction of the objective world of phenomena - as it really is and not necessarily solely the imitation of the world of appearance. It differs from formalism in having its referent in the world. This art ranges from the empirical recording of sense impressions to the selective depiction of the 'real'. It is concerned with perception and expression. Gustave Courbet wrote in an open letter to a group of perspective students in 1861:

> ... painting is an essentially concrete art, and can consist only of the representation of things both real and existing. It is an altogether physical language, which, for its words, makes use of all visible objects. An abstract object, invisible or non-existent, does not belong to the domain of painting. (114)

At one extreme of objectivism is Naturalism, which seeks to reproduce nature as it is given to the eye. As reality is sometimes seen as distorted by the limitation of the human and technical instruments used

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114 An open letter to a group of students, reproduced in Goldwater, R. and Traves, M. (eds.), op cit, p.296. For further discussion of Courbet's Realism, c.f. Ch. VI.

to view it, or by the distorting effects of ideas and ideologies, that objective reality is often given the name 'real' to distinguish it from appearances. Hence, Realism is also a form of objectivism (115).

In the 'sixties, it was Pop Art that represented this tendency. Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Munroe* (1962) screenprint, Claus Oldenberg's *Icebag* (1970), took objects from the world of popular culture and everyday experience, and made them objects of artistic attention. There was an association with Dada and, thus, Conceptualism in the presentation of these subjects for consideration as art, but I believe the dominant strain was objectivist - an attempt to reproduce mass culture as reality through art (116).

Tom Wesselman's *Great American Nude* (late 1960's), a series of paintings that are highly selective of content, takes a look at woman through the eyes of the 'sixties male. To quote Lucie-Smith:

> The girls themselves are reduced to what is most erogenous - to eyes, nipples, patches of pubic hair. (117)

This is the reality, the impressions received, the paintings are telling us. The same message comes from the comic strip paintings of Roy Lichtenstein. As far removed as these are from the 'natural' order, they form part of the symbolic order through which we view the world of our everyday experiences. Lichtenstein's paintings are Realist (118). Lichtenstein's own theorising about his work is contradictory, oscillating between stressing conceptual elements and discussion of formal arrangements - but he is more to the point when he says about the relationship between his art and society:

> I think it merely portrays it. (119)

and:

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115 There is a sense in which all art has a claim to 'realism'. All art claims to access a reality, though reality is conceived of in many different ways. The painter of the forms of the imagination lays claim to a reality undistorted by rational-practical existence.
116 On Pop Art, c.f. Russell, J. and Gablik, S., *Pop Art Redefined*, London, 1969, which contains a range of statements by critics and artists.
117 Lucie-Smith, E., *Art Today*, Oxford, 1977, p.222.
118 Rosenblum, R., 'Roy Lichtenstein and the Realist Revolt', Coplan, J. (ed.), *Roy Lichtenstein*, London, 1973, pp.115-136.
119 Soloman, A., 'Conversation with Lichtenstein', ibid. p.67.

> It doesn't look like a painting of something, it looks like the thing itself. (120)

In modern industrial society, the real is the commercial image.

Superrealist art also takes modern life as its reference, looking at it through the lens of a camera. The camera is seen as possessing an 'impartial eye' (121). Some artists work with the photograph, reproducing its every detail and lustre, painting in oil on a large canvas. The subjects are taken from everyday life.

> One of the delightful things I find about working from photographs... you really get a chance to see reality in all its awkwardness and all its randomness. (122)

And yet, the finished work of art tends to be too 'clean', to have possessed the glossiness of the photograph but to have lost the dirt and dullness that is to be found in all real-life situations. Tom Blackwell's paintings of motorbikes and car engines emphasise the light reflecting from polished surfaces , of paint, glass and chrome (123). Another example of a 'photo-realist' is Ralph Goings, whose oil painting, *Still-Life with Sugars* (1978), is an arrangement of sugar packets in a stand, a ketchup bottle, salt and pepper, and ashtray on a table top. Such an arrangement could be photographed in any number of cafés, although questionably in such pristine condition. For most Superrealists, the photograph is a point of departure, to be analysed and reproduced in paint, giving a basis for more 'painterly' concerns. This was certainly the case for Malcolm Morley, who was painting in this style in the early 'sixties, but who has gradually evolved a greater concern for expressive and formal content (124).

Superrealism has also reached out from the photograph into the three-dimensional field. For those sculptors who have adopted the objectives of Photorealism, it has been the plaster-cast that has helped serve the

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120 Coplan, J., 'An Interview with Roy Lichtenstein', ibid, p.55.
121 C.f. Lindey, C., *Superrealist Painting and Sculpture*, London, 1980, esp. pp.103-25.
122 Ralph Goings, 1972, quoted in ibid, p.106.
123 E.g. Tom Blackwell's *34 Ford Tudor Sedan (Customised Chrysler Engine)*, 1971.
124 Malcolm Morley's reproductions, e.g. *Steamships*, 1966, which set out to explore the relationship between painting and photography, what was necessary for oil to reproduce the photographic image. But in 1970, he announced a change of course towards a more expressive form of painting, by painting a red cross on top of a Photorealist reproduction of a horse race in South Africa, *Race Track*, 1970, thus making a political as well as expressive gesture.

purpose of objectivity and detachment. Duane Hanson is perhaps one of the best-known exponents of this style, producing figures from polyester resin and fibreglass. These figures have recently been of Mr. and Mrs. Average, middle-class Americans, life-size, dressed and made-up so that they would easily blend into a crowd (125). This figurative work, however, tends to take on an expressive or surrealist quality (126); even the most lifelike emit a sense of the surreal once the observer knows that the figure is not 'real'. It is the same quality of experience felt when confronting the frozen images at Madame Tussaud's. Only when the figures reproduce the comic, as in the case of the group of sculptures entitled *Portraits of Max Wall*, by Nicholas Munro (127), does one feel at ease. Recognising this subjective component, artists have tended to use this to its full, and have thus moved away from the objectivist mode. Hanson has kept very close to the natural form, but selecting his subject in order to make social comment, allowing the sculptures to comment through the representations of the empirically given.

> The subject that I like best deals with the familiar lower and middle-class American type of today. To me, the resignation, emptiness and loneliness of their existence, captures the true reality of life for these people... I want to achieve a certain tough realism which speaks of the fascinating, idiosyncracies of our time. (128)

The photorealist tendency in art seems to challenge the traditional aesthetic by the illumination of the artist's interpretive function. Impressionists, like Monet (1840-1926), analysed the experience of their senses in order to reproduce reality as it was, to capture its very essence through the study of the play of light and movement. It was imperative that the artist capture the experience of nature as it occurred, as an interplay between the objective world and the senses. Photorealism appears cold and detached by contrast. Yet the intention is similar. The photograph provides an instant record of an event, giving the artist, as the Photorealist sees it, an advantage of an objective perspective. The artist can then work with the photograph, which is no

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125 E.g., *Couple with Shopping Bags*, 1976, or *Woman Reading a Paperback*, 1978, in the O.K. Harris Gallery, New York.
126 Ed Kienholz created an environment for figures, *The Beanery*, a scaled-down model with full-size figures. The heads of the figures are clocks all stopped at 10.10, with only the owner with his own head; otherwise everything is an exact replica of the actual 'Beanery'.
127 These were exhibited at the Felicity Samuel Gallery, London, 1978.
128 Duane Hudson, reported in Lindey, C., op cit, p.133.

longer subject to transformation but truly represents a moment in time, to produce a painting of 'reality'. One may ask, why bother to paint what is already given in the photograph?

At the opposite pole to objectivism is subjectivism. Subjectivism is concerned with the depiction of inner states of being - the emotional experience of the artist, subject and audience. The development of subjectivist art in the modern period is usually associated with the influence of Gauguin and Van Gogh, the development of Fauvism in France, and Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter (129) in Germany. In fact, the subjectivist tradition in Modern art goes back further, through Expressionism to the Romantic painting of Casper David Friedrich (130).

In 1985, there was an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, showing a collection of 'German Art in the 20th Century' (131). The organisers of the exhibition presented the work on display to demonstrate a continuity of a tradition, from the 'primitive' paintings of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (132), and Karl Schmidt-Rotthulf (133), to the colour symbolism of Kandinsky (134) and Franz Marc (135), and on to the social commentary of George Grosz (136), and Max Beckman (137), representing the years of depression, decadence and the shadow of Fascism. After the exodus of Modernist artists from Germany in the 'thirties, the sponsorship of a 'Social Realism' in the place of what was officially viewed as decadent art, broke the trend of expressionist continuity. There is no official German art from 1934 to the end of the war shown in the exhibition, because this is seen as an imposition of a style that is

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129 Fauvism, Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter shared a desire to return to a primitive language of symbols. By adopting primitive forms and elemental colours, the artists sought to reach beyond individual subjectivity to a collective spirituality. A recurring theme is the dance, in which the harmony of the human spirit with the rhythms of nature accomplishes a primordial wholeness. But it is an expressive theory of colour symbolism that most unites these groups.

130 This continuity of a tradition has been traced by Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition*, London, 1975. C.f. discussion in Ch.VI.

131 German Art in the Twentieth Century, Royal Academy of Arts, London, Oct.11th-Dec.22nd, 1985.

132 E.g., *Frenzy with Bow and Arrow*, 1909-11.

133 E.g., *Three Nudes - Dune Picture from Nidden*, 1913.

134 E.g., *Fugue*, 1914.

135 E.g., *Mouse in Landscape*, 1910.

136 E.g., *Pillars of Society*, 1926.

137 E.g., *Birds Melt*, 1938.

not characteristically German (138). Nor, after the end of the war, is the influence of American art viewed as anything but a distortion of tradition. There is little space given to Pop Art, for example, or even Abstract Expressionism (139). I mention this because it seems that in this selection of expressionistic art, not only were the organisers pointing to Expressionism as a manifestation of the free Germanic 'zeitguest', they were also advocating Expressionist art as the art of the present. This can be better understood when we consider that the organisers of this exhibition were the same ones who put together another recent exhibition at the Royal Academy, entitled 'A New Spirit in Painting' (140), some contemporary artists finding a place in both exhibitions. It is these second generation painters who provide the continuity with the past that the exhibition attempts to demonstrate.

The second generation artists whom I will call 'subjectivist', include Penck, whose art uses aboriginal and child imagery, being full of symbolism, perhaps too dense to admit interpretation. His titles lead one to believe that possibly he is playing a game with the audience, eg. *Metaphysical Passage through a Zebra, 1975* (141). Hodicke, another contemporary subjectivist, makes use of the thick black outlining that is associated with early Expressionists such as Mueller and Marc. In Hodicke's recent works, buildings are portrayed in a menacing inhospitable Kafkaesque manner, symbolising the oppression of the state in the East (142). Lupertz maintains the use of black outlining, producing motifs of the symbols of war, pertinent to the German past, symbols of death and destruction (143). Boselitz's painting is also of a world turned upside down. Predominantly figurative, his paintings are of souls in torment, reminiscent of the paintings of Munch, but the colour is

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138 The organisers tended to equate Expressionism with a free democratic art; in fact, this is not a point of view easily maintained. C.f. Peter Fuller's comments in 'Art and Anti-Art', *New Society*, Nov.15th, 1985b. Also c.f. discussion in Ch. VII of this thesis.

139 These styles are viewed as the result of external factors, American dominance in the arts, and German culture generally after World War II.

140 This exhibition was proclaimed as heralding a new movement, or turning-point, in the art of the 'eighties - something critics had been seeking for a decade. Waldemar Januszezak, art critic for *The Guardian*, wrote of, 'the furious burst of energy surging through the artistic avant-garde': 'A Renewed Spirit in Painting', *The Guardian*, Oct.21st, 1981, p.15. In 1985, John Russell Taylor, writing in *The Times*, was still discerning, 'a characteristic fusion of apparently disparate elements in the art of the last few years.... a distinctive look of the 'eighties is actually emerging': 'Distinctive Look Emerging from the Turmoil', *The Times*, Sept.10th, 1985. Critics are still looking!

141 At the Stadt Aachen, Neue Galerie. Penck claims to be developing a language of abstract structures. C.f. Penck, A.R., interview by Schlieker, A., *Artscribe*, no.43, 1983, p.32.

142 E.g., *Ministry of War*, 1977.

143 E.g., *Apocalypse (Triptych)*, 1972.

more penetrating and the brushstrokes wilder, and the figures are quite literally upside down (144). Bernd Koberling's paintings take subjectivism one stage further towards abstraction: the brushstrokes and splashes of paint break down the solid outline, the figure and the background merge (145). Most of these works, and those of the other comtemporary artists included, are heavy with social and psychological comment, but their prime concern is with the manipulation of subjective content.

Reviewing this exhibition of German art, Peter Fuller has called the work of these second generation artists:

> ... vapid and slovenly outpourings. (146)

His basis for this comment is their lack of artistic discipline. When Expressionism was thriving in a pre-war Germany, it was part of an artistic climate that included the 'classicists' of the Academy; he argues, these classicists came to the fore with the prohibition of Expressionistic Art in the 1930's, but with the end of the war the Academy was broken, and its tradition lost. The new Expressionists lack the classical backcloth, with its restraints and its discipline. This, I think, is true, but it is a situation not restricted to German art.

What does seem to be important concerning this exhibition is its very presence in the context of a pluralism, that has raised anew the question, 'What is art?' Wolfgang Max Faust has argued that the German exhibition presents clearly three theses on German art (147). Firstly, German art becomes important when it links thematic references to content and form. Faust sees in the recent works the theme or question:

> Why pictures.... why art at all? (148)

The second thesis is that it is the search for personal and national identity that determines the direction of art in Germany. Thirdly,

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144 *Supper in Dresden*, 1983.
145 E.g., *Passage of the Whale*, 1984-5.
146 Fuller, P., op cit, 1985b, p.294.
147 Faust, W.M., 'Notes on German Art in the 20th Century', *Artscribe*, no.54, 1985, pp.20-5.
148 ibid. p.21.

German art formulates a specific position within Modernism. German art:

> ... confuses the concept of autonomy, (149)

of art-for-art's-sake, and it attempts:

> ... to find an existential necessity for art, which corresponds to the question of identity. (150)

At this historical conjuncture, German art with its own national purpose finds that it offers itself as an international style. The crisis that it identifies and with which it grapples is no longer a purely national one, but an international crisis.

> The question of identity and the consciousness of crisis, are to be linked with the question of art in general. (151)

Subjectivism is viewed as an art form that retains its basis in the human condition. It does not deny completely the aesthetic universality of the image, in the way that Conceptual art does. In a climate of artistic uncertainty, it offers both a link with the past, and a place for the artist and art in the present. In the past decade subjectivist art forms have been revived, after their subordination to Formalist art, Conceptual art and objectivist art forms in the 'sixties.

> The fear of losing touch with the source of creativity, with the inner world which has the power to transform and to give meaning to disparate experiences, is a spectre which lurks in the mind of most artists. (152)

A number of commentators on the arts have perceived an Expressionist art revival. As Caroline Collier notes in the article from which the above quotation is taken, some artists have turned once again to look at the subconscious impulses of the human mind. In works that start from the figurative, but through distortion and symbolism, artists like June Redfern and Paul Richards have evoked a (questionably) new Expressionism (153).

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149 ibid. p.24.
150 ibid. p.24.
151 ibid. p.25.
152 Collier, C., 'Five Painters and the Irrational', *Artscribe*, no.53, 1985, pp.21-5; the five painters being June Redfern, Adrian Viszniewski, Mario Rossi, Paul Richards and Ingrid Kerma.
153 In Richard's *Hocus Pocus*, 1985, and Redfern's *How She Met Herself*, 1985 - It seems to be to an Expressionist revival that a number of art critics are directing their gaze, towards a [contd.]

From amongst groups of artists who have abandonned painting as an outmoded form, as many did in the late 'sixties, expressive content has not been entirely abandonned. Happenings and Performance art, which are often treated as conceptual, rely heavily on expressive content (154). Joseph Beuys' art is a mixture of sculpture and performance. Although he uses 'minimal' techniques (155), the quest is for deeper spiritual realities, often juxtaposed against a deadening social and political moment. In Beuys, the avant-garde lives on; he is one of the few contemporary artists who can still command an audience to which he can pronounce as 'priest'. In his art and public life he never ceases to play the part of the artist: his dress, his actions and speech. He presents the image of the archetypal artist, not quite in control of his own being - controlled, if you would, by art itself. Expressive content, in the sense of art viewed as an outpouring that takes control of the individual as artist, is to be found in the persona projected by all artists, but they become less believable if expressive content is found to be lacking in the work of art itself (156), or if that content proves to be purely subjective meaning.

The Performance arts that have proliferated in the 'seventies feed on different referents, but primarily conceptual, and expressive. They tend to be statements or to evoke emotional responses, or both. Performance centres art on the artist; the artist becomes the object, which is defined in terms of creative involvement. The audience is invited in at the moment of creativity.

> The Performance artist wishes people to see and feel what occurs during the course of artistic creation, rather than retrospectively view the process of reification or gaze in artificial surroundings at the end product. (157)

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more clearly human content. C.f. note 140. Peter Fuller sees this as the way out of art's 'decadence', and he too places hope in the 'new spirit in painting', emphasising feeling and traditional materials, but deplores the lack of craft skills and failure to enter communal life. C.f. Fuller, P., 'A Shared Symbolic Order', *Aspects*, no.22, Spring, 1983.

154 For a review of Happenings and Performance art, c.f. Henri, A., *Environments and Happenings*, London, 1974.

155 'Minimalism' is a term applied to works of art with 'minimal art content': Wollheim, R., 'Minimal Art', Battcock, G. (ed.), *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York, 1968 - which has an excellent collection of writings on Minimalism. Art works can be minimal in content and structure or in working; thus, Duchamp's 'readymades' may be considered Minimal art.

156 That Conceptual art tends towards the irrational in its impossibly complicated and condensed pseudo-language must be seen as, in part, due to the requirement to maintain an artistic persona.

157 Adams, H., 'Against a Definitive Statement on British Performance Art', *Studio International*, vol.129, no.982, 1976, p.7.

There are, in fact, different degrees and types of involvement called forth. Hermann Nitsch's performance of *48th Action* (158) involves the public ritual disembowelling of several slaughtered lambs, and the pouring of buckets of innards and blood onto a nude man and woman, culminating in the mock crucifixion of the two (159) - a practice intended to shock or perversely excite. Attempting to reach a different audience, the performers Marty St. James and Ann Wilson act out outlines inspired by popular fiction; one performance entitled *Perfect Moments* (1982), gained its inspiration from Mills and Boon romantic novels. Their expressed purpose is to provide an art form that will be experienced by ordinary people. This emphasis on providing an experience, rather than on cognition, implies that a sensual or emotive involvement is called for, and this tends to be the case in most Performance art. Some Performances taking place in a public arena, a street or shop, may moderately shock, but are more likely to gain a response that involves a questioning of the situation. In Allan Kaprow's happening, *Calling* (1965), he wrapped performers in sheets in a city street, calling on a telephone, and in the country, hung people upside down, undressed, in woods, calling to each other (160). There is an association with Dada and Surrealism in these acts, but also, on the cognitive level, with ethnomethodology.

Textualism, formalism, objectivism and subjectivism are categories of artistic experience. In Cézanne's paintings and consciousness, they are parts of a whole, delineating the relationship between the artist, the work of art and the aesthetic object. Neither humanity nor nature is sacrificed to these categories; instead, they are fixed as component parts in a complex relationship, a dialectical interplay, at the centre of which is the experiencing being, the artist. The artist is compelled to explore reality through these categories because he has no other means. Artists throughout the modern epoch have built their art around these categories, and, in doing so, they have tended to give primacy to one or other, each in its pure form being more easily defined and grasped. But reaching for

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158 Performed at the opening of the 'Foire International d'Art Contemporair', Paris, 1975.
159 For a more detailed and graphic description, c.f. Tsiakma, K., 'Hermann Nitsch: A Modern Ritual', *Studio International*, op cit, pp.13-15.
160 Examples of Kaprow's early work and that of other artists who were to influence developments in the 'seventies, can be found in, Kaprow, A., *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings*, New York, 1966.

one of the four gives a one-sided and necessarily distorted view of reality. It must be added that, in following one of these paths, the meaningful centre of art that reaches towards something greater than individual experience has been jettisoned.

Erich Kahler has written on:

> ... [the] disintegration of form, (161)

that has taken place in the modern epoch - disintegration of human form and artistic form. Form, for Kahler, is:

> ... structure manifesting itself in shape. (162)

In the sense that human beings, and by extension species beings, inhabit a reality beyond their physical bodies, the world of symbols - the symbolic universe - and the historical process itself, they impose human form and create and recreate human form through their actions. For Kahler, form is the 'what', and content the 'how' of the one and same thing. The 'what' determines the 'how'. But this order has been reversed in recent art. The 'how' now dictates - the medium is the message, the artistic process has become the work of art (163). The 'disintegration of form' is equivalent to Ortega y Gassset's 'de-humanisation'; the two concepts point to the same loss.

The loss of a truly human referent and the one-sided analysis of experience and its depiction as art have led in the directions that I have tried to indicate by viewing the categories as points on a compass, directions outwards from a centre that is now lacking, removing any semblance of formal unity. Artistic experience has come to focus on the categories of experience themselves, as ends in their own right. The means have become the end; or, to be more precise, the four means take on the status of ends. This is at the basis of the fragmentation that we see in the art of the past two decades. It also goes some way towards explaining the pluralism that is unable to give value criteria for art.

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161 Kahler, E., *The Disintegration of Form in the Arts*, New York, 1968.
162 ibid. p.4.
163 ibid. p.74.

As I have already stressed, it is not that this relativism is a recent thing, but until the early 'seventies it was masked by the dialogue of styles. Style gave a value to a particular way of experiencing, and limited the possibilities open to art. The past two decades have signalled a state of crisis in art; not because they represent the end of the Modernist project as some have predicted, but because they have seen the contradictions inherent in Modernism brought to the surface in the practice of art - in the consciousness that the avant-gardist project has turned in on itself, become its own object, and, in this process, somehow left art where? The last two decades have brought the question, 'What is art?' back on the agenda of art discourse - theory and practice.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ART

THE ART OBJECT AS CULTURAL OBJECTIFICATION

In the preceding chapter I presented an account of the 'crisis' situation to be found in the life-world of the fine arts, limiting my exposition, as far as possible, to the plastic arts of painting and sculpture; as far as possible, because of the tendency within contemporary art practice to confound traditional classification into media specific fields. Despite the difficulty in retaining the classification, and acknowledging that it has socio-historic origins, concentration on these plastic arts can, nonetheless, be justified on the ground that two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects provide the most enduring forms of cultural objectification. They persist through time as frozen form, pointing beyond their concrete presence to their origins in a different cultural space from that now occupied.

The shaping of palaeolithic flint implements apparently beyond the dictates of practical necessity or function shows a fundamental human aesthetic impulse. I say 'apparently' beyond the dictates of practical necessity, because it is usually assumed that the aesthetic component can be separated out or quantified, even if in terms of qualitative statements; yet, surely, the very human capacity and will to form contains the aesthetic impulse. This aesthetic impulse is developed into symbolic form in the relief sculptures and paintings of the 'cave artists', witnessed in the caves and rock shelters around Lascaux and Altamira (1). The form of a particular object is the result of the coming together of aesthetic, symbolic and functional concerns, and is influenced by technical considerations in its realisation (2). The sculptured or

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1 For discussion of palaeolithic art, c.f. Sieveking, A., *The Cave Artists*, London, 1979.
2 Franz Boas has argued that technical motives are often the most important determinant of form. C.f. Boas, F., *Primitive Art*, New York, 1955.

painted object, containing aesthetic, symbolic and technical components that give to it its particular formal qualities, always has a functional side. The contemporary notion of an art-for-art's-sake does not remove the object from functional consideration; the notion of functional exclusion is an illusion, for its primary function is to serve as art, and this plays a determinant role in its formal constitution. In the variety of these formal presentations, constituting in their socio-historic clustering a range of styles, there is a rich resource for socio-cultural investigation. All these objects, these cultural objectifications, present themselves to the interpreter as content embodied in form. This remains the case however much the content of the work appears to speak to us independently of its formal context. As formal presentations, painted and sculptural objects have a history as old as humanity, though they have not been constituted as works of art until comparitively recently. They are concrete entities, open to aesthetic response, to iconographic interpretation and to analysis on technical and functional grounds.

Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge.

How does the sociologist approach the cultural objectification? I shall begin to answer this question through a consideration of the much neglected work of Karl Mannheim. In his essay, 'On the Interpretation of Weltanschauung' (3),an approach to the cultural object is theorised that locates particular cultural manifestations within the totality of the life-world that gave them form. Mannheim states his concern as being with asking the questions:

> What kind of task is a student of cultural and historical discipline faced with when he seeks to determine the global outlook (weltanschauung) of an epoch, or to trace partial manifestations back to this all-embracing entity? Is the entity designated by the concept weltanschauung given to us at all, and if so - how is it given? How does its givenness compare with that of the other data in the cultural and historical disciplines? (4)

He continues:

> ... something like the global outlook is already grasped - as we shall see - in

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3 Mannheim, K., 'On the Interpretation of Weltanschauung', *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London, 1959.
4 ibid, p.33.

> pre-theoretical fashion, is there a way to transpose it into scientific and theoretical terms? Can such a given ever be the object of valid, verifiable scientific knowledge? (5)

Mannheim's first task becomes the demonstration of the inadequacies of objective scientific method as transposed from the natural sciences. Taking 'style' as an example, he shows that this objective method, which seeks to generalise the concept of style, selects just those aspects of particular cultural objects that can be slotted into a general scheme. In so doing, the method fails to account for those particular characteristics of the object which are socio-historically specific. Socio-historical specificity is itself only of concern to the cultural scientist, not to the natural scientist whose objects are non-social, non-historical. The need to penetrate to the fundamental totality of which the object is a part has no parallel in natural science, but in the cultural sciences is of primary importance.

> The difficult and paradoxical nature of weltanschauung stems from the fact that the reality it denotes lies outside the province of theory. (6)

It follows, claims Mannheim, that rationalists are wrong in supposing that the weltanschauung of an age can be gathered from philosophical and theoretical utterances which are then arranged into a pattern representative of the whole (7). Theoretical abstraction is in a sense furthest removed from weltanschauung, which is not theorised but grasped in its immediacy - it is therefore a pre-theoretical entity. Mannheim sees the move from reliance on philosophical-theoretical utterances to a recognition of the whole field of human activity as a manifestation of weltanschauung, as a move towards the recognition of 'form' as distinct from and irreduceable to 'content'. This is central to Mannheim's methodology as it forces us to recognise the inadequacy of purely objective analysis. Indeed the probabilistic nature of all theorisation is the basis of his sociology of knowledge which finds its final formulation, as we shall see, in *Ideology and Utopia* (8).

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5 ibid, p.33.
6 ibid, p.38.
7 Mannheim argues that it was the anti-rationalist movement, especially Dilthey in Germany, that recognised that theoretical philosophy was not the major vehicle of the weltanschauung of an epoch, but merely one of the channels through which a global factor, transcending all the various cultural fields, manifests itself, the roots of this conception being within the German Romantic tradition.
8 Mannheim, K., 'Ideology and Utopia', *Ideology and Utopia*, London, 1946.

For Mannheim, the problem of theorisation does not consist in the ordering of the irrational; it is rather that of translating one form of categorisation into another.

> Aesthetics and spiritual manifestations such as works of art are a-theoretical and a-logical but not irrational. In fact, these manifestations are just as much based on categorial forms, forms of meaning, as any theoretical proposition - the only difference is that in their case we have to deal with a different set of basic categories: aesthetic, religious, ethical, etc., rather than theoretical ones. (9)

But mere translation from one field of culture to another is not adequate for understanding; weltanschauung belongs to all fields, theoretical and a-theoretical. Whilst agreeing with Mannheim here, I cannot see how a sociological account can grasp a reality other than theoretically. Sociology must accept this limitation.

Our task, states Mannheim, is to:

> ... define the methodological departure, to characterise the decisive step by which a cultural objectification can be looked at as it were, from a new side, and pointing beyond itself, can be seen as part of a new totality beyond the cultural objectification level. In themselves the objectifications of culture as they immendiately present themselves to us are vehicles of meaning and therefore belong to the rational (though not the theoretical) sphere; whereas the new totality we are seeking lies beyond all realisations of meaning, although it is in some way given through them. (10)

Now, while the cultural object is given in its immediacy, weltanschauung is given mediately. The cultural object, then, signifies, and in doing so, points beyond its own concrete presence. For a full understanding of the cultural object, Mannheim asserts, we must account for three, analytically distinct, 'strata of meaning':

1. 'objective meaning', whereby the object is to be grasped as a something in itself, regardless of its mediator meaning;
2. 'expressive meaning', the object being a signifier or mediator of the creator-actor's subjective intentionality at the moment of creation, or in the case of social action, at the moment of action;
3. 'documentary meaning', in which again the object acts in its mediatory function, only this time as a signifier of the total outlook of a period, its weltanschauung. As Simonds points out, this strata of meaning

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9 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1959, p.41.
10 ibid, p.42.

does no more then make explicit what is normally taken for granted by practitioners in the cultural sciences (11). However, the exact nature of the levels and their inter-relationship is not agreed.

The distinction between the strata of meaning is best expressed by Mannheim when he discusses the type of interpretive procedure applicable to each area of meaning:

> Whereas objective interpretation is concerned with grasping a completely self-contained complex of meaning - pervading the 'representation' of the subject matter as well as the 'shaping' of the medium - which is ascertainable from the work alone as such, expressive meaning, as we have seen, points beyond the work and requires an analysis of the artist's stream of psychic experience. Now documentary meaning is akin to expressive meaning in that it requires us constantly to look beyond the work; here too we are concerned with the man behind the work, but in an entirely different sense. Expressive meaning has to do with a cross-section of the individual's experiential stream, with the exploration of a psychic process which took place at a certain time; documentary meaning, on the other hand, is a matter, not of a temporal process in which certain experiences become actualised, but of the character, the essential nature, the 'ethos' of the subject which manifests itself in artistic creation. (12)

Specifically in the sphere of 'plastic art', the objective meaning is itself a purely visual content. It includes colouring, lighting, internal rhythmic content, placement and structure of content, pattern, etc., all those visual aspects available without reference to the artist and his consciousness (13).

As the three strata of meaning are intimately related, only separable analytically, any viewing of the object will also reveal an expressive component. There can rarely be 'content' without expressive meaning.

> If the middle ages as a rule confined pictorial representation to sacred contents (derived from the Bible), and furthermore, to certain selected episodes, the reason is, in part, that pictorial art was supposed to convey only a limited range of moods and feelings. (14)

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11 Simonds, A.P., *Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge*, Oxford, 1978, p.47.
12 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1959, p.55.
13 Presumably, although Mannheim does not discuss the possibility, these objective factors can be categorised and correlated with the forms taken by expressive and documentary meaning. There may be a structural relationship between levels.
14 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1959, p.49.

Mannheim argues that specific biblical content does not determine expressive meaning; the same biblical scene can evoke very different emotional states. It follows that when seeking the expressive meaning of 'content', the artist's intentions must be grasped at the moment of creation. This further necessitates familiarity with the attitudes and emotional state, of the epoch in which the artist works (15).

This interpretive concern is not limited to the 'content' alone. The material medium used and the way it is used also embody objective and expressive meaning. However, Mannheim places greatest stress on the objective strata of the 'forming' function of the medium.

> When we look at a statue, our visual experience embraces not only sense data, but invariably also an aesthetic conception underlying the arrangement of visual shapes purely as such. While we think we do not look beyond the purely visual we already are dealing with relationships of meaning and form; in other words, the 'space' of the statue is not the same as the 'space' filled by a mere slab of marble would be - the statue has its 'aesthetic space', which differs from that of purely physical space of optics in that it is structured in terms of visual meaning. (16)

Thus, aesthetic meaning is seen as objective and accordingly can be grasped without reference to the artist's consciousness, that is, once we have been taught to grasp it, for the aesthetic is given, but not intuitively. This leads to Mannheim making the distinction between objective meaning realised by means of a sign (content), and objective meaning realised through 'form'.

While content bears no intrinsically essential relationship to the concept (theoretical meaning), formal meaning, objective aesthetic meaning, is intrinsically related to the sensual medium. Mannheim, after giving aesthetic meaning a universal dimension, calls this universality back into question, by asserting that space itself is to a certain extent culturally defined. However, the visual universes of the observers are seen as comparable, conforming to some 'supra-historical' visual treatment of space. To the extent that expressive meaning is embedded in the

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15 A similar argument is presented by Panofsky, who also provides a three level model of 'iconographic' interpretation; however, he separates cognitive rational interpretation from intuition, viewing weltanschauung as collective mental state and therefore to be approached through intuitive understanding. C.f. Panofsky, E., *Studies in Iconology*, London, 1972.
16 ibid, p.50.

objective formal aspect of art, it is as 'form within form'. Form is superior as a vehicle of expressive meaning, for emotion is closer to form than can any sign signifying emotion be; emotion and form are both expressive in their immediacy. It is this quality of the cultural object, its ability to express emotion through form, rather than its ability to manipulate signs, that gives it its essential nature. The producer's intentionality lies both in expressing meaning through content, and through form, which itself may not be theorised. This intended meaning is only discernible by factual historical research, the possibility of which exists in the historical continuity of epochs; the nearer to our own epoch the subject epoch is, the more accessible it becomes.

While the artist has to make a conscious effort to incorporate objective meaning and expressive meaning into the work of art, this is not so of 'documentary meaning'. Documentary meaning can only become an intentional object for the observer of the work of art. For the artist, documentary meaning is a formative, untheorised element, which through him becomes transposed into the work. An understanding of documentary meaning is essential to an understanding of, rather than an interpretation of, both objective and expressive meaning. Because documentary meaning is an essential, formative aspect of the work, any part of the work of art will display documentation; thus, the work need not be viewed as a 'whole' in documentary interpretation. However, complete documentation will not be gained from analysis of any single art object; the whole production of a particular artist, or of an epoch, must be analysed in order to make the artist, or epoch, 'take shape'. In the case of an epoch, this will mean having recourse to all spheres of human activity (17).

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17 Of course, there is a limit to the possible; the range of cultural objectifications open to investigation will depend on availability, the exigencies of time. But complete documentation remains an objective, thus, an interpretation remains open to accommodation of further information. This view may seem excessive in its emphasis on 'particularity', especially when it is considered that documentary meaning is to be transposed to the conceptual level and structured to provide a 'picture' of the epoch, but it stands as a warning against the imposition of a rigid framework and culturally narrow perspective. There are grounds for considering that Mannheim contradicts himself here, however, for if the weltanschauung is a closed structure, as he sometimes implies it is, then any particular objectification cannot add to it; it can only display that which gives it meaning. Mannheim's emphasis on the particular only makes sense if cultural objectifications themselves contribute to meaning at the documentary level, that they are creative of weltanschauung. This latter dialectical conception is, I would argue, more appropriate to the understanding of cultural production. I shall return to this theme later.

Documentary interpretation exploits both objective and expressive meaning. A rich source of documentation, asserts Mannheim, are the 'theoretical utterances of the artist', through which he attempts to explain his formal or expressive goal. These utterances, however, cannot be treated as pure reflections of intention, or of the epoch's condition; they must merely be treated as symptoms of such intention and condition.

> One then may also define as a subjective counterpart of these cultural generalisations, the corresponding historical subject; in some cases this subject is identified by the name of a historical person or collectivity. (18)

This cultural subject, however, must not be equated with any empirical collective subject as defined by the method of the social sciences. Mannheim makes a distinction between, (a) a collective subject characterised by terms relating to documentary interpretation, and (b) a collective subject defined by the use of the categories of science, anthropological and sociological.

This distinction is meant to stress further the difference between expressive and documentary meaning, for expressive meaning can only refer to the real subject and his stream of consciousness, or nominalistically, to the 'average' of the members of a collectivity. Documentary interpretation, however, uses a collective subject that is 'pure' construct, whose cognitive value consists in its serving as a subjective counterpart of the 'characterological' units suggested by the documentary interpretation. Documentary interpretation provides a conceptual representation of the pre-theoretical weltanschauung.

Essential to the wider discussion of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is the 'relational' character of documentary interpretation, which means that it must be undertaken anew in each epoch: this, because interpretation is influenced by the interpreter's location in the historical stream. To understand the spirit of an epoch we have to fall back on our own. Interpretation is a hermeneutic exercise, but in Mannhiem's sociology of knowledge the interpreter does not become entrapped in the hermeneutic

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18 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1959, p.50.

circle (19). On the contrary, he sees the possibility for progression in human understanding.

In a later essay entitled, 'The Problem of Generations', weltanschauung ceases to be the central formative influence, and is itself located in a concrete social formation.

> The mentality which is commonly attributed to an epoch has its proper seat in one (homogenous or heterogenous) social group which acquires special significance at a particular time, and is thus able to put its own intellectual stamp on all the other groups without either destroying or absorbing them. (20)

The spirit of an epoch, to the extent that it remains such, now is composed of 'entelechies', social currents, giving 'polar tension' to each temporal segment of history (21). These social currents have their origin in concrete social groups with an identifiable core. Now, on one level, I can agree with Mannheim's assertion that:

> Taking the whole historical and social process into consideration, we can say that there has never been an epoch entirely romantic or entirely rationalist in character, at least since the nineteenth century, we clearly have to do with a culture polarised in this respect. (22)

But this only demonstrates tension within the totality around polar positions or strategies for dealing with reality; it does not segment the social whole. The identification of social groups as carriers of these polar tendencies need not be seen as reducing weltanschauung to a reflection of concrete social groupings and their interests. Weltanschauung as a concept is, however, defective, in that it indicates primarily an idealistic entity, the mentality of the age. For a satisfactory conceptual representation of the totality, it is necessary to look to a dialectical model, which better expresses the interactive relationship between social structure and thought.

This dialectical model is partly theorised by Mannheim, whose

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19 The hermeneutic circle can be viewed as a limitation on progress in understanding, such that interpretation becomes entrapped within a relativistic universe of meaning. C.f. Bauman, Z., *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, London, 1978, p.17.
20 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1959, p.313.
21 The term, 'entelechy' refers to the expression of the unity of an inner aim.
22 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1959, p.318. Clearly, it is possible to conceive of societies so 'closed' that a given style is entirely dominant: an expression of Durkheim's 'mechanical solidarity'.

conceptualisation is that thought is 'related' to social being (23). The concept of relatedness was developed to counter reductionist models, which in making knowledge epiphenomenal, devalue the human 'spirit'. Mannheim wanted to show that it was possible to speak of the 'social connectedness' of thought in a way that is meaningful, without treating social conditions as antecedents.

In *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim produces a classification of types of conception of ideology, as socio-historically generated, relating their coming into being with socio-historical location, and suggesting a development towards a more rational and general conception. Historically, he argues, conceptions of ideology move from the particular to the total; that is, from a 'realisation' that the ideas held by an opponent are distortions of the 'real' situation, to a realisation that these distorted beliefs are products of the particular socio-hostoric location of the group to which the individual belongs, - the Marxist conception of ideology as false consciousness. The next step, however, is decisive, for there is a move to the recognition that all beliefs are problematic, including one's own. This step is conceived of as being from the 'special' to the 'general'. It removes the value-laden notion of ideology which sees one's own position as superior, replacing it by a theory of ideology that recognises the evaluative nature of all thought. This opens the way for the development of a sociology of knowledge. The recognition of the evaluative nature of all thought makes it possible to obtain a new level of objectivity through taking on a critical attitude, which subjects all positions, including one's own, to sociological analysis. Relationism starts from the assumption that there are:

> ... spheres of thought in which it is impossible to conceive of absolute truth existing independently of the values and position of the subject and unrelated to the social context. (24)

Relationism insists, like the general conception of ideology, on the need to recognise that all the elements of meaning in a given situation have reference to one another, and, furthermore, that all knowledge is

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23 Simonds, A.P., op cit, discusses in detail the concept of 'relatedness' and its centrality to an understanding of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge.
24 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1959, pp.70-1.

structured and oriented towards some object, it being only the approach to the object that varies with the nature of the knower, his social location. This is an important point.

> The study of intellectual history can and must be pursued in a manner which will see in the sequence and coexistence of phenomena more than mere accidental relationships, and will seek to discover in the totality of the historical complex the role, significance and meaning of each component element. (25)

Relationism can be seen as a reformulation of the concept of documentary meaning. Between his essay, 'On the Interpretation of Weltanschauung' and *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim shifted perspective towards increasing concreteness of analysis and greater specificity of reference. In doing so, he replaced, to some extent, the notion of weltanschauung with that of 'meaning context', related to social group interests. In his essay on 'Conservative Thought' (26), Mannheim seeks to establish his method of interpretation by identifying 'styles of thought' as the key to understanding the relationship between thought and social location. He acknowledges that the patterning of thought changes through time and proposes the notion of style to designate historically specific types of patterning, in the same manner that art historians classify the arts. Any particular style of thought is not now, however, viewed as epochal, but rather existing alongside other styles of thought, each associated with a different social location. Persistence and change in styles of thought cannot be undertstood without reference to the social groups that are identified as 'carriers' of these styles (27). Here Mannheim fails to sustain his conception of the relatedness of thought as non-deterministic, asserting that:

> ... different ways of approach to the world are ultimately at the bottom of different ways of thinking. The basic drive determines the character of a style of thought. (28)

What Mannhiem fails to acknowledge here is that thought itself is an essential and active part of the individual's and collective's approach to the world; it is not therefore to be viewed as derivative. Mullins has criticised Mannheim for not recognising that:

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25 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1946, p.83.
26 Mannheim, K., 'Conservative Thought', Wolff, K.H. (ed.), *From Karl Mannheim*, Oxford, 1971.
27 ibid, p.135.
28 ibid, p.136.

... language is a crucial factor in reality construction. (29)

- a criticism rightly aimed at his later work.

The concept of relatedness, linked to the scientific rational interest, is essential to Mannheim's view of validation, in terms of a relatively socially unattached intelligentsia (30), with an interest in truth, a notion that can only be maintained if thought is viewed as active in the shaping of knowledge and reality. There is implicit recognition of this in the status given to the intellectual, whose education has provided the means to direct the critical faculties at the global situation rather than being narrowly confined to the outlook of a particular social group (31). This ensures a more complete, if not absolutely objective, view of social reality.

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29 Mullins, W.A., 'Truth and Ideology: Reflections on Mannheim's Paradox', *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, vol.XVIII, no.2, 1979, pp.141-154.

30 Gouldner makes a distinction between Intelligentsia and Intellectuals, arguing that the former have a 'technical' interest and the latter a 'critical, emancipatory, hermeneutic and hence often political' interest. C.f. Gouldner, A., *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*, London, 1979, p.48. Mannheim's conception of the role of the intellectual fits somewhere between, not entrenched within convention and yet apolitical.

31 Mannheim, K., op cit, 1946, p.156.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL THEORY

An essential feature of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is the recognition that thought is socio-historically located. The hermeneutic, therefore, is not a method, so much as an inescapable condition of the communication of meaning and acquisition of knowledge. It is Gadamer, in *Truth and Method* (32), who more fully develops this hermeneutic position. Man, the social actor, is viewed as bound by his own historicity. Interpretation of historical events and objects is itself historically mediated; one cannot eliminate historical being in order to arrive at a transcendent objectivity. This ontological condition of Man's social being forces itself into his practical intellectual endeavour, informing the method of socio-historical enquiry and limiting the possibility of cultural understanding. At the same time, it is the grounds for understanding, for a meaningful interpretation rather than a purely quantitative mapping. The process of interpretation, the hermeneutic circle, takes the form of a dialectical interplay, a communication of meaning between meaning contexts in the reflexive consciousness of the cultural interrogator. At no point is a one-sided phenomenological construction of social reality envisaged by the hermeneutic procedure of Gadamer, any more than a pure objectivity is conceivable. The subject-object duality is collapsed into a dialectical frame of reference, that requires that the investigator maintain an intellectual openness to the cultural objectification.

> All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or of the text. (33)

But meaning is not presented as a limitless possibility; the cultural objectification itself is a formative influence on the construction of meaning.

In discussing the relationship between hermeneutics and aesthetics, Gadamer tackles the problem of relativism by posing the question in two ways:

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32 Gadamer, H.G., *Truth and Method*, London, 1975.
33 ibid. p.238.

> In its origin is not a work of art the bearer of a meaningful life-function within a cultic or social context? And is it not within this context alone that it receives its full determination of meaning? Still it seems to me that the question can also be reversed: is it really the case that a work of art, which comes out of a past or alien life-world and is transformed into our historically educated world, becomes a mere object of aesthetic historical enjoyment and says nothing more of what it originally had to say? (34)

Gadamer asserts that we cannot answer the latter question in the affirmative. In experiencing the object aesthetically, as in interpreting of its meaning intellectually, we are necessary grasping (35) the object hermeneutically, a process in which the work of art 'confronts us itself' (36). It is expressive of something and not merely a contextually constructed reality. There is a correspondence here with Mannheim's view that the object, analytically speaking, possesses objective meaning, that is empirically given to the observer, and, also, that meaning structures are never fully closed to inter-contextual communication. Both Mannheim and Gadamer insist that interpretation necessarily requires an 'openness' to communication of meaning, involving a suspending of interests from outside of the intellectual intention. Mannheim's conception of 'social relatedness' is central here, for a contextually deterministic model could not facilitate inter-contextual knowledge claims.

There are, of course, other ways of theorising the release of knowledge from its socio-historical context, so as to identify true and false statements and beliefs presented as interpretations of reality. Here I will confine the discussion to Marxist critical theory, which claims to overcome the 'problem' of the hermeneutic circle. The claim to scientific knowledge made by the structuralist theory associated with Althusser will be dealt with in the following section. Lukács developed a classical Marxist social evolutionary position in *History and Class Consciousness* (37), viewing knowledge as bound to the class consciousness of social

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34 Gadamer, H.G., 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics', *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Berkley, 1977, p.97.

35 To grasp understanding implies an active and interactive relationship between subject and object of understanding. At the level of the psychological development of cognizance, Piaget has demonstrated the move from activity to consciousness: 'The subject only learns to know himself when acting on the object, and the latter can become known only as a result of progress of the actions carried out on it.' Piaget, J., *The Grasp of Consciousness: Action and Concept in the Young Child*, London, 1977, p.353. The basic mechanism of structural accommodation and assimilation describes well the hermeneutic process.

36 Gadamer, H.G., op cit, 1977, p.101.

37 Lukács, G., *History and Class Consciousness*, London, 1971.

class groupings. To overcome the problem of the production of true or scientific knowledge, Lukács bases this in the consciousness of the proletarian class, which he sees as the first class in history with the potential to gain knowledge of the totality of social relations. It remains a historically conditioned consciousness, but, posited at the termination of class struggle, it becomes seen as a universal rather than interest specific based knowledge. Marxist critical theory is seen as supplying the means for social class self realisation. This perspective is dependent on a conception of history unfolding, in the Hegelian sense, towards a final resolution of its dialectic and of classes as the carriers of 'consciousness'. Only history itself will validate the first assumption, but the latter seems to be clearly contradicted by the failure of this class to break free of its dependency on intellectuals in the formulation of its class position.

A different perspective, but equally an evolutionary model, is presented by Habermas(38), whose critical theory grounds forms of knowledge in species interests rather than in class groupings. He identifies three 'knowledge-constituting interests', fundamental categories of experience that facilitate an approach to knowledge and activity in the world. 'Technical interest' stems from the need to manipulate the environment and provides analytical-empirical knowledge. 'Practical interest' stems from the need for communication, understanding and cooperation, and provides historical-hermeneutic knowledge. 'Emancipatory interest' arises in response to the historically contingent constraints and distortions to which technical and practical interests are subject in social structures where social relations are based on exploitation, giving rise to 'critical-dialectical knowledge'. This latter human interest offers a synthesis of the others, recognising that the human subject is active in the world and yet historically limited (39). It is a form of knowledge practice that determines:

> ... when theroretical statements grasp invariant regularities of social action as such and when they express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed.(40)

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38 C.f. Habermas, J., *Knowledge and Human Interests*, London, 1978.
39 For a thorough and concise discussion of Habermas's critical project, c.f. Scott, J., 'Critical Social Theory: An Introduction and Critique', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.29, no.1, 1978.
40 Habermas, J., op cit, 1978, p.310.

The possibility of an undistorted knowledge is, then, constituted in human social practice itself, and is not dependent on a class formation. It is an evolutionary model because Habermas sees progress towards a rational society, free from the distortions of traditional society - his project is the continuation of the process of 'enlightenment', which is itself dependent on the passing of capitalistic social relations. Habermas, unlike Lukács, does not see a particular class as the arbinger of an undistorted social reality, for the possibility of a critical theoretical practice is no longer confined to a particular class interest - in advanced capitalistic society liberation is no longer an outcome of a historically constituted moment, but originates primarily as a theoretical moment. The conditions of the removal of class domination are unclear and only identifiable through a critical-dialectical analysis (41).

Critical theory undertakes an ideology critique, where ideological forms of consciousness are identified as false, and in doing so presents its own statements as truth. Here it seeks to escape the hermeneutic circle, which critical theory identifies with distorted communication. Habermas attempts to do this through a conception of undistorted rationality, which takes him forward to the discussion of the possibility of an ideal speech community. It is in such a community that the true rationality of critical theory can be identified and accepted, for it is only in such conditions that 'pure intersubjectivity exists' (42). The ultimate adequacy of a theory is, then, its understandability and adoption by members of the ideal speech community (43). Habermas is adhering to Schutz's 'postutate of adequacy' here, with due recognition of the ideological nature of capitalist social relations distorting everyday commonsense experience (44). Only in this way could theory fulfil its claim to provide a systhesis of technical and practical interests.

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41 C.f. Habermas, J., *Legitimation Crisis*, London, 1976, pp.37-43, and 'Technology and Science', *Towards a Rational Society*, London, 1977, pp.120-2. The crisis of legitimation, the product of historical contradictions, is nonetheless taking place through the active participation of social actors, struggling to legitimise structures of subjugation, to unmask this distortion of human social potential, or simply living out their lives unconscious of the crisis in which they partake.

42 Habermas, J., 'Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence', Driezel, H.P. (ed.), *Recent Sociology*, no.2, London, 1970a, p.138.

43 C.f. discussion in Geuss, R., *The Ideal of a Critical Theory*, Cambridge, 1985, pp.75-88. There is a similarity between the 'ideal speech community' and Mannheim's 'free-floating intellectuals', only Mannheim would not claim so much freedom for thought; it is its very relatedness that grounds it in reality. For the conditions necessary for undistorted communication, c.f. Habermas, J., 'On Systematically Distorted Communication', *Inquiry*, vol.13, 1970b, pp.205-18.

44 Schultz, A., *Collected Papers*, vol.1, The Hague, 1962, pp.43-4.

The contrast with hermeneutic theory is clear; where hermeneutics remains at the level of the problematic of meaningful communication and knowledge formation between contexts, critical theory is concerned with the identification of distorted communication and the possibilities for emancipatory action. Hermeneutics does not offer a basis for absolute truth, while critical theory proclaims the possibility of truth in an undistorted reality.

Fay has made a number of criticisms of critical theory, with its assumption that truth will set man free (45), that I see as fundamental. (a) There is an over-emphasis on the power of reason to derive truth, that is the truth of what we are and what we can and ought to become.

> Our knowledge of ourselves is fundamentally historical. (46)

(b) Learning the truth is not in itself sufficient grounds for freedom; it does not remove the psychological and social structural obstacles to putting knowledge into action. (c) Human beings are necessarily embedded in tradition and it is here that they acquire their identities, so that the notions of autonomy and self determination cannot be explored outside of the means provided by tradition. If these criticisms are to be accepted, criticisms that essentially stress the historicity of meaning and action, then the claims of critical theory are greatly weakened. Fay wishes to suggest that critical theory can accommodate these issues, but his own statement makes this appear an impossible task:

> Humans are not only active beings; they are also historical, embodied, traditional, and embedded creatures whose powers of reason are inherently limited. Because of this there can be no human self-knowledge which is not at the same time self-ignorance, and there can be no human society without repression and dependency. (47)

With this rather pessimistic view I would concur, although this does not stop human beings striving for freedom and self-knowledge as a necessary counterpart of the experience of restraint; in this sense the emancipatory impulse is real enough.

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45 Fay, B., *Critical Social Science: Liberation and its Limits*, Oxford, 1987.
46 ibid, p.206.
47 ibid, p.214.

I see no reason why a hermeneutic sociology could not make an approach to the problem of domination and distorted communication, without making the kind of claims to privileged knowledge that critical theory makes. Its findings would remain open to reflection and reinterpretation, itself a precondition of 'relatively' undistorted communication, but it would be capable of discerning the relationship between institutional structures of domination, and facilitation, and the actions and meanings produced by social actors. What it could not do is provide rules or laws that indicate the type of action necessary for liberation; such action has to arise out of the perceived interests of individuals and groups within their lived experience. But this is not a line of theoretical discussion I have space to pursue here.

What I do feel is necessary here is some discussion of the place of hermeneutic theory, and Mannheim's sociology of knowledge in particular, within contemporary social theory. At present, it is true to say that there is no one dominant social theoretical perspective, but rather a number of competing approaches to social reality (48). Johnson, Dandeker and Ashworth have tried to demonstrate the structural basis of the fragmentation of contemporary social theory. They divide perspectives according to how they would answer questions concerning the nature of society and how society is to be known - according to ontological and epistemological premises. The ontological dimension finds a polarity between materialist and idealist answers to the question - what is the nature of reality? On the epistemological dimension they identify nominalist and realist accounts in answer to the question - how do we come to know reality? The four onto-epistemic combinations that result from the application of this framework are empiricism, subjectivism, substantialism and rationalism.

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48 I shall be drawing on the arguments presented in Johnson, T., Dandeker, C., and Ashworth, C., *The Structure of Social Theory*, Basingstoke, 1984. Although there is a growing number of books on the problem of the alternative social theoretical perspectives, it is the structural analysis presented here that I find most satisfactory, with its grounding of sociological issues in philosophical questions.

	Nominal	Real	How is social reality known?
	1	3	
Material	Empiricism	Substantialism	
	2	4	
Ideal	Subjectivism	Rationalism	
What is the nature of social reality			

(49)

The structure of social theory is represented by the four 'strategies' shown in the diagram. Empiricists view reality as materially constituted and experienced as sensory data. Sensory experience presents reality as fact, objectively present. The empiricist typically constructs models, theoretical generalisations, to explain the relations between facts. Subjectivism views social reality as a mental construct; there are no facts external to the interpretive, constitutive activity of the social actor. The social theorist, taking this subjectivist strategy, has to find a place for his interpretation of reality in the communicative constitutive process that is social existence. The substantivist conceives of social reality as constituted of material structures, but these structures are not directly observable, despite their objectivity, and must be sought beneath the appearance that reality presents to the observer. Rationalism conceives of social reality as explainable in terms of a structure of ideas that exerts a constraining influence on social being, constitutive of social structure and providing the limits of social process. The task of theory for the rationalist becomes the presentation of a logically consistent structure of concepts that fit reality and explain in their relations the appearance of things (50).

Clearly, social theory is more conplex than this model would immediately suggest, with theorists attempting to deal with issues that cut across

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49 Reproduced from ibid, p.19.
50 ibid, esp. pp.6-21.

the structural divide between strategies and with issues raised by other strategies.

> Each of the strategies is then a dialogue, a mediative process which attempts to cope with the persistent sociological paradoxes that are generated by the alternative solutions: between fact and theory, freedom and determinism, structure and action, meaning and conditions, and so on. (51)

What Johnson et al are contributing to the understanding of the competeing perspectives within contemporary social theory is a recognition, to use their own term, of 'strategic bias' in theoretical formulation. It is a strategic bias that emanates from the internal logic of the onto-epistemological foundation categories, and in the ongoing social theoretical process gives rise to shifting 'fields of tensions' (52), cutting across the strategic categories. It is a bias derived from the dualistic conception of reality and the attempt to find a resolution to duality by giving greater significance or primacy to one particular pole of the dualism. The field of tensions remains present because of:

> ... [the] recognition that alternative strategies make valid claims which need to be taken into account, as well as the fact that each strategy is confronted by its own internal problems which undermine its capacity to construct a stable position in its own terms. (53)

It is a field of tensions that forces a dialogue between strategies.

It is not my intention to proceed to a discussion of the field of tensions in contemporary sociological theory. What I want to suggest is that such tensions cannot be seen as derived from the theoretical domain alone, from the dynamics of resolution and confrontation between strategies. Social reality, and our practical experience of it, forces itself into the theoretical field. We experience ourselves as free agents and we experience constraint; we accept reality as objectively present, but recognise the power of our own imagination to construct reality in our own terms. In short, we are aware of the contradictions inherent in social space: theorisation as a systematisation of concepts may be an attempt to resolve contradictions, but ends in emphasising them. Theorisation itself is a social practice, but to make social structure its

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51 ibid, p.22.
52 ibid, p.22.
53 ibid, p.23.

object it has to impose rational categories upon it: categories that are themselves conceptually and logically limited, but necessary to reflexive social practice. Conceptualisation should not be confused with social reality itself,nor should theoretical systems be expected to be logically coherent and, at the same time, provide a total fit with social reality. Social theory wrongly makes the assumption that social reality conforms to a rational model, to thought itself. This is just as true of empiricism and substantivism as it is of subjectivism and rationalist theory. Empiricists will not accept as relevant anything that does not conform to their definition of reality as 'fact', and substantivists rule out of court the notion of a non-material reality whilst upholding materialism conceptually. Social theory has to recognise that social being is the condition and foundation of all knowledge. If this is to be conceptualised through the categories of understanding we have at our disposal, and I should contend that these are primarily dualistic (54), we have to accept contradiction and duality as the basis of a dialectical understanding.

As Johnson et al point out, the failure of attempts to synthesise the dualities is largely a consequence of theorisation seeking 'dualistic synthesis' (55), which does not resolve the duality but rather imposes a one-sided strategic dominance.

> The first rule of a dialectical synthesis must be, then, the theoretical recognition of a single reality which unifies the dualities, without eliminating them. A dualistic resolution recognises the existence of the material and the ideal aspect of reality, while at the same time accepting that they are both part of a single reality. (56)

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54 The existence of innate categories of understanding has been convincingly argued by Noam Chomsky: c.f. Chomsky, N., *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge, Mass, 1965, and 'The Formal Nature of Language', Appendix A to Lenneberg, E.H., *Biological Foundations of Language*, New York, 1967. More directly influential to my thinking, however, has been the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, who begins from the assumption that the human mind operates through a system of binary classification. C.f., e.g., *The Raw and the Cooked, (Mythologiques I)*, trans. Weightman, J. and Weightman, D., London, 1969. It follows from Levi-Strauss's notion of innate structure that all cultural objectifications share this binary formative component, that in this sense thought does not evolve. C.f. Levi-Strauss, C., *The Savage Mind*, London, 1976. Both theorists provide a basis for understanding, in positing human constraints, that helps the hermeneutic enterprise escape the historical context.

55 Johnson, T. et al, op cit, p.204.

56 ibid, p.204.

Each of the strategies has something to offer in this conception of synthesis. Where I think my perspective differs from that of Johnson et al is in the belief that such a synthesis can take place at the theoretical level. The dialectical synthesis is a reality at the level of social being, but to theorise it involves the use of conceptual categories that are limited by the dualistic nature of thought. Having said this, this should not stop theory striving to conceptualise this synthesis, but it may be that we have to accept a high degree of contradiction and inconsistency in social theory. The unified system that Johnson et al seek and view as crucial to synthesis (57) is unlikely to emerge. In identifying the structural framework within which contemporary social theory is practised, they may have to accept that this represents the conceptual limits of social theory, and that a true resolution resides only in pre-theoretical social being.

In considering attempts at synthesis, by Bhaskar (58) and Giddens (59), Johnson et al, whilst acknowledging their positive contributions to social theory, view their projects as failures on the grounds that they do not transcend the dualities and present a truly dialectical synthesis. On these terms all theory must be judged lacking, but is it a useful criterion of validation of a theory to expect it to produce a systematic and dialectical synthesis? This striving for theoretical closure may prove to be a dead-end. Johnson et al present a theoretically centred project, and one of the major problems with sociological theory is that it has become increasingly detached from social practice and sociological research (60). The way forward, as I see it, is to recognise the dialectical nature of social being and to adapt social theory to the needs of social research. This calls for an element of eclecticism and a weakening of the hold of theoretical systems.

Giddens, writing of his own theoretical eclecticism, asserts:

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57 ibid, p.205.
58 Bhaskar, R., *The Possibility of Naturalism*, Brighton, 1979.
59 Giddens, A., *New Rules of Sociological Method*, London, 1977. C.f. also, *The Constitution of Society*, Cambridge, 1986, published after Johnson, T. et al's book.
60 This is especially true of recent Marxist theory in the arena of 'cultural' production, where theory asserts its own appearance as reality. The general criticisms levelled at Althusserian theory by Thompson could equally be directed at much post-structuralist analysis; c.f. Thompson, E.P., 'The Poverty of Theory', Thompson, E.P., *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays*, London, 1978, pp.193-397.

> If ideas are important and illuminating, what matters much more than their origin is to be able to sharpen them so as to demonstrate their usefulness even if within a framework which might be quite different from that which helped to engender them. (61)

Giddens is asking for a 'decentring' of sociological theory, not only to allow different strategies to share concepts, but also to introduce theoretical insights from other disciplines. I would concur with this; a social theoretical utterance may have a contribution to make to the understanding of an aspect of social reality and this can only be determined from within a particular project, be it that of an individual or collective.

Gidden's attempt to present a theory of structuration, which removes the static dualism of subject and social object, is based on the correct premise - ontologically speaking the basis of social life is social being. Social being is not to be deterministically explained as the product of actors' intentions or as the working of objective structures; it is both at one and the same time - the duality of structures (62). Knowledge formation, as a social activity, is itself an aspect of social being, and this is what I think Mannheim was trying to establish with his notion of relatedness. Thought is a social activity; it embodies subjectivity and structure in process. Social theory and research has to acknowledge this. As Giddens relates it:

> All social research presumes a hermeneutic moment, but the presumption may remain latent where research draws upon mutual knowledge that is unexplicated because researcher and research inhabit a common cultural milieu. (63)

Johnson et al implicitly recognise this when they base the forms of validity advocated by the four social theoretical strategies in ordinary social practice. They identify the four criteria of validity as: 'experience' for empiricism, 'practice' for substantivism, 'convention' for subjectivism and 'logic' for rationalism (64). What is important to realise here is that social theory, in taking these forms of validation from the context of everyday activity, has abstracted them from the

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61 Giddens, A., op cit, 1986, p.xxii.
62 C.f. ibid, pp.1-36.
63 ibid, p.328.
64 Johnson, T., et al, pp.185-7.

social life projects with which they are intrinsically bound. Here, Habermas is correct, along with substantivism more generally, to want to return theory to its social context - the union of theory and action in praxis. But what Habermas does not recognise is that theory never does escape its social relatedness in any transcendent objective sense. Social theory is itself a social project; where it differs from ordinary everyday life experience is in making thought its own object. Thought cannot escape the hermeneutic moment of its own reflexive activity. If social theory recognised this, then it would see its own formulations as partial, necessarily related utterances.

It should be noted here that social being does not exhaust reality. The presence of a physical reality has to be granted, as does the assertion that this physical reality has considerable permanence. It is possible to agree with Stark when he says that:

> ... [the] facts of society are made, and ever remade, by us, whereas the facts of nature are not. (65)

Although, this does not mean that they are not mediated by social being in their coming into consciousness, both in perceptual and cognitive processes. Scientific theories are 'interpretive constructions' (66). However, physical reality does persist and hold itself available to recurrent interpretation, that gives rise to the positing and testing of general statements concerning its nature as structure and process. This is the sense in which Mannheim can speak of objective qualities of cultural objectifications. It must also be granted that physical reality enters into social life as a determinant force.

Once it is recognised that the structural strategies so clearly presented by Johnson et al, are themselves 'related', intrinsically bound with social process, it can be seen that the 'structure of tensions' that provides the condition of their structural unity itself originates in the wider social context of the conditions and contradictions of social being. It is true that dualistic thought cannot resolve these tensions in theoretical

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65 Stark, W., *The Sociology of Knowledge*, London, 1955, p.165.
66 Mulkay, M., *Science and the Sociology of Knowledge*, London, 1980, p.119.

discourse, but it is not synthesis through theory that is the answer, even if this were possible, but a dialectical conception of duality that never reaches a final resolution. This I would posit as the condition of social being.

In interpreting cultural objectifications I shall follow Mannheim's prescription and seek access to documentary meaning, to the interpretation of weltanschauung. Here I shall define weltanschauung as the consciousness of social being as it appears in the historically situated actions and thoughts of subjects. I realise that social being is more than this, but it is this that makes history appear as both a becoming and as structured by cultural styles. As a method to this end I shall use structural models that focus on the dualistic tendency of conceptual practice, as I have already demonstrated in my discussion of the contemporary situation in fine art, and as I have accepted Johnson et al's structure of social theory as demonstrative of the situation confronting social theorists. It seems to me that thought is so structured; the model of the four strategies and the nature of the structural tensions in contemporary social theory receives their explanatory force from the representation of social theory as constructed within a dualistic frame of reference. That we conceive of reality as dualistic structures our approach to it, and so plays a creative part in the historical constitution of social reality itself. There are, I would argue, logical limits to the ways in which mankind 'thinks reality'. Whether these limits are conceived of as purely logical or as in some sense biological is another issue, but they are present as a constraining and facilitating force in social life. Again it is necessary to point out that social being does not exhaust reality, though it is the condition of the experience of it.

It will be seen that I intend only a partial interpretation of weltanschauung and a structural analysis at that. But it is a structure that has arisen out of an interactive approach to the historical periods under review, to their cultural objectifications directly and through other interpretive accounts. It is not possible, or desirable for the purposes of this study, to give an account of all the social influences on art, as Wolff has suggested should be the outcome of a hermeneutic

investigation (67). I shall, however, attempt to indicate the broad relationship between the structures I uncover and socio-historical process.

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67 Wolff, J., *Hermeneutic Philosophy and the Sociology of Art*, London, 1975, pp.129-38.

WHAT IS ART?

The question of the nature of art has been of central concern to the writing of this thesis. Here I wish to explore this question on a theoretical level, through contributions made from within the discipline of Sociology principally, but not exclusively. The adequacy of a theoretical utterance has to be assessed, not solely by its internal consistency, but by its ability to disclose some part of social reality. Weber was right to insist that the definition of a subject has to await the results of research (68), but it will be a definition that always remains open to future redefinition in the light of practice. Here I shall pose the question of the nature of art as a central concern confronting the sociology of art. As Elizabeth Bird has demonstrated, the assumption that sociologists can take up a position of 'aesthetic neutrality' is untenable (69). 'What is art?' is a question that sociologists of art have to confront.

As a preliminary, I would assert that a distinction has to be granted (a) between the art object and the aesthetic object, and (b) between theoretical accounts of the aesthetic object and the aesthetic experience itself. The first distinction is perhaps most easily demonstrated, yet it does lead to much confusion. Any object can be the object of aesthetic contemplation, although to the extent that some objects are more aesthetically 'pleasing' than others, we can say that they have greater aesthetic value. It is not a necessary condition of a work of art that it be aesthetically pleasing; a work of art is defined within an institutional and wider societal context (70), and is subject to evaluation within the terms laid down by that institutional order. Such criteria as being original, expressing contemporary life, conforming to a 'progressive' style, being true to life, being the work of a known or

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68 Weber, M., *The Sociology of Religion*, London, 1965, p.1.
69 Bird, E., 'Aesthetic Neutrality and the Sociology of Art', Barrett, M. et al (eds.), *Ideology and Cultural Production*, London, 1979, pp.25-48. This view is not accepted by everyone. Best, R. argues that the question of the aesthetic is the province of philosophy and aesthetics (p.79): 'Sketch for a Sociology of Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.17, no.1, 1977, p.79; and Barbu, Z., has indicated that the sociologist is only concerned with literature and art as a means to increase knowledge of social events: 'Sociological Perspectives in Art and Literature', Creedy, J. (ed.), *The Social Context of Art*, London, 1970, p.9.
70 C.f. discussion of George Dickie's institutional aesthetic in Ch.I.

professed artist, demonstrating a 'truth' about social or political life, and many others, are valuations that originate in social institutional practice and are therefore to be seen as historically specific.

How the aesthetic is conceptualised is to be explained in terms of the unfolding of discursive activity, giving rise to theoretical speculation as to its true nature, but also only partly theorised judgements on aesthetic value. However, this discursive activity has to be seen as a response to an aesthetic object or experience that is itself preconceptual. This is not an easy point to demonstrate, as we necessarily grasp the world of experience conceptually once we make it an object of understanding. A child demonstrates a sense of form before it can articulate its feelings for form, or be expected to apply cognitive rules consciously (71). The place that aesthetics has in our century is a legacy of eighteenth century accounts of the beautiful and the sublime, and the association made between aesthetic experience and the art object (72). From this time on, the aesthetic is subjected to theorisation that seeks to transform the preconceptual experience into a theoretical frame of meaning. The two, aesthetics and aesthetic object, are not coterminous.

In the theories of art reviewed in the following pages, the above distinctions are often left untheorised, and thus are sometimes the basis of internal contradiction and confusion. It may also be the case that theorisation denies such distinctions.

Art and Ideology Critique

There has been a growth in sociologocally orientated theorisation about

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71 The child's sense of form has been demonstrated by a number of psychologists. Fantz has conducted a range of experiments to demonstrate that neonates possess a sense of form, with preference for certain patterns. C.f. Fantz, R.L., 'The Origin of Form Perception', *Scientific American*, no.204, 1961, pp.66-72.

72 C.f. Chambers, F.P., *The History of Taste*, London, 1971. For short discussion, c.f. Saw, R. and Osborne, H., 'Aesthetics as a Branch of Philosophy', Osborne, H. (ed.), *Aesthetics in the Modern World*, 1968, which traces the development of Aesthetics from the use of the term by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-62).

art in the past two decades, much of it by theorists outside of mainstream sociology, and mostly adopting a professed Marxist perspective. This body of work has popularised the view that art can best be understood through an ideological critique, that demonstrates the socio-historically contingent nature of works of art. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (73), more than any other work, popularised an approach that discarded the artist as the central formative influence in favour of social class ideology (74). Berger's account in *Ways of Seeing* is intended to be dismissive of those art historical perspectives that view art through the life and work of 'great men' (75). His analysis of the art object concentrates almost exclusively on content, seen as the product of bourgeois ideology. Oil painting as a genre is described as originating in bourgeois property relations and market transactions. Gainsborough's *Mr. and Mrs. Robert Andrews* (1748-9) is viewed by reference to the sitters' location in the landscape, which fills the centre left of the painting, and is recognisable as their private property. Berger sees the painting as a concrete representation of their status as landowners, to hang for their own and others' contemplation and admiration (76).

To demonstrate the ideological basis of artistic practice and reception has become the major objective of recent Marxist theory. Eagleton expresses this desire for a Marxist ideological critique in the arena of literary criticism.

> Criticism must break with its ideological pre-history, situating itself outside of the space of the text on the alternative terrain of scientific knowledge. (77)

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73 Berger, J., *Ways of Seeing*, London, 1972.
74 Before Berger, this approach had been developed by Plekhanov, G.V., in *Art and Social Life*, Moscow, 1957; and Antal, F., c.f. *Florentine Painting and its Social Background*, London, 1964, and essays in *Classicism and Romanticism: with other Studies in Art History*, London, 1966. Berger has since acknowledged the sterility of the approach taken in *Ways of Seeing*; c.f. Berger, J., 'In Defence of Art', *New Society*, 28th Sept., 1978.
75 *Ways of Seeing* was written as a television series, following the widely acclaimed series, *Civilisation*, written and presented by Kenneth Clark. To some extent it has to be seen as a response to the art historical perspective therein; c.f. Clark, K., *Civilisation*, London, 1969.
76 Berger, J., op cit, 1972, p.108. It is interesting to compare this account to that of John Hayes, which also identifies the scene in the Andrews' property, but emphasises the interpretation that it is a marriage portrait, with the sheaves of stooked corn in the foreground symbolic of fertility. He also notes the influence of Rococo style in the depiction of the cloud formation, indicative, one could argue, of an aristocratic decorative taste. C.f. Hayes, J., *Gainsborough*, London, 1975, p.203.
77 Eagleton, T., *Criticism and Ideology*, London, 1978, p.43.

To achieve this, Eagleton proposes a schematic representation of the structures that produce the literary text, it being:

> ... the task of criticism to analyse the complex historical articulation of these structures. (78)

The structures are specified as: the general mode of production (GMP), referring to the dominant mode at any historical moment; the literary mode of production (LMP); the general ideology (GI); authorial ideology (AuI); and aesthetic ideology (AI); along with the text itself. The status of the schema is unclear, for the relationship between component parts is itself historically conditioned. Although the LMP is a 'sub-structure' of the GMP, the question of determinancy is left open to historical specification. The GI, which according to the base/superstructure model of Marxist theory, is superstructural:

> ... at a particular historical stage bear[s] significantly on the character of the LMP, (79)

which is part of the GMP. Having schematically established these structures, Eagleton breaks them down again, by specifying other structures with the status of 'modes', which interact with the structures of the schema: modes of literary distribution, exchange, and consumption (80). The schema is further broken down by presenting the linguistic, the political, and the cultural as structures within the GI (81), and arguing that these are not merely 'superstructural' (82). When he writes of the relationship between the GI and AuI, he states that:

> ... relations of effective homology, partial disjunction and severe contradiction are possible.' (83)

Almost any relation between structural components seems to be historically possible, so that it is difficult to see how this schema aids analysis, let alone provides a foundation for scientific knowledge, however we conceive of this.

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78 ibid, pp.44-5.
79 ibid, p.54.
80 ibid, p.47.
81 ibid, p.54.
82 ibid, p.55, footnote 2, where Eagleton states that 'without language there could be no material production in the sense characteristic of the human animal, language is first of all a physical, material reality, and as such is part of the forces of material production.'
83 ibid, p.59.

When Eagleton asserts that:

> ... the literary text is the product of a specific overdetermined conjuncture of the elements or formations set out schematically, (84)

he does not add to our knowledge of the relationship between text and social process. He does not solve what John Hall has called:

> ... one of the greatest weaknesses of the sociology of literature.... its inability to specify the exact links between literature and society. (85)

However, perhaps we should not expect this exactness in general theoretical terms, but rather seek those arrangements that exist specific to the historical process. If general schemas are to arise, surely it is out of this historical analysis, not as an attempt to construct a theoretical framework on axiomatic principles - in Eagleton's case with the aid of Althusserian concepts. Eagleton's schema is an attempt to demonstrate the ideological nature of the literary text whilst avoiding crude determinism, but structures are lost in their own relative autonomy and in the historical process itself. His avowed materialism with its claim to scientific rather than ideological discourse is never substantiated in theoretical practice, although it determines the problematic.

In attempting to theorise the relative autonomy of ideological practices, as they are designated by Marxist theory, Eagleton cannot retain a determinist schema, as ideology is cut free from the materialist base on which most Marxist analysis is grounded. Here I agree with Hirst's criticism of Althusser's notions of the relative autonomy of ideological structures and of economic determination in the last instance, that they are not tenable; the concepts of autonomy and determination are contradictory (86). If ideological practice is itself 'real', to the extent that it can act back on the economic base, then it is not correct to see ideology as mystification, at least not in all instances. What the Althusserian approach has achieved is to bring into question the crude

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84 ibid, p.63.
85 Hall, J., *The Sociology of Literature*, London, 1979, p.24.
86 Hirst, P., 'Economic Classes and Politics', Hunt, A., *Class and Class Structure*, London, 1977.

opposition between 'true' and 'false' consciousness. After attacking humanism for being ideological in 'Marxism and Humanism' (87), he later retracts:

> In no way was I condemning ideology as a social reality; as Marx says, it is in ideology that men 'become conscious' of their class conflicts and 'fight it out'. (88)

This totalising conception of ideology itself poses a problem for claims like Eagleton's to scientific practice. As McLennan et al point out, in Althusser's work there is:

> An irresolvable tension between - ideology conceived as the epistemological antithesis to science-in-general and conceived as an intrinsic element of the structure or fabric of social formations. (89)

The problematic status of Marxist, and indeed all sociological, accounts is raised by this oppositional relationship between ideology in its generalised form and ideology in its particular form - to use Mannheim's terminology (90). If the concept ideology is to be retained in its particular form - and I have already expressed my view that this is not possible and that a hermeneutic approach thereby becomes necessitated - then the grounds for non-ideological theoretical practice have to be established. This has not proved to be an achievable project.

Marxist ideological critique assumes a privileged epistemological position. It sets its own discourse above the ideological level in order to expose ideology as mystificatory. Nicos Hadjinicolaou in *Art History and Class Struggle* (91) asserts that:

> The very function of ideology, as opposed to science, is to hide contradictions in life by fabricating an illusory system of ideas. (92)

Hadjinicolaou's account of the history of art is held by contrast to be scientific - the same claim made by Eagleton. Writings on art which do

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87 Althusser, L., *For Marx*, London, 1969, pp.219-47.
88 Althusser, L., 'To My English Readers', ibid, 1969, p.11.
89 McLennan, G., Molina, V. and Peters, R., 'Althusser's Theory of Ideology', *On Ideology*, London, 1977, pp.77-105.
90 C.f. previous discussion of Mannheim's conception of ideology. Also c.f. Larrain, J., *The Concept of Ideology*, London, 1979, for a categorisation of uses of the ideology concept.
91 Hadjinicolaou, N., *Art History and Class Struggle*, London, 1979.
92 ibid, p.10.

not take the form of ideological critique are labelled as 'aesthetic ideologies' (93). Hadjinicolaou follows Berger and Eagleton when he points to three obstacles in the way of a true reading of the history of art. These are: (a) the conception of art history as a history of artists; (b) the conception of art history as forming a general history of civilisation; (c) the conception of art history as a history of works of art (94). These art historical strategies are dismissed for their one-sidedness and for not recognising the role of class struggle and its ideological formation in the visual ideology of the work of art.

If we confine analysis to disclosing visual ideology, then we gain only a partial understanding of the complexity of the historical and creative process, and risk distorting visual content or ignoring broad areas of visual socio-psychological content. For example, Hadjinicolaou argues that there is no such thing as an artist's style, and attempts to demonstrate this through analysis of the work of David and Rembrandt. David is selected because he is an artist seen to espouse several styles in succession, while Rembrandt painted in several styles simultaneously. In both cases, Hadjinicolaou asserts, art historians try to identify a single style that is truly the artist's and explain why the others are not. To make his point Hadjinicolaou admits to:

> [an] excessive attention [to the] ... conditions under which each work was commissioned and to the class provenance and class ideology of the person who commissioned it. (95)

What is perhaps more important is his shift from the notion of artist's style to that of artist's ideology - he is actually concerned to show that the artist does not have an ideology of his own, seeing this as synonymous with style. Now, one can agree that artists rarely display a consistent ideology, but this does not mean that they do not greatly influence the style and, in Hadjinicolaou's narrower sense, the visual ideology of a particular work. The exercise of identifying this personal ideology and possibly asserting some consistency throughout the artist's oeuvre, or establishing certain works as a cannon, it is no less valid in

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93 ibid, p.13.
94 ibid, p.17.
95 ibid, p.104.

art history than it is in Marxist theory, where it is consistently practised. If it is important to know what Marx was really saying, is it not equally valid to ask what David and Rembrandt intended?

The examples taken by Hadjinicolaou are pre-Modern. How much more difficult and less insightful it would be to seek distinctive visual ideologies in the Modern era, where the artist's control of style is far greater. An analysis of the 'art movement' becomes increasingly central from Impressionism through to Conceptualism, and the individual style of the artist is increasingly significant, as the artist's aesthetic authority is established over his audience. To some extent, the artist has always painted for himself. Take Rembrandt's self-portraits for example (96): how are these to be adequately described as class-based visual ideology? They are deeply psychological/'spiritual' studies, much more penetrating than any of his commissioned portraits. They begin to indicate something about the artist as distinct from his class of origin, and are free of concerns dictated by patronage. Why should not a study of the artist's psychological state, centred on these self-portraits, be an equally valid undertaking to class analysis (97)? An over-emphasis on either undertaking would be one-sided, but not of itself invalid. However, seeking the connection between themes originating in the artist's psyche and those that may be shown to be representative of the consciousness of a collectivity, and integrating these within the context of the wider social structure, may be seen as the highest aim of research. Here I am referring to the establishment of the 'relatedness' of components within the totality, not their reduction, however mediated, to a structural base, materialistically or idealistically conceived (98).

Janet Wolff has said of Hadjinicolaou's book that there is:

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96 Some sixty paintings, twenty etchings, and ten drawings are known. C.f. discussion in Rosenberg, J., *Rembrandt: Life and Work*, Oxford, 1980, p.37.

97 The emphasis on class analysis derives from a particular politically committed social theory that seeks its validation, ultimately, in praxis. Hadjinicolaou not only rejects other art historical approaches, he also rejects sociology as bourgeois discourse: c.f. op cit, 1979, pp.50-1. He takes Marx's polemic, 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles', (Marx, K. and Engels, F., *The Communist Manifesto*, Harmondsworth, 1971, p.79) as providing the measure of all social activity. Hence Realism is defined as the art of the progressive class.

98 I have dealt with this conception of 'relatedness' at some length already.

> ... very little [of the]... account of the history of art and of the ideological nature of painting,(99)

with which she disagrees. In her opinion the sociology of art's ideological critique has demonstrated:

> ... [the] historical, ideological, and contingent nature of a good deal of 'aesthetics' and of many, if not all, 'aesthetic judgements'. (100)

Wolff does admit in *The Social Production of Art* (101) that the emphasis on 'art-as-ideology' has followed:

> ... one particular direction [and] is rather limited. (102)

She warns against any crude conception of this ideological identity. She points to the need to understand the part played by technology, social institutions and economic factors (103), and also tries to demonstrate that the ideological critique does not necessarily remove the artist as an analytical category or as a real person (104). I have argued elsewhere (105) that Wolff's concern to unify the disparate field of the sociolgy of art and to rescue art itself from the excesses of ideological critique brings the problematic nature of theorisation in this area into relief. There are tensions in her theoretical discourse that demonstrate a desire to account for her own response to art whilst staying within the framework of Marxist discourse. I believe also that there is evidence of a continuing commitment to hermeneutic philosophy that leads her to seek a broader base for the sociology of art (106). This makes her approach to theory more open than Hadjinicolaou's; it is difficult to see how he could accept Wolff's conception of ideology as referring to:

> ... [the] social and historical location of artists' thoughts as members of social groups. (107)

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99 Wolff, J., *The Social Production of Art*, London, 1981, p.5.
100 Wolff, J., *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art*, London, 1983, p.11.
101 Wolff, J., op cit, 1981.
102 ibid, p.29.
103 ibid, c.f. discussion, pp.32-48.
104 ibid, p.70.
105 Hincks, T., 'Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art: A Critical Commentary on the Writings of Janet Wolff', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.24, no.4, 1984, pp.341-54.
106 In Wolff, J., *Hermeneutics, Philosophy and the Sociology of Art*, London, 1975, Wolff was committed to developing a hermeneutic theory of art. This commitment to hermeneutics seems to be a moderating influence upon her more recent Marxist discourse.
107 Wolff, J., op cit, 1983, p.70.

This breaks with Hadjinicolaou's narrower sense of ideology as presenting an illusion of reality.

Before looking in more detail at Wolff's sociology of art, it is necessary to comment further on the issue of what it means to say that art is an ideological product in Marxist discourse. In Marx's formulation of the ideological to be found in *The German Ideology* (108), there is a starting point for an understanding.

> We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of their life process.... Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. (109)

Care needs to be taken in the interpretation of this statement. Marx is not saying that ideology as 'reflexes and echoes' of life process is a simple matter of determination, but that thought and consciousness cannot be detached from social process as a whole. Raymond Williams has tried to correct the view that sees the above passage in simplistic material versus ideal terms, which he claims is itself an idealistic polarity (110). Williams points to the passage in *Capital* (111) where Marx compares the labout of the bee to that of the architect who:

> ... raises his structures in imagination before he erects it in reality. (112)

as a corrective to any crude conception of ideology. One can only understand this apparent inversion by Marx, if one accepts that consciousness too is seen as part of the human material social process (113). Retaining the notion of materialism here has caused much confusion, for what Marx accepts as reality is the lived historical process with its dialectic of material and ideal components. There is a distinction to be made between philosophical materialism and historical materialism. Thoughts, ideas, are not in themselves ideological, but

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108 Marx, K. and Engels, F., *The German Ideology*, London, 1965.
109 ibid, p.14.
110 Williams, R., *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford, 1978, p.59.
111 Marx, K., *Capital*, Moscow, 1961. For broad discussion of Marx's attitude to art in his writings, c.f. Baxandall, L. and Morowski, S., *Marx - Engels: On Literature and Art*, New York, 1974, and Laing, D., *The Marxist Theory of Art*, Sussex, 1978.
112 ibid, vol.1, pp.177-8.
113 C.f. Williams, R., op cit, 1978, pp.57-8.

become so if detached from social process, so as to be viewed as constitutive of reality. To quote Williams again:

> Ideology is 'separated theory', and its analysis must involve restoration of its 'real' connections. (114)

In Marx's view, consciousness is grounded in class interests, and such consciousness becomes ideology when it is generalised and presented as reality, forming an illusion or false consciousness. It is possible to accept this view and incorporate it into a hermeneutic approach. But the separation of consciousness that is grounded in social practice from ideology is not a simple matter.

Marxist ideological critique often assumes that to show that discursive acts are grounded in social structures is to invalidate them in some way. What Williams demonstrates, that is relevant to the question posed concerning the nature of art, is that artistic practice need not be seen as devalued by being grounded in social reality.

> ... it is clear, historically, that the definition of 'aesthetic' response is an affirmation, directly comparable with the definition and affirmation of 'creative imagination', of certain human meanings and values which a dominant social system reduced and even tried to exclude. (115)

This formulation allows for the acknowledgement of the reality of the aesthetic experience, viewing aesthetic theorisation as a response to this, as well as to the social conditions within which experience and theorisation take place. However contaminated by ideological forms, the consciousness of the aesthetic is not to be dismissed as pure illusion. Theorisation of the aesthetic, the attempt to find grounds for value judgements and the identification of good or even great art, on this formulation would seem not only possible but a valid project. Yet they are denied in much recent Marxist literature, either implicitly, by the terms of the ideological critique, or explicitly, as the target of such a critique. Such denial, on the grounds that art and aesthetic

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114 ibid, p.66.
115 ibid, p.151. Wolff also argues that 'to demonstrate the origin of a judgement is not (necessarily) to comment on its truth'; op cit, 1983, p.17.

consciousness are historically contingent, has been termed 'contextualism', and the opposing tendency, to be found within and outside Marxist theory, with its claim to art's indispensibilty, 'foundationalism' (116).

The Specificity of Art - Contextualism versus Foundationalism

Wolff, despite her assertion that the central theme of *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art* is to establish:

> The irreduceability of 'aesthetic value' to social, political, or ideological coordinates. (117)

still has to be described as a contextualist, albeit with a desire to establish the aesthetic as in some way 'autonomous'. What she is looking for in an aesthetic theorisation is its ability to become part of a sociological (Marxist) discourse. Her ground for rejecting aesthetic theories is their impossibility of being:

> ... incorporated into a sociological approach. (118)

A basis for finding a unified theory that would incorporate the concerns of aesthetics into a sociological approach she identifies in the recent tendency in some aestheticians to recognise the contingent nature of aesthetic judgements. This convergence of theory is based on the realisation, according to Wolff, of:

> ... [the] essentially social nature of aesthetic experience. (119)

What Wolff neglects to remark upon is the way that aesthetic theory has had to take account of contemporary trends in art practice. These trends, the culmination of avant-gardist anti-artism, have produced the

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116 Shapiro, G., 'Gadamer, Habermas, and the Death of Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.26, no.1, 1986, pp.39-47.
117 Wolff, J., op cit, 1983, p.11.
118 ibid, p.108.
119 ibid, p.68.

situation in the art-world described in Chapter I. A sort of convergence has taken place, but as I have commented elsewhere:

> ... it has less to do with the adoption of a more adequate sociological model than with conformity to an overarching 'weltanschauung'. (120)

The situation in the art-world I have termed pluralism, involving the inability to specify grounds for aesthetic value judgements, is itself associated with the disintegration of style. This is part of the Modernist weltanschauung that denies the very aesthetics of a universal timeless order, and seeks to ground reality as historical process (121). The aesthetics that sociology is seen to be converging with is that of 'late-Modernism' - relativistic and devoid of a value position. There is, then, a need for a defence of the aesthetic, not on the grounds that sociological analysis has gone too far, although in some cases it has, but as a response to excesses in the art world itself.

Wolff's choice of 'aesthetic attitude theory' and 'institutional theory', as approaches to the aesthetic that possess positive elements that can be taken into a sociological account, highlights her contextualism. Both approaches are nominalistic. Aesthetic attitude theory directs attention to the intentionality of the aesthetic act and away from the objectively present object of aesthetic contemplation. Wolff, rejects the idea of 'disinterestedness' (122) often associated with aesthetic attitude theory for a phenomenological 'bracketing' of reality (123). Institutional theory argues that art and aesthetic value are defined by those in a position of authority in the art-world, so that aesthetic value is a received category that determines the way an audience views an art object (124). Again, the objective presence of an aesthetic object is denied, as in this case is the reality of the aesthetic experience as independent of received 'aesthetic ideology'. These theories reinforce the contextualist view of art and aesthetic value, and could, only with distortion and selectivity,

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120 Hincks, T., op cit, 1984, p.348.
121 C.f. discussion in Ch.VI.
122 On disinterestedness, c.f. Ch.I, p.10, note 22.
123 Most of Wolff's discussion is concerned with the aesthetic as an experience gained through entering one of a multiplicity of realities open to the human subject. C.f. Schultz, A., 'On Multiple Realities', Schultz, A., *Collected Papers*, vol.I, The Hague, 1962. For Wolff, this involves entering into an aesthetic discourse.
124 C.f. Dickie, G., *Art and Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*, New York, 1974, and discussion in Ch.I of this thesis.

be incorporated into a Marxist sociology of art (125).

To seek to come to terms with the 'specificity of art' is Wolff's avowed intention. She identifies three senses of the term 'specificity' (126): (a) the historical separation of artistic activity from other areas of social life and the concommitant specialisation of aesthetic modes of perception, (b) the independence of art in relation to social or economic factors - art's relative autonomy, and (c) the identification of the specific characteristics of art - what is involved in aesthetic evaluation, pleasure and gratification.

It is with the latter of these senses that Wolff is concerned, and she finds its best articulation in discourse theory (127), but it is difficult to see how this takes us nearer to the specificity of art, in the aesthetic sense. Yet Wolff asserts:

> ... discourse theory offers us a notion of the specificity of the aesthetic in terms of the particular discursive practices which constitute it, while leaving open the possibility of relating the aesthetic and its discourse to extra aesthetic factors.... the specificity of art is identical with the discourses of the aesthetic. (128)

This removes any possibility of recognition of an aesthetic object, for the aesthetic experience is no other than its own theorisation. But this is surely too limited an approach. It is acceptable to say that discourse, for example, is determinant of the way we describe beauty, and

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125 For lengthier discussion, c.f. Hincks, T., op cit, 1984, pp.347-50.
126 Wolff, J., op cit, 1983, pp.86-90.
127 Discourse theory takes the position that social reality is constituted in discourse, or, at least, the way we conceive of the world we inhabit is such a construct, having a determinacy over social action. As such it shifts the perspective on reality. As Foucault states in *The History of Sensuality; Volume One, An Introduction*, Harmondsworth, 1981, pp.8-9: 'The question I would like to pose is not, Why are we repressed? but rather, Why do we say.... that we are repressed?' However, one has to beware of such transpositions, as this can lead to the assertion that, for instance, repression is a purely discursive experience. Bennet has taken an extreme view, arguing that the text has no existence in its own right, but is a product of reading. The act of criticism produces meaning; readings being theoretically unlimited, criticism abandons itself to relativism. C.f. Bennett, T., *Formalism and Marxism*, London, 1979. For a review of this work and of Jameson, F., *The Political Unconscious; Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London, 1981, where Jameson tries to maintain the notion of ideology as false consciousness, c.f. Giles, S., 'Against Interpretation? Recent Trends in Modern Criticism', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.28, no.1, 1988, pp.68-77. As Giles points out, these theories fail to approach the text in its own terms, or to supply a critical reading.
128 Wolff, J., op cit, 1983, p.94.

possibly what we look for and designate as beautiful, but it cannot be held that it determines the nature of aesthetic pleasure. Discourse does not just happen, it does not of its own volition create a social reality; rather it mediates by establishing a more or less closed framework of meaning through which to conceptualise the pre-theoretical experience.

I shall discuss the other main approaches to the specificity of the aesthetic identified by Wolff, 'philosophic anthropology' and 'psychoanalytic theory' later. These are both rejected by Wolff for their 'essentialism'. Despite her professed openness to aesthetic theory, she does not demonstrate flexibility in her Marxist sociological discourse.

> It may well be that the pleasure and gratification experienced in aesthetic encounters has to be explained in terms of deep unconscious or even physical responses, but if so, these can only be conceived as historically and concretely produced in individuals in the context of the particular nature of the family in the given society and period, the specific relations between the sexes obtaining, and the wider social and ideological processes and institutions in which consciousness and experience are constructed. (129)

With this statement the specificity of art is limited to its historical and discursive particularity. Wolff's attempt to rescue the aesthetic flounders, theory failing to break out of its contextualist framework.

A more overt contextualism is presented by Roger Taylor whose professed intention is to destroy the art myth entirely.

> Art is nothing over and above what has been socially established as art. (130)

Taylor's argument is that art and aesthetics establish 'conceptual practices' which act against the interests of the majority. Art and its related field of concepts and practices provide a mask of superiority to those who have access. The task of the book is to demonstrate that these concepts are linguistic constructs, gaining their particular meaning within bourgeois society. Art is inauthentic; popular culture by contrast is authentic. This seems to be the message of the book and it is demonstrated in an analysis of bougeois appropriation of jazz through the application of the art concept. Taylor claims that his analysis goes

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129 ibid, p.107.
130 Taylor, R.L., *Art, An Enemy of the People*, Sussex, 1978, p.49.

further than Marxist accounts, because these rest content with describing the historical circumstances that give rise to a particular art style or work of art. Marxist accounts do not, he claims, analyse the origins and growth of art as a conceptual practice, but accept bourgeois categories and adopt an art historical perspective (131). It is possible to criticise Taylor on two accounts: firstly, he himself, with his advocacy of popular/folk culture, gives to this a value equally derived from the prevailing conceptual framework as the value placed on high art; secondly, not all Marxists can be criticised for not analysing art as a conceptual practice - Wolff is a case in point.

To some extent, Taylor's comments about Marxists accepting prevailing conceptual practice are justified. The art concept is adopted by Lenin who had a conception of artistic value that he sought to defend (132). Marx, too, as can be seen from his comments on Greek art in the introduction to the *Grundrisse* (133), had a notion of artistic value. Lukács favoured social realism as a literary form, and held to a belief in the possibility of great art (134). Brecht viewed art as a means to consciousness raising through experimentation on stage and with audience participation; art for him held a value as social practice (135). Marcuse shifted his position from viewing art in Aristotelian terms, as a cathartic experience that resolved societal tension on the aesthetic plane and, thus, was an affirmation of reality (136), to an assertion of art's liberatory function, not simply as revolutionary content, but as an 'aesthetic transformation' taking place in every 'authentic' work of art

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131 ibid, p.73. He is obviously not aware of Williams, R., *Keywords*, Glasgow, 1976, where concepts are viewed as constituting a particular practice within capitalist society. Though Williams never abstracts these as elements of discourse set above practice. In *Culture*, Williams refers to the categories of art experience as 'disguised social processes': Williams, R., *Culture*, Glasgow, 1981, p.126.

132 Lenin, V.I., *On Literature and Art*, Moscow, 1967. C.f. discussion in Laing, D., op cit, pp.20-5.

133 Marx, K., *Grundisse*, Harmondsworth, 1973, pp.110-1. Marx saw Greek art as a source of pleasure and value; it represented the expression of the childhood of humanity, or so he postulated. This has been a source of concern to Marxists ever since. Jauss has called it an 'idealistic embarrassment': Jauss, R., 'The Idealistic Embarrassment: Observations on Marxist Aesthetics', *New Literary History*, vol.II, 1970.

134 C.f. esp. Lukács, G., *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, London, 1963. Also c.f. his defence of Realism and anti-Modernist stance in 'Realism in the Balance', first pub. 1938, Block, E. et al, *Aesthetics and Politics*, London, 1977.

135 C.f. Brecht, B., 'Against Georg Lukács', Block, E. et al, ibid. As this account demonstrates, there is divergence in theorisation within Marxist discourse. It has been convincingly argued that Marx himself acknowledged an avant-garde function for art. C.f. Rose, G., *Marx Lost Aesthetic*, Cambridge, 1984.

136 Marcuse, H., 'The Affirmational Character of Culture', *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, London, 1968.

(137). For Hauser, not only is artistic creation:

> ... [the] prototype of the dialectical process, (138)

it also provides knowledge, taking over from science:

> ... at the point at which further knowledge can only be acquired along paths which cannot be trodden outside of art. (139)

These theorists, varied as their Marxism is, have tried to maintain the concept of art as corresponding to an essential social reality. They can all be described as foundationalists.

Attempts to specify a materialist aesthetic foundation to artistic practice, to fulfil the foundationalists' concern with human constants, have tended to locate the aesthetic in art's liberatory function and/or to specify a material basis for the universality of art. The notion of the aesthetic as a liberatory force is prominent in the works of Marcuse and Hauser, and also in Brecht's application of theatre (140). Art is viewed as having the potential to break through ideology. Gadamer expresses this view of art as liberatory in existentialist terms:

> The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and a demolition of the familiar. It is not only the 'This art thou!' disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us, 'Thou must alter thy life!'. (141)

Emphasis on art's liberatory function necessarily has a phenomenological bias, but it can be viewed in more didactic and less aesthetic terms when emphasis is placed on social content, as in socialist realism. Here the search for aesthetic authenticity gives way to instrumentalism.

Lukács' Marxist literary criticism, with its use of the category 'realism' as a measure for evaluating a text, provides an example of an approach

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137 Marcuse, H., *The Aesthetic Dimension*, London, 1979.
138 Hauser, A., *The Sociology of Art*, London, 1982, p.397.
139 ibid, p.5.
140 Brecht, in his early works, tried to shock the audience into 'consciousness', as in *The Threepenny Opera*, while his later work, for example, *Mother Courage and her Children*, present socio-psychological forces in tension around moral issues, a questioning of necessity and potential in history. For discussion of Brecht's work, c.f. Williams, R., *Modern Tragedy*, London, 1979, pp.190-204.
141 Gadamer, H.G., 'Aesthetics and Hermeneutics', op cit, 1977, p.104.

that affirms art through its instrumental purpose. The notion of the 'type' as a synthesis of general and particular within historical situations develops into a guiding principle for the evaluation of texts:

> ... what makes it a type is that in it all humanity and socially essential determinations are present at their highest level of development. (142)

Art's function here is primarily didactic. As John Hall points out, in Lukács' theory of realism, there is a move from descriptive to normative analysis (143), where 'realism' becomes the guiding principle, and the text is viewed through the 'truth' claims of Marxist theory. It is:

> ... [a] Marxist aesthetic based very rigourously upon a Marxist interpretation of history. (144)

As Alan Swingewood remarks:

> ... the aesthetic element in Marxism has developed into a frankly utilitarian aesthetic. (145)

in the later work of Lukács. Clearly, there is a strong sense of the instrumentalist aesthetic in the writings of recent Marxists advocating an ideological critique, although a positive aesthetic is not theorised to balance the negational tendency of such a critique. In Lukács' theory of realism there is an aesthetic upon which to base value judgements, though these judgements are imposed by a historical-materialist interpretation of society.

Ernst Fischer's *The Necessity of Art* (146) provides an example of a Marxist foundationalist art theory. Art's liberatory function is viewed as freeing Man from his isolation in the world.

> [Man] feels that he can attain wholeness only if he takes possession of the experiences of others that might potentially be his own. (147)

Art provides the 'indispensible means' for the merging of the individual with the collectivity. It both allows for a loss of self, and a

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143 Hall, J., op cit, 1979, p.4.
144 Orr, J., 'Georg Lukács', Routh, J. and Wolff, J. (eds.), *The Sociology of Literature: Theretical Approaches*, Sociological Review Monograph, 25, Keele, 1977, p.109.
145 Swingewood, A., 'Marxist Approaches to the Study of Literature', Routh, J. and Wolff, J. (eds.), ibid, p.136.
146 Fischer, E., *The Necessity of Art*, Harmondsworth, 1978.
147 ibid, p.8.

distancing, simultaneously (148). It both particularises, in that it is conditioned in time, and generalises, by going beyond the bounds of time (149). Through his art, the artist's role in class society is:

> ... to raise awareness, to 'liberate men' - from the anxieties of the ambiguous; fragmented individuality and from the dread of an insecure existence; to guide individual life back into collective life, the personal into the universal; to *restore the lost unity of man*. (150)

Art is founded in human collective existence; it begins as magic used as a tool for enabling Man to work in the world.

> A means of experience - a gesture, an image, a sound, or a word - was as much a tool as a hand-axe or knife. It was only another way of establishing man's power over nature. (151)

Art develops through the magic power invested in 'similitude' (sympathetic magic), arising from the forms and rythms of nature and social existence. As society evolves, so magic gives way to art, science and religion, though something of the magical remains in art. Art here has the ability to act as a means to allow Man to stand outside and above nature and social existence, whilst resolving the problem of isolation caused by this very distancing from the totality - it confronts Man's alienated existence. Art is necessary and indispensible.

> Not until humanity itself dies will art die. (152)

In Fischer's theory of art there is a union of the fundamental and the instrumental. Art is born out of the need to control existence and remove uncertainty from life experience. It is a direct response to alienation in the world. In this sense, Man cannot but indulge in artistic practice. In its primitive form as magic, art presents an illusion of power over nature as well as giving form to collective experience, while in capitalist society it becomes truly liberatory and performs the task of demystification. There is a shift in perspective here, from what art is, to what art should be, without an acknowledgement of this - leading into a discussion of socialist art, an art form that

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148 ibid, p.9
149 ibid, p.12.
150 ibid, p.40.
151 ibid, p.32.
152 ibid, p.47.

'anticipates the future' (153). To maintain its collective expression in a class divided society, art's function becomes seen as class-based, the working class taking on the mantle of carriers of Man's collective identity. Art develops as an expression of human collective identity, 'species being', providing a liberatory critical function, the form of which changes with the historically determined situation of alienation - this appears to be the central theme of *The Necessity of Art*.

Fischer's aesthetic derives from a historical-materialist conception of social evolution, albeit tinged with phenomenological concerns. In this, it has much in common with the writings of Marcuse and Hauser, already mentioned. Recently there has been an attempt by some Marxist writers to specify a fundamentalist basis for art of a more thoroughly materialist kind - what Wolff has termed 'philosophic anthropology'. Timpanaro has proposed, as a basis for an understanding of art and literature, an analysis of human 'constants' that transcend the historically specific (154). He argues that Marxists should recognise the biological, physical and psychological basis of human activity, not as 'determinant' in any crude way, but as nonetheless determining to a degree. Nature, he asserts, has a prior claim over mind, with the physical, biological, and socio-economic and political forming levels of dependency. Evolution has set down structures that, although not transcendental, have socio-historical permanency - an ontology with which I can relate.

Williams, responding to the materialism of Timpanaro, has argued that a search must be made for the permanent configurational basis of aesthetic experience, which he indicates may be found in our 'life rhythms' (155). Williams sees in Timpanaro's work a recognition of what he was striving for when he wrote:

> The true effects of many kinds of writing are indeed quite physical: specific alterations of physical rhythms, physical organisation; experiences of quickening and slowing, of expansion and of intensification. (156)

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153 ibid, p.111, conforming to the Modernist aesthetic and the notion of avant-gardism.
154 Timpanaro, S., *On Materialism*, London, 1975, p.50.
155 Williams, R., *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*, London, 1979b, p.340. Also c.f. his 'Timpanaro's Materialist Challenge', *New Left Review*, no.119, 1980, pp.42-59.
156 Williams, R., op cit, 1978, p.156.

It is through these that the aesthetic:

> ... appeared to speak, and that the reduction to 'ideology' tried and failed to deny or make accidental. (157)

Peter Fuller has gone further in the direction of theorising a materialist basis for aesthetic experience, arguing for recognition of 'relative constants' in human behaviour:

> ... there is a resiliant, underlying 'human condition' which is determined by our biological rather than our socio-economic being, by our place in nature rather than by our place in history. (158)

These relative constants, Fuller has argued, are primarily to be seen as of a 'psycho-biological' nature, although they are ideologically structured at the cultural level (159).

> Through its authentic expression the greatest art of the past posits a human subject, and reveals a human practice, which tears through the veils of ideology to speak of 'relatively constant' elements of human experience (160).

The search for these relatively constant elements has lead Fuller to seek answers outside Marxism: in ethology, biology, archeology and psychoanalytic theory (161). Thus, in considering aesthetic reception, he writes approvingly of Darwin's view that pleasure in the beautiful is a capacity belonging to humans and animals alike, although cultural complex taste is not shared, as this results from the interplay of diverse concepts that enhance our understanding of beauty. Following Grant's 'physiological aesthetics' (162), Fuller states:

> I, too, believe that the aesthetic response of human beings probably has its roots in congenital, instinctive responses, but these are subject to some peculiarly human (rather than merely birdlike) powers of transformation. (163)

One does not have to go back to Grant's writing to find this ethological perspective. Layhausen writes:

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157 ibid, p.156.
158 Fuller, P., *Seeing Berger: A Revaluation*, London, 1980a, p.9.
159 ibid, pp.29-30, appears in note at bottom of text.
160 Fuller, P., *Beyond the Crisis in Art*, London, 1981, p.31.
161 C.f. Fuller, P., 'Art and Biology', *The Naked Artist*, London, 1983, pp.2-19.
162 Grant, A., *Physiological Aesthetics*, first pub. 1877, New York, 1977.
163 Fuller, P., op cit, 1983, p.6.

> What an organism is capable of expressing and how it does so has on the whole already been laid down by the phylogeny of the species. (164)

Desmond Morris has done much to popularise this ethological perspective (165). In an early work on the aesthetic capabilities of chimpanzees, he claims to demonstrate that primates have a basic aesthetic sense, one that is akin to that of a young child, where consciousness of balance and a concern with form can be seen (166) in drawings and paintings. But most of what Morris presents as 'art work' is far removed from human aesthetic intention; the manner of writing about the chimpanzees' work imputes artistic intention. He writes of one chimpanzee (Congo) as being:

> ... hard at work completing many series of experimental drawings. (167)

It is difficult to take Morris seriously here, although this itself does not dismiss the possibility of a basic aesthetic response present in chimpanzees. The comparison between chimpanzees' drawings and those of young children does seem to offer some evidence for the view that there is a similarity in formal aesthetic presentation. Fuller, indeed, places great store by the findings of Morris, as presenting a demonstration of a basic aesthetic impulse (168).

Fuller is drawn to ecology because it appears to offer a materialist explanation for the presence of human constants. He quotes the socio-biologists, Lionel Tiger and Robin Watson, approvingly:

> Men are not simply creatures of culture, they are the creatures that create culture because that is the kind of creature they are. (169)

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164 Layhausen, P., 'The Biology of Expression and Impression', Lorenz, K. and Leyhausen, P. (eds.), *Motivation of Human and Animal Behaviour*, Amsterdam, 1973, p.276. A major problem for this perspective is that of the inaccessibility to the phylogeny of human kind. To overcome this, there is reliance on the study of animals lower down the evolutionary tree, based on the assumption that 'The uniform origins of all life make it possible to make comparison': Koehler, D., 'Non-verbal Thinking', Lorenz, K., *Man and Animals*, London, 1972, p.94. But this leads to the idea that 'culture' simply obscures the nature of the human animal, while in fact it is creative of humanity in its own right.

165 In books such as *The Naked Ape*, London, 1967, and *Man Watching*, London, 1977.

166 Morris, D., *The Biology of Art*, London, 1962.

167 ibid, p.28.

168 There is some evidence to support this if we compare Morris's chimps with child art; c.f. Eng, H., *The Psychology of Children's Drawings*, London, 1966. That there is an expressive impulse at play in child drawings seems to be demonstrated by Kellogg's research on their development; c.f. Kellogg,R., *Analysing Children's Art*, Pala Alto, California, 1969.

169 Fuller, P., 'Art and Biology', op cit, 1983, p.12.

How, then, is culture founded upon biology? Fuller points to the findings of Desmond Collins to demonstrate the importance of biological evolution to cultural development (170). Collins argues that Neanderthal mothers, due to the increasing brain size of the child at birth, were unable to deliver the baby successfully. He estimates some 90% peri-natal mortalities. Through selective adaptation the human child came to be born with a smaller head, with an increased capacity for later growth. Effectively, there was a slowing down of the growth process which had the cultural repercussion of producing longer infant dependency on the mother (171).

Having established the infant/mother relationship, as at the origin of human cultural evolution, Fuller turns to the psychoanalytic work of Winnicott, where this relationship is given psychological dimensions. From the security of this relationship, the child is gradually brought into consciousness of itself and of the external world, first through illusion and then through the 'transitional object' to external reality (172). According to Winnicott, the child fills the potential space between it and the mother with creative activity. This is the basis of cultural life, a creative sphere where objectivity and subjectivity are never entirely sundered. Here, for Fuller, is an explanation for the late Neanderthal and early Cromagnon flowering of cultural activity.

Fuller sums up his position:

> These then seem to me to be the principal biological roots of art: residual, genetically given aesthetic responses; a particular human capacity for work on the external world, and above all - this uniquely human faculty for transforming such elements, through labile symbolic and imaginative activity whose roots are to be found in the particularisation of the infant/mother relationship (173).

In his actual art critical writing, it is not the mother/child relationship, the psychoanalytic insights, that have been most influential

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170 Collins, D., *The Human Revolution: From Ape to Artist*, London, 1976.
171 This assumes a gradual evolution from Neanderthal to Cromagnon, but there is speculation that the two groups may be distinct types, only the latter providing the evolutionary branch to Homo Sapiens. For discussion of what little is known, c.f. Wymer, J., *The Palaeolithic Age*, London, 1984.
172 C.f. Winnicott, D.W., *Playing and Reality*, London, 1974.
173 Fuller, P., op cit, 1983, p.19.

recently (174); it is his commitment to human 'expressive content' that shapes his criticism and facilitates value judgements (175).

Fuller's foundationalist stance has been dismissed by Wolff, on the grounds that psychoanalytic accounts:

> ... [are not] amenable to proof or disproof, (176)

a positivist position that she does not take in relation to works she approves of, that fall within a contextualist framework. As she says:

> More damaging is the way in which such a theory is totally closed to the possibility of the social construction of and historical variability of primary psychological processes, as well as to the possibility of differential human experiences, for example, by males and females in given historical circumstances. (177)

More damaging, because Wolff's position will not allow for factors that cannot be explained contextually; it will not accommodate a conception of aesthetic value that is not itself contextually constructed. Even if the aesthetic is given some sort of autonomy from the ideological, its specificity is necessarily contextual.

Structural Tensions

The tension between contextualist and foundationalist accounts of art's specificity can be seen as a structuring theme within Marxist discourse, and more generally within the sociology of art. This theme alone does not adequately present the dynamic structure of theorisation. Added to this, there exists a tension on another dimension: that between accounts that stress art's instrumental purpose and those which emphasise its immanental purpose. Instrumentalist approaches to art have already been alluded to; they are those accounts that posit a purpose external to art itself - art is a vehicle for meaning or affects from without. Immanentalist theories, in contrast, conceive of art as embodying or

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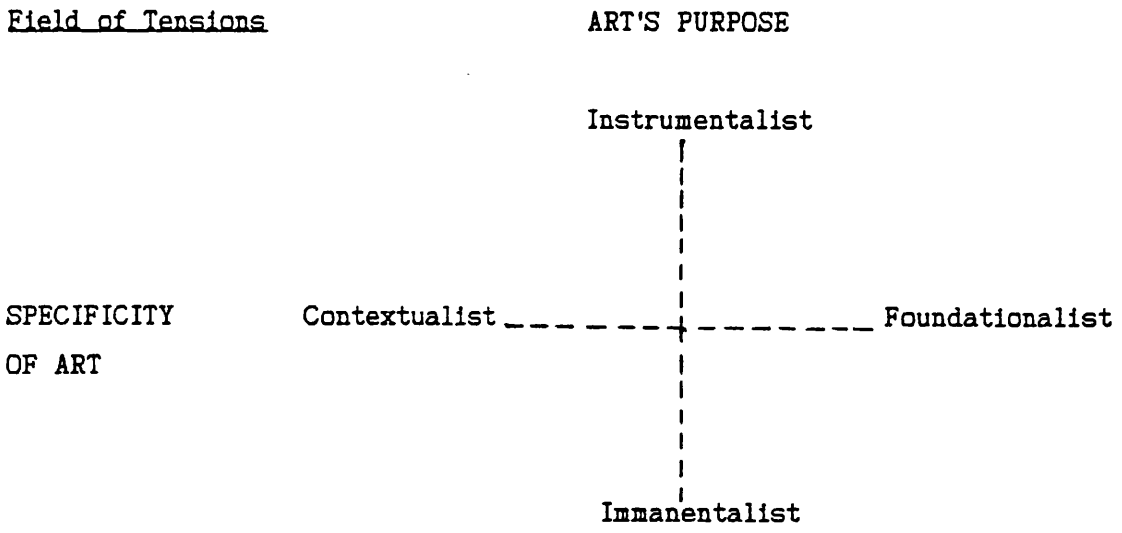
174 C.f. esp. essays in Fuller, P., *Art and Psychoanalysis*, London, 1980b.
175 C.f. essays and reviews in Fuller, P. op cit, 1983.
176 Wolff, J., op cit, 1983, p.101.
177 ibid, p.101.

expressing meaning from within; art's purpose is given in the form and expression of the work of art.

<u>Field of Tensions</u>



The tension between polar points, between contextualists' and foundationalists' accounts of the specificity of art, and between instrumentalist and immanentalist conceptions of the purpose of art, can be found in all theories of art. Wolff's concern with the contextualist aesthetics is a response to the presence of foundationalist theories, and Fuller's foundationalism a response to contextualist theory. The work of both these social theorists also displays the tension between instrumentalist and immanentalist positions. The notion of 'autonomy of the aesthetic' in Wolff's theory counters the instrumentalism of an ideological reading. In Fuller's work, art's 'expressiveness' denies the ideological reading of art, but in the place of ideology arises a psychoanalytic purpose that is no less of an instrumentalist reading .

Theories of art typically define art in terms of its specificity and purpose. This attempt to theorise art gives rise to four types of theory that are structurally related.

	Instrumentalist	Immanentalist
Contextualist	Utilitiarian theories	Communicatory theories
Foundationalist	Functionalist theories	Manifestationalist theories

Wolff's sociology of art is primarily located as a utilitarian theory, although she indicates a leaning towards a communicatory perspective in order to solve the problem of aesthetic value. The discourse theory of Foucault is viewed as a positive contribution to the specificity of art (178). However, Wolff interprets discursive practice in the narrow sense of conceptual discourse, which limits the possibility of the autonomy of a sphere of art/aesthetic discourse. Foucault's notion of discourse seems to be broader and to hold out the possibility of a partially or non-conceptual aesthetic discourse. In discussing *Las Meninas* by Velázquez, he halts his analytical discourse, pointing out that it is:

> ... a language inevitably inadequate to the visible fact. (179)

The painting embodies its own discursive activity, positing and resolving its own problematic, albeit within a discursive framework distinctive of its epoch - the Classical. Art does not here have a purpose external to its own discourse; the discourse is art.

Others have developed more clearly defined communicatory theories of art. Linguistic structuralism provides a case in point, where:

> ... the meaning of each image is wholly a matter of its relation to the other. (180)

Just as Saussure in his *General Linguistics* had argued for a synchronic

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178 ibid, pp.91-5.
179 Foucault, M., *The Order of Things*, London, 1970, p.9.
180 Eagleton, T., *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, London, 1983, p.94.

interpretation of the signs system that constituted language (181), so linguistic structuralists studying literary texts or fine art works, as well as other forms of representation, have emphasised systems relation between signs. Linguistic structuralism focuses on the reading of the text, myth, work, and largely ignores the authorial intention. Thus, Roland Barthes can write that:

> ... the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. (182)

But Barthes' semiotics is not simply concerned with structural analysis; it is tied to the breaking-down of 'mythologies'. The assumption is that mythology obscures reality, rather than presenting structural resolution, however imperfect, to existential conflicts. Barthes' intention is to 'unmask' myths, not simply to decipher them, so his semiotics is a method that always retains a reference point outside of the text or image. He is pulled in the direction of proclaiming an instrumental purpose to the myth, and is thus identifying the author, albeit a collective author (183). Refraining from instrumentalist comment, Barthes' semiotics can open up a text or image to lay bare a structural base, but it is a contextualist perspective that pays little heed to foundationalist concerns about the specificity of art. In Barthes' semiotics, art can have no privileged place; he certainly would not agree with Marcuse's claim that art:

> ... must communicate a truth, an objectivity which is not accessible to ordinary language and ordinary experience. (184)

Levi-Strauss, in his writings on myths, provides another example of a communicatory theory - myths are contingent and immanental. But he shows a strong concern for a foundationalist aesthetic, taking him into a manifestationalist perspective when he attempts to answer the question, 'What is art?' The artist, states Levi-Strauss, is:

> ... both something of a scientist and a 'bricoleur'. (185)

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181 de Saussure, F., *Course in General Linguistics*, London, 1960.
182 Barthes, R., 'The Death of the Author', *Image-Music-Text*, Glasgow, 1977, p.148.
183 This is not the case with his study of 'The Face of Garbo', but is certainly true of the analysis in 'Operation Margerine', both to be found in Barthes, R., *Mythologies*, St. Albans, 1976, pp.41-2, 56-7.
184 Marcuse, H., *An Essay on Liberation*, Boston, 1969, p.40.
185 Levi-Strauss, C., *The Savage Mind*, London, 1976, p.22.

In looking at Clouet's portrait of *Elizabeth of Austria*, he asks of the source of the 'profound aesthetic emotion' (186) that is experienced by the onlooker. He dismissses the affective quality of the realism of the detail and suggests instead that the small scale of the work, it being a 'miniature', holds the answer.

> All miniatures seem to have intrinsic aesthetic quality, (187)

and most art is small scale. This is the case even with something as vast as the Sistine Chapel paintings:

> The paintings of the Sistine Chapel are a small-scale model inspite of their imposing dimension, since the theme that they depict is the end of time. (188)

Levi-Strauss argues that all representation seems to involve a reduction in scale, a giving up of certain properties. Such miniaturisation appears to allow for knowledge of the whole, without first having recourse to the parts; an illusion:

> ... which gratifies the intelligence and gives rise to a sense of pleasure. (189)

In addition, miniatures, being man-made, constitute an experiment with the object, and it is an experiment that the observer is drawn into in contemplating the finished work, which, because of its miniaturisation, is always open to completion by the creative onlooker. The artist, being attentive to conventions and place, and to the internal structure of the work, creates a:

> ... union between structural order and the order of events. (190)

that triggers an aesthetic emotion in the onlooker who:

> ... discovers the possibility of such a union through the work of art. (191)

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186 ibid, p.22
187 ibid, p.23.
188 ibid, p.23.
189 ibid, p.24.
190 ibid, p.25. Pierre Guiraud has argued that the aesthetic sign can be totally free from convention, its meaning adhering to representation alone. The work of art can thus be an invention, but, he suggests, not a pure invention, for it obeys the working of the unconscious mind and is therefore still open to semiotic interpretation. C.f. Guiraud, P., *Semiology*, London, 1981, pp.66-81.
191 Levi-Strauss, C., op cit, p.25.

For Levi-Strauss, artistic creation consists in communication:

> ... within the immutable framework of a mutual confrontation of structure and accident. (192)

The particular outcome, the work of art, is necessarily contingent, but its aesthetic effect, derived from the structuring of the accidental, is nonetheless universal and necessary as human experience. In the universality of the aesthetic effect, Levi-Strauss espouses a manifestationalist theory of art; even though, in part, the aesthetic effect is an 'illusion', it is necessary to the recognition of the union of structure and accident that is the condition of human experience (193).

What Levi-Strauss identifies as the immutable framework within which communication takes place, the 'confrontation of structure and accident', is the core concern of communicatory theories. William Ray has presented the thesis that modern literary theory, from phenomenological to deconstructivist perspectives, has been searching for meaning in the resolution to:

> ... perhaps an unresolvable paradox, between system and instance. (194)

The differences between:

> ... phenomenological criticism and structuralism, or reader-response criticism and deconstruction, result less from a fundamental disagreement as to the nature of meaning and how it occurs in reading than from divergent strategies of presenting this phenomenon within a critical discipline. (195)

All these approaches are concerned with the reading of the text; to establish to what extent the text, as authorial intention or as structure, determines the reading. While Satre can identify in literature:

> ... the word, which tears the writer of prose away from himself and throws him out into the world. (196)

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192 ibid, p.26.
193 As with Hauser and Gadamer, Levi-Strauss views the aesthetic as a 'knowledge' experience, as a part of recognition of reality.
194 Ray, W., *Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction*, Oxford, 2984, p.3.
195 ibid, p.2.
196 Sartre, J.P., *What is Literature?*, London, 1970, pp.7-8.

an act of freedom, Jonathan Culler's structuralist perspective insists that:

> ... a speaker's utterances are understood by others only because they are already virtually contained within the language. (197)

In both cases the text has primarily a communicatory meaning that can be made the object of critical attention. What I have called absolute meaning in Chapter I is present in Sartre as the act of writing, as an expression of 'being-in-itself' (198). It is possible to:

> ... catch a glimpse of eternal freedom at the horizon of the historical and concrete freedom which it pursues. (199)

This statement takes Satre's existentialist theory of literature over into the manifestationalist category, along with Levi-Strauss, who presents a very different structuralist theory. They are both drawn towards a foundationalist aesthetic.

If one excludes this foundationalist belief in a transcendent aesthetic, literature, and art more generally, is not sustained as a privileged social practice. The practice of criticism cannot identify its object, other than by acceptance of socio-cultural contingent categories. I do not intend to branch further into literary theory here; that I have done so at all is due to the general acceptance within the sociology of art of the need for a unitary approach to literature and fine art (200). It is, however, worth mentioning here post-structuralist literary theory, because it seems that while phenomenological approaches focus largely on authorial intention, and structuralist approaches focus on the text, post-structuralism is a new departure in its focus on the re-writing of the text. Post-structuralist criticism attempts to dissolve the text as structure; meaning surfaces, is dissipated, and reconstructed. Post-structuralist criticism is itself a new 'writing', itself open to

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197 Culler, J., *Structuralist Poetics*, Ithaca, 1975, p.29.
198 C.f. Sartre, J.P., *Being and Nothingness*, London, 1958.
199 Sartre, J.P., op cit, 1970, p.58.
200 I believe, however, that there are fundamental differences, not the least being the necessary reliance of literature on language, and the manipulation of concepts. Here poetry differs from prose, or the novel, but painting and sculpture differ fundamentally in their reliance on pre-conceptual, and possibly non-conceptual, signification. I would not go so far as to claim, as Sartre does, that 'notes, colours, and forms are not signs': Sartre, J.P., op cit, 1970, p.12 - but they are not primarily conceptual.

deconstruction (201). The problem with this theorisation from the perspective of the sociology of art, of the meeting of structure and contingency, is that its attempt to rescue the contingent, 'surplus meaning', shifts attention from the literary text to the critical account itself, which confronts one as a new text with its own 'surplus' to exploit. It is a form of critical anarchism that has many parallels with developments in Conceptual art (202).

The above communicatory theories are very different from the literary theory of Terry Eagleton outlined earlier. Communicatory theories focus on the meaning implicit in the text, while Eagleton's focus is on that which is extrinsic to the text, but nonetheless determines it. It is the difference between immanentalist and instrumentalist approaches. The instrumentalist perspective of Marxists undertaking an ideological critique is shared by sociologists who take a functionalist and consensus perspective. Kavolis argues that art is:

> ... actually, or potentially, functional for society as a whole, and its influence may be conservative or innovative (or a mixture of both). (203)

Art is seen as having essentially an affective function, providing an emotional involvement in social and cultural life, with artistic creation producing:

> ... new symbolic foci of sociocultural integration. (204)

This functional art does not correspond to a general psychological need, as Kavolis argues that only some individuals, those from higher up the social hierarchy and the alienated, are 'sensitised' to art.

Parsons held a very similar view, recognising that art plays an important part in the 'communication of affect' (205). Parsons designates the

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201 C.f. Culler, J., *On Deconstruction*, Ithaca, 1982.
202 C.f. Derrida, J., *Writing and Difference*, London, 1978, and by the same author, *Positions*, London, 1981.
203 Kavolis, V, *Artistic Expression: A Sociological Analysis*, Ithaca, 1968, p.5.
204 ibid, p.5. Milton Albrecht suggests that art's integrative function includes providing an interest for 'deviant' personalities, those who tend towards values of 'being', rather than values of 'doing'. Albrecht, M., 'Art as an Institution', *Sociology of Art and Literature*, London, 1970, pp.1-26.
205 Parsons, T., *The Social System*, London, 1970, pp.384-428.

'system of expressive symbolism' as one of the types of 'culture pattern', along with the 'belief system' and the 'system of value-orientation standards', it being differentiated from these by its cathectic primacy as a mode of motivational orientation. Within the system of expressive symbolism, Parsons rightly sees what he terms 'pure art' playing a significant role in contemporary society, with the creative artist and the performing artist as specialists in the creation and manipulation of expressive symbols. As Parsons suggests, the artist has a need to communicate with a public, regardless of the extremes he may go to in order to present his individualism; but, although a large public appears to reciprocate with a need for art, this does not necessarily support Parsons' argument that it is system needs for the communication of effect that are being met by the institutionalisation of artistic practice, involving specialisation by the artist.

For Parsons, art, 'pure art', is the result of specialisation within the system of expressive symbolism, the artist's role being to create new patterns of expressive symbolism for the public, and to give 'form' to their expressive interests (206). To the extent that art is used to further interests, political, religious, etc., it loses its status as pure art, and is subordinated to the interests of propaganda. Parsons is not clear on the point of exactly in what way pure art is instrumental in the maintenance of the social system. In a modern democratic social order, it seems that, as a differentiated activity, art meets the expressive and cathectic needs of individuals who do not have expressive symbolism imposed from above. Artistic freedom and specialisation in the production of pure art compliment the search for expressive symbolism by social actors seeking to confirm their individualism. In this theorisation, avant-gardism would have to be dismissed as external manipulation of art, that is, once the search for the 'New' went beyond the bounds of expressive symbolic concerns. Parsons arrived at his conceptualisation of art's expressive symbolic function from his focus on the problem of systems integration. In his theory, art can only be envisaged as instrumental to the attainment of systems ends; pure art is only 'pure' in the sense that it is a specialist activity differentiated from other activities. Because the precise function art performs is

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206 ibid, p.408.

determined by system needs, the particular form that art takes must be viewed as contingent, but art itself is indispensible to social system stability, and therefore has a universal affective function.

A further variety of functionalist theory is presented by psychoanalytic accounts. Freud, it has to be said, does not provide a theory of art as such. He seems to think that such a theory, from the perspective of psychoanalysis, is not possible.

> It can do nothing towards elucidating the nature of the artistic gift, nor can it explain the means by which the artist works - artistic technique. (207)

However, he did write on art and literature. In his account of Michelangelo's *Moses* (208), Freud offers an art critical reading, attempting to demonstrate the artist's intentions in sculpting the figure, in its particularity. His conclusion is that *Moses* is:

> ... a concrete expression of the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself. (209)

It is a sculpture of Man rising above his passions, an act of 'sublimation', 'the highest mental achievement'. Perhaps this finding of Freud's is not a purely objective reading of the details of the sculpture. The sculpture depicts what, for Freud, one would expect to find in a great man like Moses - and, one can add, in a great artist, for Freud seemed to have a reverential attitude to art, which explains his reluctance to apply psychoanalytic methods.

> Before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms. (210)

Yet Freud, elsewhere, can write that the artist is an introvert:

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207 Freud, S., 'An Autobiographic Study', *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol.XX, London, 1959, p.65.
208 Freud, S., 'The Moses of Michelangelo', ibid, vol.XII, London, 1957.
209 ibid, p.233.
210 Freud's 'Dostoevsky and Parricide', ibid, vol.XXI, London, 1961, p.177. As Fuller points out, 'Freud seems consciously to evade offering any psychoanalytic arguments concerning Michelangelo or his works. Fuller, P., 'Moses, Mechanism and Michelangelo', op cit, 1980, p.40.

> ... not far removed from neurosis. He is oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs. He desires to win honour, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these satisfactions.... he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and his libido too, to the wishful construction of his life of fantasy, whence the path might lead to neurosis. (211)

Here he is applying psychoanalytic insights. Clearly there is ambivalence in Freud's position on art (212).

In his study of Leonardo (213), a psychoanalytic account forms the basis of interpretation of the work of art. But the work of art is interpreted as would be a dream, as an expression of the repressed childhood memories that have their basis in psychodynamic conflict; Leonardo is the subject of the investigation (214). There is little doubt that the Leonardo essay is an attempt to apply psychoanalytic procedure to the interpretation of art, and to the extent that it achieves its end, it constitutes art as instrumental to the release of psycho-sexual energy. In Leonardo's case, the *Virgin Mary and Saint Anne*, where the child Jesus appears with both mother figures, the conflict Leonardo experiences over his two mothers, one biological, the other with whom he was brought up, is transposed into the art work.

The fact that Leonardo could create such a great work of art, rather than a mere representation, is explained partly in terms of his repressed homosexuality. The work of art is dream work and sublimated sexuality; without this sublimation, the art object would remain a mediocre expression without universal value. In this notion of sublimation, the art object is lifted above its instrumental purpose, indicating an aesthetic level that Freud did not attempt to theorise further. Later

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211 Freud, S., 'The Path to the Formulation of Symptoms', Lecture XXIII, 'Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis', op cit, vol.XVI, London, 1963, p.376.
212 A point clearly made by Storr, A., *The Dynamics of Creation*, London, 1972, pp.1-13.
213 Freud, S., 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood', op cit, vol.XI, London, 1968.
214 As Wollheim argues, the Leonardo essay is concerned with what is 'expressed by the subject of the work', while that of Michelangelo's *Moses* is concerned with expression in the classical sense; Wollheim, R., 'Freud and the Understanding of Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol.X, 1970. Peter Fuller also recognises the conflict between the 'scientific' and 'objective' approach to the *Moses*, and the 'creative' and 'imaginative' emphasis in the Leonardo study; Fuller, P., 'Moses, Mechanism and Michelangelo', op cit. And, according to Gombrich, Freud recognised the conflict within his own approach to the two works, in a letter to the painter, Herman Struck, 1914, saying that he acknowledged that the Leonardo essay was 'half a novelistic fiction'; Gombrich, E., 'Freud's Aesthetic', *Encounter*, January 1966, p.33.

psychoanalytic theory tends to concentrate on the mechanisms that translate psycho-sexual conflict into artistic representation, emphasising the content of the work (215).

Psychoanalytic theory has attempted to establish the instrumentality and necessity of art, developing a functionalist perspective that helps to explain the role of the unconscious in artistic practice, but, as I have shown to be the case in the writings of Freud, there is an acknowledgement of the immanental character of art also, a belief in its irreduceability to instrumental ends.

The conceptual structure within which art, artistic practice and aesthetic experience, are theorised, produces a dialogue that seeks resolution of the contradictions inherent in dualistic accounts. A theory of art has to locate art's specificity and its purpose; it has to come to terms with the axial dualities of contextualism/fundamentalism and instrumentalism/ immanentalism. However, it is the experience of art objects as both specific and generalising, as content and form, that gives rise to this theoretical concern, and it is against this experience that the adequacy of a theory must be assessed. This is not to deny that experience itself is mediated, yet it is not totally constructed. Aesthetic experience has to be taken as real, though mediated by aesthetic convention; hence the need to distinguish between the aesthetic and its theorisation. An adequate understanding of art, and therefore interpretation of the art object, has to locate it within the dialectical interplay of these dualities, and not try to force it into a partial reality defined by the theoretical construct itself.

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215 Thus, Kris looks at the way the 'primary process' is used in the service of the ego: Kris, E., 'On Preconscious Mental Processes', *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, New York, 1952. And Weissman finds the artist's inspiration and theme in his hallucinated response to the mother's breast: Weissman, P., 'Psychological Concomitants of Ego Functioning in Creativity', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, no.49, 1968, pp.464-9. Adrian Stoke's Klienian aesthetic stresses the reconstitution function of art, in the regression back to the object-subject relation between infant and mother: Stokes, A., *The Image in Form*, Harmondsworth, 1972.

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Art, in the above theoretical accounts, has been given a very broad definition; in fact the point of crossover between the cultural object and art has not been raised as a theoretical or practical issue. Most theorisation about art accepts art historical classification. However, such classification is an extension of a category that is itself a relatively recent historical construct. The linking of a man-made object with aesthetic experience to derive a theory of artistic practice, such that it raises the object of contemplation into a sphere set apart from non-art cultural objectifications, inaugurates the founding of a fine art tradition. This tradition is a socio-historical construct, but it is not solely this, for it is built upon the consciousness of the aesthetic and Man's ability to produce an aesthetic effect. The concern of this thesis is to locate this tradition, structurally and historically, to gain an understanding of art in the narrower sense of a specific human practice that has become recognised as 'special'. It is recognition of this status of artistic specialness that has engendered the theoretical accounts discussed above. By locating art structurally and historically, it is hoped to reach a better understanding of the situation confronting contemporary art

CHAPTER III

THE RISE OF THE ARTIST

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:ion of art from craft production is a situation that many
not the craftsman a claim to artist's status? Or, expressed
what right has art to claim a 'special' status that sets it
other productive activity? To begin to answer these
ıt is necessary to explore in depth the historical realisation
egories of social experience we label 'art' and 'craft'. In
questions, we are committed to a framework of meaning within
ɜ categories operate and take on reality. In this chapter, I
to unravel this framework of meaning, to enable an approach
intessential question: What is art? For it is in the
ng of the category, 'art', that we shall also find the
·y significance of craft production, and, underlying this, their
p to labour more generally.

Raymond Williams has traced the etymology of the terms, 'art' and 'artist' in the English language from the thirteenth century (1). The term, 'art', was first used in the context of 'the seven arts' and, later, 'the liberal arts'. These arts included grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, and were associated with the highest human ability - that of the capacity to reason. The term, 'arts', throughout the mediaeval period, was inseparable from intellectual activity, that, in accord with reason, was believed to conform to objective laws. In the seventeenth century, Williams argues, there was increasing specialisation of a group of skills previously associated with more general categories of artisan production. These skills included painting and sculpture, which now began to be conceived of as arts. By the late eighteenth

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1 Williams, R., *Keywords*, Glasgow, 1976.

century, there was a conceptual opposition established between artist and artisan - the artists having acquired a 'liberal arts' status (soon to become fine arts), by incorporation into the category of 'intellectual activity', increasingly being conceived of as 'creative' or 'imaginative' activity. The artisan, by contrast, was viewed as a skilled manual worker or 'craftsman', having little need of recourse to intellectual activity. While the product of artistic endeavour came to be viewed as imaginative, a unique 'creation', that of the artisan was primarily functional and at best imitative.

For Williams, the origin of the modern category of the fine arts lies at the turn of the nineteenth century, with the beginning of a new epoch marking the ascendency of the middle classes - the dominance of the capitalistic mode of commodity production.

> There was a consequent defensive specialisation of certain skills and purposes to the arts or the humanities, where forms of general use and intention which were not determined by immediate exchange could be at least conceptually abstracted. (2)

The fine arts came to stand outside the sphere of commodity production, with its emphasis on use value, derived from the capacity for exchange in the market place. And, according to Williams, this defensive specialisation introduced a distinction between artist and technologist, and between artist and craftsman - based on the artist's immunity from subordination to use value.

Following Williams, Fuller asserts that the fine art tradition was:

> ... associated with, indeed was a direct product of the transformation of the economic structure in Britain by the emergence of industrial capitalism. (3)

This is a view that has been expressed by others (4). Yet it is a

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2 ibid, p.33.
3 Fuller, P., 'Fine Art after Modernism', *New Left Review*, no.119, 1980c, p.46.
4 Wolff, J., *The Social Production of Art*, London, 1981, p.11. Pearson, N. and Brighton, A., 'The Artist: Ambiguities of Definition and Problems of Survey Methods', (unpublished): paper given at the British Sociological Association Conference on Culture, University of Sussex, April 1st-4th, 1978. Fyfe, G., 'Art and Reproduction: Some Aspects of the Relations between Painters and Engravers in London, 1760-1850', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol.7, 1985, pp.399-425.

questionable assertion, based primarily on the English experience, which itself evolved out of changes that had earlier taken place in Renaissance Italy and seventeenth century France.

Changes in the status of the artist and in the conditions of production and consumption, as well as in the conception of the purpose of plastic representation, owe much to the patronage of Church, merchants, and aristocracy in a pre-capitalistic era. As Fuller rightly points out, the English lacked a national visual tradition of their own (5); it is only in the eighteenth century that such a tradition begins to form, enhanced by the establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts (1768). In France, the Academie de Peinture et Sculpture was established one humdred and twenty years earlier in 1648. In Italy, academic organisation was first inaugurated in 1562, with the establishment of the Academia del Disegno, in Florence. The emergent bourgeoisie had an important part to play in the transformation taking place in the production of paintings and sculpture and the changing status of the producer, but not such a decisive role as Williams or Fuller suggest. It would be wrong to see the close of the eighteenth century as a total rupture with the past, constituting a new historically specific field of fine art practice. The eighteenth century did bring about a dramatic change in sensibility and a conceptual shift, but it was a transformation within an already constituted framework of meaning that emerged slowly but perceptibly out of the Middle Ages.

In this constitution of a framework of meaning, both art and craft production gained their distinctive characters. Art was constituted in the development of a sphere of fine art practice that established an art theoretical and institutional structure that sustained artists, art objects and aesthetic object in a relationship of 'specialness'. We can use the terms, 'art' and 'artist' in the modern sense only with this establishment of a sphere of fine art practice. The Renaissance marks the historical moment at which such a framework comes into being: a sphere of fine art production that is informed by a belief that art in some way partakes of an 'essence', that the artist is uniquely able to gain access to this

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5 Fuller, P., op cit, p.44.

essence and that the art object displays or contains essence. Essence is that which gives form and meaning to existence, but at the same time existence distorts essence (6). It is contact with essence that gives to fine art its 'special' status, for art, it is believed, discloses essence in a purer form than does the natural world. Artist, art object and essence are inseparable components in this framework, and, ever since the Renaissance, they have been subjected to aesthetic theorisation in an attempt to codify the relationship. In such a framework, essence becomes theorised as the aesthetic object.

Clearly, such a framework sustaining art sets this production apart from other activity. Art is not craft, but particular crafts can become art by elevation into the sphere of fine art practice. Thus, we have had this century growing 'art' recognition for a small number of traditional crafts. The craft of the potter provides an example here, for there has been an increasing differentiation between industrial production and hand-made pottery. Certain industrial products have maintained their status as craft objects through attention to design and a tradition that reaches back to early hand production techniques which are often retained at specific points of production - Wedgewood, Minton, Royal Dalton. But these industrial based companies have not achieved the status of art for their products. The small independent hand-craftsman, however, does have some claim to artistic status. Some 'great' potters have come to be recognised and effectively raised to the status of artists - Bernard Leach (b.1887), Lucie Rie (b.1902), Shoji Hamada (b.1892, Japan). Expressed differently:

> ... it is only in the past hundred years that serious artists have begun to consider pottery as worthy of their full attention. (7)

As the artist is seen to be 'born' to his position, it is understandable that the artist should be viewed as discovering the potential in pottery for art work, rather than the trained potter being given such a status, along with his product, by society.

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6 In all aesthetic theories there is this conception of art, extracting an essence, separating reality from appearance - this is even true of 'Naturalism', for there is no pure naturalist or imitative style, the artist selects his subject to depict reality as it is, undistorted. This is so with Dutch art of the seventeenth century, French and English Naturalism of the nineteenth century, and Pop Art in the twentieth century.

7 Rose, M., *Artist Potters in England*, London, 1970, p.15.

When the potter is raised to the status of an artist, we find that there is a concentration of the 'individualistic' style achieved and the 'skill' that enters into each production. But this alone is not enough, for this type of description of an object as unique, individual, embodying skill, is also valid for any craft object. What is added to this to make the work art, is an aesthetic, and the producer is viewed as creative. Thus, Bernard Leach, himself writes:

> Very few people in this country think of the making of pottery as an art.... but pots are human expressions. (8)

Also:

> Aesthetically a pot may be analysed for its abstract content or as a humanistic expression, subjectivity or objectivity; for its relationship to pure form or for its manner of hand working and suggestion of source of emotional content.... under [the potter's] hands the clay responds to emotion and thought from a long past, to his own intuition of the lovely and the true, accurately recording the stages of his own inward development. The pot is the man; his virtues and his vices are shown therein - no disguise is possible. (9)

The suggestion of an inward search and spiritual development betrays a link with Eastern traditions. Leach was highly influenced by the pottery and paintings of the Japanese, and the philosophy that they sensually convey. Hence, his long association with Shoji Hamada, who worked with him at St. Ives before returning to Japan and a communal existence in a traditional village of potters. The return of Hamada to a traditional Japanese setting with its communal way of life and the relative anonymity of the craft producer, conflicts, however, with Western notions of individualism. What Leach, like many Western artists from the nineteenth century onwards, saw in the tradition of Japan, was a veneration for man-made objects based upon a mysticism that sees each object as a point of contemplation for the whole universe, as an embodiment of a way of being in the world. For the Japanese, the pot does not convey the creativity of the artist, but rather the harmony of the universe, and yet it is this creative element that becomes foremost in its translation into our Western tradition of art (10).

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8 Leach, B., *A Potter's Book*, London, 1945, p.1.
9 From Leach, B., *The Potter's Portfolio*, 1951. Passage taken from text reproduced in Hogden, C. (ed.), *The Art of Bernard Leach*, London, 1978, p.37.
10 The tension between Japanese art and the art of the West is best expressed through Japanese attempts at synthesis. Western artists were influenced by the influx of prints into Europe in the late nineteenth century, but this did not make the same impact on culture as the opening of Japan to the West in 1853. C.f. Smith, L., *The Japanese Print since 1900*, London, 1983.

This focus on the 'creator' is essential to art. We can see the transition towards art consciousness taking place in a number of cultures, with the development of the practice of signing the work. As E. Kris and O. Kurz point out:

> Very generally speaking, one can say that the urge to name the creator of a work of art indicates that the work of art no longer serves exclusively as religious ritual, or, in a wide sense, magic function, that it no longer serves a single purpose, but that its valuation has at least to some extent become independent of such connections. (11)

It is the first step on the way to an 'art-for-art's-sake' conception of production and valuation. However, a craftsman, conscious of his craft, of his skills, could sign a work because he wanted to be named as the maker and possessor of skills - he might simply be saying, 'This is well made and I am the maker.' To use the term 'creator' is to imply more: that the object embodies something that has been placed in it through the productive act, that the artist has brought forth out of his own being. When Kris and Kurz use the term 'creator', they use a contemporary category, and are in danger of distorting the historical picture, although the importance of the signature itself cannot be denied. Where signatures appear on products, at whatever point in history, we have a clear indication of a highly developed craft consciousness, but not necessarily a conception of art.

In our contemporary consciousness we make a distinction between art and craft, by giving to art an aesthetic purpose and to the artist a creative capability. The art object is set apart from other objects by its freedom from utility and its aesthetic purpose. Craft objects, generally speaking, we associate with the application of skill in the process of manual production. Art is a product of inspiration, craft of learning. A craftsman learns his craft, but an artist is born (12). The concepts of

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11 Kris, E., and Kurz, O., *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, New Haven, 1979, p.4.

12 The notion that the artist is born to his vocation, that he is driven to fulfil a potential, is widely held. 'He must realise that his every deed, feeling and thought are now but sure material from which his work is to arise, that he is free in art, but not in life': Kandinsky, W., *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, first pub. 1912, New York, 1977, p.54. Rudolf and Margaret Wittkower have pointed to the consistency of the image of the artist presented by psychologists, novelists, critics, etc., all refering to those characteristics that set the artist apart from ordinary people. C.f. description of artists type in Wittkower, R. and M., *Born Under Saturn*, London, 1963, p.xix. The popular image is promoted in Stone, I., *Lust for Life* and *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, biographical novels, later films, of Van Gogh and Michelangelo. Kris, E. and Kurz, O., op cit, have shown that the special character of the artist is to be found in biographies of artists from Hellenistic Greece, and that there is continuity to the present.

art and craft, although distinct, both, when applied to a particular product, give to it a valued status. Both art and craft objects are valued as the product of individuals, as the outcome of a human encounter with nature. As such, they are set apart from objects of pure utility, that are usually associated with work. Work, whether it be the enforced labouring of the slave, or the subjection to operations determined in the process of mechanical production, is by comparison degrading. The objects produced through work are functional, lacking in individuality or human expression - alienated (13). Contemporary consciousness, then, possesses three categories of object production: art, craft, and utilities; the type of labour associated with these being creative, skilled and work (alienated labour) respectively.

The 'Arts and Crafts Movement' (14) in England, a movement that has its intellectual origins in the writings of Pugin (1812-52) (15), derives its problematic and momentum from the contradictions inherent in this categorisation of labour into three spheres of practice. In the life's-work of William Morris (1834-96), we find the problematic most forcefully articulated. In part, Morris was concerned to promote unity between those practices that were held to be arts in the highest sense of the word, and those practices that were increasingly concentrating on decorative embellishment of everyday objects - the crafts. These 'lesser arts', as Morris refers to them, were becoming:

> ... trivial, mechanical, unintelligent, incapable of resisting the changes pressed upon them by fashion or dishonesty; while the greater [arts], however they may be practised for a while by men of great minds and wonder-working hands, unhelped by the lesser, unhelped by each other, are sure to lose their dignity as

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13 The term 'alienation' is used to mean many things, but essentially the existence of a gulf between Man's actual and potential being. Marx developed the concept in relation to production in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 1844, - reproduced in Fromm, E. (ed.), *Marx Concept of Man*, trans. Bottomore, T.B., New York, 1961b - where he sees alienated labour as reducing Man's sphere of free activity to that of his animal instincts. Man is alienated from the collectivity, from nature, and from his own true being. Fromm extends the notion of alienation into the psychological and moral sphere: Fromm, E., *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, London, 1980, pp.41-67. On the translation of alienation into art, c.f. Fischer, E., *The Necessity of Art*, Harmondsworth, 1963, pp.80-7. I shall return to this theme in Chapter VII.

14 For discussion of Arts and Crafts Movement, c.f. Naylor, G., *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, London, 1971. C.f. also Williams, R., *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*, Harmondsworth, 1963, pp.137-61, which places this in the context of the view that art is an aspect of a 'way of life' - cultural, moral, aesthetic - art is organically connected to society. This conception unites Pugin, Ruskin and Morris.

15 C.f. Pugin, A.W.N., *Contrasts*, first pub. 1831, Leicester, 1969, and *True Principles of Christian Architecture*, London, 1841. Pugin linked the state of the arts to the religious and moral state of society. In *Contrasts*, he compares mediaeval to modern through a series of drawings.

> popular arts, and become nothing but dull adjuncts to unmeaning pomp, or ingenious toys for a few idle men. (16)

Morris was conscious of a gulf opened between the arts and crafts, between the creative activity of the artist and the skill-based activity of the craftsman. What Morris wanted was a merger of the two, as the true reflection of Man's condition. Without this, the arts were devoid of meaning, 'toys for a few idle men', while the crafts became trivialised and mechanical, followers of fashion. So he urged his guild audience to:

> ... learn to be artists, if art is not to come to an end amongst us. (17)

To apply the sensibility of the artist to the production of objects in everyday life was his dream, with the aid of the techniques of the craftsman.

The Arts and Crafts Movement, in its emphasis on personal involvement with the productive process, was hostile to the conditions of industrial production. Morris saw in labour the potential for Man's fulfilment.

> The thing which I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labour. (18)

There was, for Morris, the possibility of dissolving the arts/craft/work differentiation within society. Work became more meaningful to the producer through application of craft techniques and skills, while being raised to the level of the spiritual and moral through the infusion of artistic sensibility. His Utopian dream is nowhere better expressed than in the following passage:

> That art will make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountainsides; it will be a pleasure and a rest, and not a weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into the town; every man's house will be fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work; all the works of man that we live amongst and handle will be in harmony with nature, will be reasonable and beautiful; yet all will be simple and inspiring, not childish and enervating; for as nothing of beauty and splendour that man's mind and hand may compass shall be wanting from our public buildings, so in no private dwelling

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16 Morris, W., *Hopes and Fears for Art*, London, 1889, p.2, from 'The Lesser Arts', first given as a lecture to the Trades Guild of Learning. In this lecture he stresses the requirements of simplicity and organic beauty, the importance of training and knowledge of art's past achievements.
17 ibid, p.30.
18 ibid, p.58. From 'The Art of the People', a lecture given to the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design.

> will there be any signs of waste, pomp, or insolence, and every man shall have his share of the best. (19)

In the social philosophy of Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement, the arts/craft/work division of labour is challenged, and reality redefined. All three forms of labour are historically specific and corrupted. And, for Morris, this corruption came to be seen as a consequence of modern civilisation. In the tradition of Pre-Raphaelite socialism, he asserted:

> ... every man should be an artist. (20)

- a social philosophy that demands revolutionary change.

It has not, however, been solely the province of social reformers to attempt to integrate the disparate practices of art and craft. More conservative forces have been attempting to promote a sort of synthesis, and there has been a long history of debate and intervention in Britain, focusing on the economic and cultural deprivation that accrues from failure to integrate art with the wider society. The result of state action, however, has been to isolate the fine arts, rather than to integrate them into the economy. Concerns were first voiced in the early decades of the nineteenth century, over the poor state of design in manufacturing industries, compared with other industrialised nations. Alongside this economic concern went a belief in the civilising effects of the arts, necessitating their promotion throughout society (21).

In the Report of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, presented in 1836, by W. Ewart, M.P., it was suggested that:

> ... principles of design should form a part of any permanent system of national education. (22)

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19 Gaunt, W., *The Pre-Raphaelite Dream*, London, 1945, pp.184-200. Gaunt explains Morris's socialism as a movement from King Arthur to Karl Marx, locating it as a Utopian dream.
20 Morris, W., op cit, p.36, 'The Lesser Arts'.
21 For a history of this conservative approach to the unification of art, craft and technology, and the debate over state involvement in the arts, c.f. Minihan, J., *The Nationalisation of Culture*, Glasgow, 1977. Also Ashwin, C., *Art Education: Documents and Policies, 1768-1975*, London, 1975. For the role of the Arts Council since 1945, c.f. Pick, J., (ed.), *The State of the Arts*, London, 1980. The best recent critical account of state involvement in the arts in Britain is Pearson, N.M., *The State and the Visual Arts: State Intervention in the Arts Since 1760*, Milton Keynes, 1982.
22 Reproduced from Ashwin, C., op cit, p.15.

It should be noted that the Committee was set up in order to look into the relationship between art and manufacture, an acknowledgement of the success in British markets of French textiles using fine art design - the need for the report was viewed as predominantly economic. This is true despite the high level of support for the Committee's proposals from the Arts and Crafts Movement. Henry Cole, reporting to the Select Committee of 1849 on the schools of Design, makes this economic concern clear:

> I apprehend that the assumption in starting these schools was, that the benefit should be strictly commercial. I do not think that the schools were created for aesthetic purposes, or for general educational purposes. (23)

The Royal Academy of Arts had also begun its life with strong industrial links, as the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture, and Commerce. But within its walls an art-for-art's-sake attitude was promoted. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) writes:

> An institution like this has often been recommended upon considerations merely mercantile. But an academy founded upon such principles can never effect even its own narrow purposes. If it has an origin no higher, no taste can ever be formed in it which can be useful even in manufactures; but if the higher arts of design flourish, these inferior ends will be answered of course. (24)

This view of art stood in conflict with attempts to make art serve the economic needs of the nation, or appeared to do so, and with the Pre-Raphaelite socialism of William Morris. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the art-for-art's-sake movement was to develop outside of the Academy, rejecting the moral ground that the Academy sought to hold for more subjective criteria of personal experience, in so doing inheriting the anti-rationalism and anti-institutionalism of the Romantic movement. Despite attempts to dissolve art into craft or to align it more closely with manufacture, art has retained its conceptual autonomy, its specialness. The artist's perspective has been upheld.

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23 ibid, p.34. Henry Cole effectively took control of the development of art and design education between 1852 and 1873, as well as playing a significant role in the development of the state museum system. C.f. Pearson, N., op cit, pp.14-38.

24 Reynolds, J., *Discourses on Art*, first pub. 1797, London, 1969, p.11. As both Ashwin, C., op cit, p.1. and Pearson, N., op cit, p.113, note 16, point out, the use of the term 'design' by Reynolds is in the tradition of 'disegno' (French 'dessin'), meaning graphic invention. For a history of the Royal Society, c.f. Menzies, K., *The Story of the Royal Society of Arts*, London, 1935.

There is no doubt that an important factor in this autonomy of art has been the very institutionalisation of art education by the state that initially sought to harness art to manufacture. As Pearson points out, state intervention has played an important part in fostering the idea of specialness (25). During the past century, official attitudes towards the role of art, its place within education, and its relevance to society, have changed towards the acceptance of the artist's perspective (26).

During this period of change in official attitude to the role of art in the education system, the gulf between fine art and design widened. Specialisation, however, increased within the art school, design and fine art being channelled into distinct areas of practice. Fine art, by shedding its design element, became free to develop without being directly answerable to industrial needs; it became recognised as having an inspirational role to play in relation to design. The institutionalisation of art had the effect of isolating fine art from the dictates of the economy, giving it a place in the education system that allowed it to function almost exclusively for its own perpetuation. The education system has provided a place to work, and materials and grants, as well as a career for a large number of artists. The effect has been to create a large body of artists economically independent of the market value of the work they produce. They do not have to conform to taste; they are outwardly free to create it.

Art has become less and less skill-based (27), while craft training has

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25 Pearson, N., op cit, p.7. He also suggests that the intervention of the state has developed and reproduced values that have been ascribed to art, making it unpopular and anti-popular. This is, however, a complex issue, as one could equally argue that the fostering of art through state institutions has increased the public's involvement in and appreciation of art. Fuller points out that the institutions are supported by intellectuals whose interest in maintaining art's special status lies in the knowledge they can claim, that distances them from 'ordinary' existence, giving to them an élite status. Fuller, P., 'Fine Art after Modernism', *New Left Review*, no.119, 1980, p.53.

26 In the Hadow Report (1926), art is officially recognised as being beneficial, in its own right, to individual development. In the Plowden Report (1967), the nature of art as a form of communication and expression was stressed, and it was recommended that it should 'permeate the whole curriculum' and life of the school. A challenge to this way of thinking about art's place in education has emerged recently with the new 'vocationalism' being introduced into education at all levels.

27 De-skilling has been the result of rejection of academic methods of training and the adoption of more subjective criteria of evaluation of art works. Art students interviewed by Made, C. and Weinberger, B., (*Art Students Observed*, London, 1973), showed a dominant belief that art was about self-expression (p.272), and a significant majority thought that art could not be taught. De-skilling also has to be seen in the context of the specialisations of fine art and its separation from design.

been removed from its workshop setting, and taken under the aegis of design within the education system. Small craft industries flourish, fulfilling the modern definition of craft production, but largely supported by a training gained within the art college. The products they produce are 'personalised', which sets them apart from the products of the small engineering firm or the carpenter's workshop. Craft, thus, maintains a distance from work and the production of utilities. In industry, generally, mass production techniques and new technology have increasingly had the effect of de-skilling large sections of the workforce (28). Work as a form of labour has become increasingly alienating (29).

Defending and projecting one's status as craftsman or artist is a form of occupational protectionism, that seeks to maintain social standing, personal integrity, and to delimit a sphere of competency and value. This defensive specialisation, as Williams terms it (30), is a personal, collective and social act; it has its economic and psychological dimensions, but is also a social construction that necessitates the collaboration of an audience or public. Such a collaboration is ensured only to the extent that there is a shared framework of meaning existing between artist, craftsman, and the public in general. It does not follow that conflict within this framework cannot take place; but the nature of the conflict is largely determined by the framework of meaning.

In Gordon Fyfe's research into the relationship between painters and engravers in England at the turn of the nineteenth century (31), we find

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28 De-skilling as a product of technological advance has been cited by Braverman as a major contribution to the loss of control by the worker of the work process, as well as his further subjection to the dictates of the labour market. Braverman, H., *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, New York, 1974. This has been accompanied by a growing consumer interest in craft products, helping to raise the status of craftwork. Just as Gombrich can write about *The Story of Art*, so Lucie-Smith can write on *The Story of Craft*, with its aim of seeing craft as 'the practical expression of social life', implying that machine manufactured goods are not. C.f. Lucie-Smith, E., *The Story of Craft*, Oxford, 1981, p.7.

29 Blauner, in contrast, has argued that a historical process can be discerned in which technological advance has been accompanied by increasing alienation, but that modern automated process technology reverses the trend. Blauner uses an operational definition of alienation in terms of the degree of meaning and sense of purpose, the degree of social integration, the degree of control over the work, and the level of involvement. The higher levels found on all these dimensions in process technology, Blauner argues, show that the work situation is self-actualising. Blauner, R., *Alienation and Freedom*, Chicago, 1964.

30 C.f. note 3.

31 Fyfe, G., op cit, '... engravers challenged the academic laws that defined them as something less than artists.' (p.413)

evidence of a conflict that is internal to this framework of meaning. The engravers, closely allied by trade to the painters who had, through their academisation, laid claim to a privilaged status, sought access to the Academy in order to enhance their own social and economic standing. As Fyfe states, the engravers:

> ... occupied an ambiguous position within the hierarchy of the arts. (32)

They also occupied an underprivileged position, in being seen as artisans who reproduced rather than created the product of their labour. The engravers sought the status of artists by entry into the Academy, but this was denied on the grounds that engraving was essentially a manual and reproductive activity. In this conflict there was no denial of art and craft as types of production; the categories were accepted by both parties. The ambiguous status was a consequence of the engraver's ill-defined role which denied his 'authorship' of the product he produced, even when this product was publicly recognised as art. Authorship was a critical issue, because of its very centrality to the aesthetic that was sustained within the hegemonic framework of meaning shared by painters and engravers (33).

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32 ibid, p.400.

33 The centrality of authorship was, however, itself not a recent acquisition of aesthetic theory. The contemporary importance of the author/creator of the work of art has its origins in the Italian Renaissance. It had for centuries been the practice of artists to sign their work, even though they may have only added finishing touches to a product of the workshop. It was enough that it was in their manner, though the work eventually came to stand as an example of authorial creativity.

RELIGIOUS PURPOSE AND THE ORIGINS OF CRAFT CONSCIOUSNESS - THE REPRESENTATIONAL CRAFTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

On entering into an investigation of representational plastic form and its social conditions of production in the Middle Ages (34), one is immediately made aware of the inadequacies of the conceptual categories in general use in art-historical analysis. As conceptual tools, the categories of 'artist', 'art object' and 'art theory' fail to penetrate to the mediaeval experience, to the existential reality of a world very much pre-modern. All three categories became descriptive of concrete social phenomena only with the dawn of the modern era, with the socio-historical generation of the sphere of fine art.

Mediaeval society was not devoid of conscious aesthetic experience (35) - of beauty in nature and in the products of Man. Essential to the consideration of the 'beauty' of an artefact, was its utility or purpose - whether it was a tool for tilling the earth, or a representation of a religious condition or theme, the object was upheld as a good example of its type only insofar as it was perceived to have achieved its purpose. The artefact was viewed as functional, as the product of working applied to the materials provided by nature and the models to be found in nature. It was the outcome of skill and applied knowledge.

To the extent that it is possible to speak of an aesthetic system in the Middle Ages, this must be conceived of in the context of the Christian Church's attempt to conceptualise the relationship between God and Man, as an epistemological project. Aesthetic experience was explained in the light of Christian doctrine, as were the Classical texts which were

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34 The Middle Ages broadly refers to the period from the Fall of Rome in the West, to the Renaissance of the Quattrocento. However, it only has any real significance as a unifying label for the period 1000-1400, this being the era that is of concern here. Even with this narrower definition of the Middle Ages I am refering to a period of transition and discontinuity, of dynamism and not of stagnation as theorists of the Italian Renaissance have depicted it. It is a period that includes the twelfth century Renaissance to be discussed later.

35 C.f. discussion in Meyer Schapiro, 'On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art', Schapiro, M., *Romanesque Art*, London, 1977. And evidence concern with beauty to be found in Abbot Suger's account of the buildings of Saint-Denis; c.f. Panofsky, E., *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis*, Princeton, 1946.

adapted to the existential problematics of the post-Classical feudal order.

> The mediaeval aesthetic system conforms to certain invariable principles which are repeated in the works of almost every mediaeval author; to wit, symbolism, allegory, and the cult of proportion and brilliance of colour. (36)

These 'principles' are part of a system of thought that makes a distinction between the phenomenal world of experience and the spiritual realm of God, based around the axiom that God - expressed as beauty, harmony, light, proportion, - radiates His presence in the phenomenal world; a consequence of the act of creation, and as an ongoing presence in the world. When Man beholds beauty, so he beholds God's presence.

Although the Classical tradition, contained within Christian thought, reached towards an anthropomorphic view of the cosmos, the Hebrew-Christian view prevailed. God reaches out to Man, rather than Man reaching towards God. Hence the strong mystical element within Christianity. Man can prepare himself for God's presence; he cannot bring about this contact with God - he awaits God's will. The Hebrew tradition emphasises the need for strengthening of will, the classical upholds the power of the mind. For the Hebrew, the answers to life's fundamental questions are available; Man knows what is to be done, but lacks the will to do it (37). This was the dominant view within the Church, a view that was challenged in the twelfth century, and again, more fundamentally, in the fifteenth.

Within mediaeval Christian society, 'art' had no other meaning than working or doing. The production of sculptural and pictorial representation, like all other work undertaken with the hands, was considered a manual task, a craft. When Thoman Aquinas (1227-74) divided human activity into two spheres, those of speculation and practice, he was following mediaeval convention (38). All manual production was judged by the criterion of usefulness, and in the

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36 de Bruyne, E., *The Esthetic of the Middle Ages*, New York, 1969, p.41.
37 C.f. discussion in Murray, A., *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1978, esp. pp.1-6, which deals with these two traditions of thought.
38 A clear account of the theology of Aquinas is contained in Burrell, D.B., *Aquinas; God and Action*, London, 1979.

representational crafts, this criterion subjected all production to the dictates of religious didacticism. Plastic representation was to be illustrative of scripture, visual sermons for the illiterate and inspiration for all. The religious purpose permeated all areas of social life in the period from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. The official religious attitude to the use of representational form was crucial in the formation of style and in the determination of the social status of the producer.

The mediaeval Church was not entirely opposed to the production and use of ornamentation (39). At times, the religious climate had veered towards the puritanical; early monastic movements were particularly liable to stress the virtues of the ascetic life, but this was the exception rather than the rule. It is significant that as the Church became more powerful, supported by the wealth of the rapidly expanding towns and consolidating national states in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and as the spiritual centre for a consciously Christian European feudal order, its sponsorship of the decorative and representaitonal crafts greatly increased, forming the basis for the innovating styles of the Romanesque and Gothic (40).

The eleventh and twlefth centuries saw a rapid expansion of population in the wake of more efficient agricultural production, military expansion, with the first crusade in 1095, a new puritanical evangelical spirit promulgated by the Cistercians, rapidly increasing commerce fostering the revival of old and the growth of new urban centres, and a new intellectual awakening. The Gothic developed as the expression of a new-found confidence, a new dynamic outward-looking Christian confidence.

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39 Evidence of the use of ornamentation and splendour within the Church, and of monastic opposition to it, is expressed in the words of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Abbot of the Cistercian Monastery at Clairvaux, Champagne: 'The Church is resplendent within her walls, beggerly in her poor; she clothes her stones in gold and leaves her sons naked.... in the cloister, under the eyes of the brethren who read there, what profit is there in those ridiculous monsters, in that marvellous and deformed comeliness, that comely deformity? To what purpose are those unclean apes, those fierce lions, those monstrous centaurs...? For God's sake, if men are not ashamed of these follies, why do they not shrink from the expense?' C.f. de la Croix, H. and Tansey, R.G. (eds.), *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, New York, 1970, p.316.

40 The increasing wealth of merchants and bourgeoisie exerted a secular influence on style through their patronage of Church building. It became customary to build an altar or chapel in honour of the family name. C.f. Rörig, F., *The Medieval Town*, London, 1964, p.131.

This period has been labelled the 'twelfth century Renaissance' (41), an acknowledgement of the dynamism and achievement of the period, set apart from the Italian Renaissance by a century of economic decline, and by having its centre of gravity in Northern Europe.

Church and nation states advance in symbiotic tension, each drawing sustenance from the other while struggling for dominance. This relationship, in which neither the Christian Church as a European structural entity, nor any single state, managed to impose supreme control, has been identified as the mechanism fostering dynamic development, providing a power vacuum in which trade could flourish and relatively free urban classes develop new social relationships and institutional practices (42). Europe's peculiar dynamism, according to Hall, is in no small part owed to the role played by Christianity from the time of the fall of the Western Roman Empire:

> ... the Church wore the mantle of Rome. It was civilisation and the hope of a better life. (43)

Christianity sustained a common foundation for civil society in the face of nation state consolidation.

The intense competition between states and the constraint on ideological and institutional controls offered by the pre-existence of Church-nurtured structures within the emerging states, prevented national states from expanding to form a unified empire and imposing rigid control from above. Instead, 'organic' government prevailed, based on:

> ... a limit to arbitrariness combined with, indeed in part caused, considerable and ever-increasing infrastructural penetration. (44)

In this situation, the urban centres could retain considerable independence as a power-base whilst exerting direct influence on the

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41 C.f. Trevor-Roper, H., *The Rise of Christian Europe*, London, 1966, pp.131-96. Trevor-Roper locates this 'Renaissance of the twelfth century' in the two centuries, 1050-1250. C.f. also Haskins, C.H., *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge, 1976, and Brooke, C., *The Twelfth Century Renaissance*, London, 1969.
42 Hall, J.A., 'Capstones and Organisms: Political Forms and the Triumph of Capitalism', *Sociology*, no.19, pp.173-92. Also Hall, J.A., *Powers and Liberties*, Harmondsworth, 1986, pp.111-44.
43 Hall, J.A., ibid, p.120.
44 ibid, p.137.

state. In some instances, as is the case with the Northern Italian towns, they could sustain an independent political identity of their own.

It is in this context of dynamic transformation and organic government, that individual and group identity begins to be consolidated, within democratic forms of organisation and in expressive personalised representational forms. Here it is the towns that take the lead. However it must be stressed, form had to be realised within a Christian context. Even in the twelfth century, the Classical model, when it was sought, could not rise above the Christian thematic. The twelfth century Renaissance shifted the balance between reason and will towards the former, but it did not displace the Hebrew-Christian hegemony.

The Christian Church remained influential in determining the development of representational form throughout the mediaeval period. Biblical condemnation of image-worship posed a major obstacle to the use of representaitonal form within the Church. However, after the iconoclastic revolt against image-worship in the centuries following the fall of Rome, representational form had gradually encroached into religious practice. Debate over the use of images reached a height in the seventh and eighth centuries, and in 726AD, Gregory II was forced to defend this against accusations of image-worship made by Emperor Leo III (45). Gregory's defence of images centred upon their usefulness for instructional and inspirational purpose: they were for:

> ... our admonition and excitation. (46)

The attitude of the Church to the use of images was fully codified and given official sanction by the Decree of the Second Council of Nicaea (*).

> We with all exactness and care do define that, in the same manner as the Holy and life-giving Cross, so shall holy images, whether formed of colours or of stones, or any other material, be set forth in all the holy churches of God, and also on sacred vessels.... whether image of Christ Jesus our Lord, our God and Saviour, or of our immaculate Mistress the holy Mother of God, or of the holy Angels,

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45 C.f. introduction to and translation of Gregory II's letter to Leo III (726AD), *The Seventh General Council, the Second Council of Nicaea*, trans. Mendham, J., London, 1848. This contains translations of council proceedings and other documents that pre-date its sitting.
46 ibid, p.v.

> or of the Saints and other holy men. For in proportion as these are continually seen in images and pictures, so are the minds of the beholders aroused to the remembrance and affection for their prototype.
>
> And further, we define that there be paid to them the worship of salutation and honour, and not that true worship that belongs to God alone. And in the same way as the holy Cross or the Sacred Gospel.... So to these also shall be made offerings of light and incense, as was the pious custom of those of old. For the honour of the image passes on to the prototype, and he who worships an image worships in it the person of him who is represented thereby. (47)

Sanction was thus given to the use of images for instructional purpose. More significantly, the image was officially given holy status in its function as mediator between the world of Man and the supernatural realm of God. In the Eastern Church, which fell under the control of the 'Iconoclasts' for almost a century, a reaction against iconoclastic doctrine in the ninth century led to an intense reverence for the sacred image or 'icon'. This stress on the mediatory function of the image led to a strict geometric orthodoxy as to the form of the 'true' representation (48). Stylistic rules were applied rigidly determining form and content in the production of the icon, and innovation was contained (49). Plastic representation in the Western Church, however, was never subject to such rigid rule, nor did the plastic object become the point of such reverence, and strict formalisation did not take place. This was in large part due to the weaker position of the Western Church, its place in a plurality of power interests, and tendency to fragmentation in a looser European confederation of states.

For centuries it was the monasteries that were the centres of innovation in the development of craft techniques, many developing their own distinctive styles in decorative and representational crafts (50). They

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47 ibid, pp.439-40.
48 C.f. Mathew, G. *Byzantine Aesthetics*, London, 1963, for detailed discussion of the overriding significance of geometry in Byzantine art.
49 E.H. Gombrich has suggested that, despite the rigidity imposed on Byzantine art by the emphasis on traditional forms, this very traditionalism ensured a closer link between representation and nature, due to the 'naturalism' within the Greek tradition upon which Byzantine art was founded. This explains why Byzantine art was able to become a major source of inspiration to craftsmen in the eleventh and twelfth centuries who sought a naturalistic model. C.f. Gombrich, E.H., *The Story of Art*, London, 1974, p.98.
50 'In contrast to the lay Lords, who were hindered by military considerations, the monasteries, thanks to their rational economic procedure, were in the position to set up the most varied industrial establishments and to accumulate considerable wealth': Weber, M., *General and Economic History*, trans. Knight, F.H., Glenco, 1950, p.150.

alone, up until the eleventh century, provided the settled existence necessary for the preservation and development of 'learning' allied with craft skills (51).

Many of the products of the early monasteries were the work of the monks, whose craft activity was subordinated to the religious purpose. With the establishment of the Benedictine Order in the eleventh century, the manual crafts were given a positive stimulus. St. Benedict, in the *Monastic Rule*(*), which ultimately became the basis of western monasticism, gave instruction that a certain part of the day should be set aside for the accomplishment of manual crafts, stating that craftsmen should be allowed to practise their craft within the monastery (52).

The monasteries were great patrons. As the monastic orders grew in influence in the thirteenth century, so their building projects and demand for fine craftwork grew. The majority of these works were undertaken by lay-craftsmen (53). There is evidence to suggest that many craftsmen who obtained their training outside the monasteries were taken into the monastery as monks (54) - an arrangement that was undoubtedly mutually beneficial to monastery and lay-craftsman. While it provided the monastery with a ready source of skilled labour, it also meant that the craftsman was freed from the economic uncertainty that accompanied an otherwise nomadic existence, the common lot of the lay-craftsman in Northern and Central Europe, prior to the establishment of settled urban centres (55).

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51 Trevor-Roper has suggested that it was the monastic movement that carried the 'seeds of western life through the grim winter of the Dark Ages', to come to fruition in the Cistercian feudal estates of the thirteenth century, with their magnificent abbeys. The period saw the 'drawing together' of the 'monastic cell' and the 'feudal cell'; the new European social order emerging with Christianity as its spiritual and ideological centre under the Carolingians (768-900AD), even though this was initially to the detriment of Church power. C.f. Trevor-Roper, H., op cit, pp.95-100.

52 Martindale, A., *The Rise of the Artist*, London, 1972, p.65.

53 The style of representation developed in the monasteries was greatly influenced by the traditional motifs of the indigenous population. An important example is the *Lindisfarne Gospel* (c. seventh century)

54 This was the case with Henry III of England's favourite painter, William, a monk of Westminster, who practised the craft of painter prior to becoming a monk. C.f. Zarnecki, G., *The Monastic Achievement*, London, 1972, p.120.

55 A. Hauser discusses the wandering life of the lay craftsman and the effect of the rise of the towns on their trade. C.f. Hauser, A., *The Social History of Art*, London, 1951, vol.I, pp.244-52.

It is in the monasteries that we find the earliest sources of evidence of a craft consciousness, a development that has often been interpreted as an early form of individualism. During the eleventh century developed the practice of craftsmen signing their work, and even depicting themselves at work (56). One manuscript, completed in 1149AD, by Eadwine, a monk at Christchurch, Canterbury, contains a picture of himself encircled by the following inscription:

> I am the prince of writers; neither my fame nor my praise will die quickly, demand of my letters who I am. The Letters; Fame proclaim you in your writing for ever Eadwin, you who are to be seen here in the painting. The worthiness of this book demonstrates your excellence. O God, this book is given to you by him. Receive this acceptable gift. (57)

This self-praise comes from one who has learnt his skill and has become conscious of that skill; although within the monastic order, Eadwine, in and through his work, shows himself foremost a craftsman (58). It is his skill at his trade that he holds before God, for to labour at a craft is held to be a worthy pursuit.

One of the earliest and most substantial documents concerning the practice of the craftsman is a treatise by Theophilus, a craftsman-monk producing work around 1100AD, entitled *On Divers Arts* (59). Theophilus speaks to us through the treatise as a craftsman in the tradition of craftsmen. He does not claim a status other than that of a craftsman. He does, however, affirm the religious purpose of the craftsman's work and attempts to establish the origins of craftwork in the gifts given to Man at the creation.

> We read in the account of the creation of the world that man was created in the image and likeness of God and was given life by the breathing in of the Divine breath; that by the excelling quality of such distinction he was preferred above all other living creatures, so that capable of reason, he should respect the will

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56 For mediaeval craftsmen's own pictorial documentation of their craft, c.f. Egbert, V.W., *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, New Jersey, 1967. C.f. discussion of the practice of signing of works in the previous section.

57 Martindale, A., op cit, p.68.

58 This growing craft consciousness is a major secularising influence. It was from the craft workers that support for the new socio-economic order of the towns was to come. The low proportion of monk craftsmen as against lay-craftsmen who depicted themselves at work at their craft seems to support the view that craft consciousness was replacing religious consciousness. C.f. Egbert, V.W., op cit. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries see a great increase in depictions of the craftsman at his trade.

59 This Treatise is translated in full in Hawthorn, J.G., and Smith, C.S. (eds.), *On Divers Arts; The Treatise of Theophilus*, Chicago, 1963. The editors argue the case for Theophilus being a pseudonym of Roger of Helmorshaussen, a metalworker of some renown, craftsman monk, producing work around 11100AD.

> and revere the sovereignty of his creator alone. But although he lost the privilege of immorality through the sin of disobedience, being pitifully deceived by the cunning of the devil, nevertheless he transmitted to the generations of posterity his distinction of knowledge and intelligence, so that whoever devotes care and attention to the task can acquire, as by hereditary right, the capacity for the whole range of art and skill. (60)

The skill of the craftsman is achieved by the cultivation of the conceptual and mechanical abilities given to the first man by God, and attention to the accumulated knowledge of the generations of Man. It is the duty of the craftsman to use this gift from the past. It is this accumulated knowledge that Theophilus is presenting to the reader in the three books of his treatise. The information contained in the three books is in the form of technical instructions. It is the documentation of a predominantly oral tradition of training on the job - a craft tradition.

We find in the writing of Theophilus an insight into the mind of the craftsman-monk of the late mediaeval period. As a member of the Benedictine order, he presents us with that blend of religiosity and craft consciousness that was stimulated by the rules of St. Benedict. However, in reading the treatise, it is impossible to escape the opinion that the craftsman takes precedence over the monk. Theophilus is foremost a craftsman, with a strong sense of the tradition and virtue of his crafts. When later I discuss the writing of Cennino Cennini (61), the continuity of craft consciousness from the time of Theophilus will be observed, although in Cennini this takes a more secular, workshop orientated expression.

The view of the craftsman as carrying out God's design, along with the sacred function of representational form, provides one of the historical platforms from which the notion of artistic creation was to emerge. It is significant, as shall be demonstrated, that the recognition of the creative role of the artist and theorisation of art as creative activity was to take place in Italy, in the intensely religious atmosphere of the Catholic Reformation. But this art historical turn of events was itself

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60 ibid, p.11. Prologue to Book I.
61 Cennino Cennini wrote in his Treatise, 'The Book of the Art', (c.1400AD). For full translation, c.f. *The Book of the Art of Cennino Cennini*, trans. Herringham, C.J., London, 1899.

dependent on developments that pushed craft activity in a more secular direction - the seeking of liberal arts' status by producers of representational form.

The development of craft consciousness outside the monasteries took place within occupational associations. Throughout the Middle Ages it was the master mason who retained the highest status amongst the crafts. Records show that, as early as the eleventh century, the master mason, Godwin Gretsyd, in charge of the building of Westminster Abbey for Edward the Confessor, was wealthy enough to leave properties in Southampton to the Abbey, and also to be benefactor of Hyde Abbey at Westminster, with his wife, Wendelburgh (62). Undoubtedly, the vast responsibility that accompanied the master mason's task, of coordinating the work of numerous lower tradesmen and handling the size of investment involved in material and labour, contributed to his high social status and economic reward. It was the increase in dimension and vision of architectural construction of the Romanesque and, especially, the Gothic (63), that took building projects ouside of the competence of the ordinary craftsman, and brought about the practice of hiring master masons from far afield on the evidence of their good name.

The need for efficient organisation to accomplish building projects on the scale of the Romanesque and Gothic led to the formation of the Masons' Lodge. Because of the mobility of labour between construction sites, it became necessary to build housing for the artisans, to provide them with both sleeping accommodation and workshops, and also to act as centres for the coordination of the work on the site (64). The artisan engaged on the site obtained direction from the master mason, who was responsible for planning (65). The Lodge, as the centre for

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62 Harvey, J., *The Master Builders*, London, 1971, pp.39-41. It has been calculated that the Master Builder of architect status in the late Middle Ages was paid three or four times the wage of a fully skilled craftsman within the same trade. (p.4.)
63 Romanesque style is usually dated from the mid-eleventh century to the onset of Gothic at the close of the twelfth century. But these styles were the first truly international styles, and owed this largely to the universality of the Christian Church in the late Middle Ages. C.f. Green, V.H.H., *Medieval Civilization in Western Europe*, London, 1971, pp.275-96.
64 Knoop, D. and Jones, G.P., *The Mediaeval Mason*, Manchester, 1967 ed., p.55.
65 Hauser, A., op cit, points out that often the task of organisation was shared between the architect and a manager, who was made responsible for the provision of materials and labour. P.244.

administration, also acted as a courthouse, through which discipline was maintained and the regulations of the masons' craft enforced (66).

Thus emerged one of the earliest forms of organisation along occupational lines (67), and although it was limited as a form of occupational control to the site, and then only for the duration of the building project, it both brought about a close association among the trades involved, and constituted a hierarchy with the 'architect' at the apex. This amounted to a separation between the manual worker and the architect, whose task was now predominantly intellectual. The architect was thus emergent from the mason, acting as a middleman between the employer, which was usually the Church, and the lay-manual labourer employed on the site.

The occupation of the architect thus came to be designated as mental labour, involving a high degree of mathematical knowledge, and placing him in a position to claim to be practising within the 'liberal arts'. It is possible that the close occupational association of the painter and sculptor helped foster in them similar aspirations, although they were faced with greater difficulty in overcoming the designation of manual labour. Indeed, when the Florentine Republic wanted to honour Giotto (1267-1337) for his work as a painter, they could do no more than offer him the post of City Architect; there was no official post available for a painter (68).

It was the urban centres that provided the stable occupational base upon which a fully developed craft consciousness could form. It is possible, as Hauser suggests, that the painter and sculptor freed themselves from

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66 Harvey, J., op cit, p.48.
67 The Guild, according to Weber, was found in late Antiquity, but also in Egypt, India and China. It was a form of organisation that was used by the state as a means for extraction of compulsory contributions, and as such differed from the mediaeval guild which was a 'free association'. Such free associations were partly organised in late Antiquity, thus, Italy retained a long tradition of guild activity. Jules Toutain has argued that the guilds of late Antiquity were not essentially economic and protectionist, but rather provided a power base for representation of workers' interests to raise their status in the community. They often took the form of religious organisations. C.f. Toutain, J., *The Economic Life of the Ancient World*, London, 1930.
68 Giotto acquired a certain amount of fame in his lifetime, but there is no record of his work or art theory. There is dispute over the authorship of many works attributed to him. Only the fresco covering the interior of the Arena Chapel at Padua (1303-6) is universally ascribed to him.

the organisation of the Lodge to settle in the towns as independent masters (69), but it is also true to say that many of the independent craftsmen were previously tied to the feudal estates of monasteries and had accommodated their skills to the needs of urban life while still serving the needs of lord and monastery. And in the Italian towns, where large urban centres had survived the fall of Rome, guild organisation had its roots in antiquity. Town life did not automatically lead to the enhancement of the status of the painter and sculptor; indeed, these crafts were, in the late mediaeval period, still far from fully differentiated. There was no painter or sculptor as conceived of today.

In 1323AD, the French scholar, Jean de Joudun, wrote a treatise in praise of Paris, in which, in a chapter headed 'Concerning the Manual Articifer', he lists those crafts which he felt to be an ornament to the city:

> We have also thought to add something concerning those craftsmen working with their hands, if it will not displease the reader to consider them. Here indeed you will find the most ingenious makers of all sorts if image, whether contrived in sculpture or in painting or in relief. Here too you will see the most cunning constructors of instruments of war.... Again, you will discover men preparing most diligently clothing and ornament. We are not ashamed to mention here the makers of bread, nor yet the fashioners of metal vessels.... The more intently the parchment makers, scribes, illuminators and bookbinders, devote themselves in the service of wisdom to the decoration of their works, the more copiously do the delightful fountains of knowledge flow forth from that most profound source of all good things. (70)

The inclusion of the image makers and illuminators along with the makers of bread and the makers of clothes, is clear demonstration of their common status at this time.

The complex trade origins of the painter as an independent craft can be observed in the various guilds to which they belonged. The painter's attachment to a guild was dependent upon the trade structure within any particular mediaeval town, and his position within the guild was often one of subordination to crafts more centrally situated in the structure of economic relationships. In Florence at the opening of the fourteenth century, painters belonged to the 'Medici e Speciali', a guild which also

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69 Hauser, A., op cit, p.248.
70 Martindale, A., op cit, pp.9-10.

contained the doctors, the apothecaries, and the merchants who supplied the raw materials for the other crafts (71). Within this guild the painters were classed as 'Sottoposti dell'Arte', being unable to participate as full members. In Bologna it was to the papermakers that the painters were attached in their guild (72). In contrast, the painters of London were associated with the same guild as the stainers of cloth (73); while in Hull they belonged to the same guild as a number of other trades - including goldsmiths, pewterers, plumbers, glaziers, cutlers, musicians, stationers, book-binders, and basket makers (74).

This array of different craft associations to which the painter found himself attached in the various urban centres, is a reflection on the nature and status of the painter's craft, which was largely subsidiary to the practice of other trades, for the painter would rarely take control of the production process from beginning to end. The earliest ordinances (75) of the London Painters' Guild are concerned in the first four clauses with the painting of saddles (76), a common task of the painter. And, in Paris, guild regulations divided painters into two groups: those primarily concerned with the painting of images, and those whose primary concern was the decoration of saddles (77).

Even the most eminent of painters and sculptors were expected to undertake a variety of craft functions; this included painters attached to the courts. Melchior Broederlam of Ypres, a painter in the service of the Duke of Burgundy, undertook the painting of standards and decorative work, as well as altarpieces. In 1386-87, he undertook the painting of the Duchess's hearse, and also the drapery and pavilions of the Duke's boat (78). Painters were not accepted as members of the court until the close of the Middle Ages, and the practice did not become widespread until well into the fifteenth century.

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71 Antal, F., *Florentine Painting and its Social Background*, London, 1964, p.278.
72 ibid, p.285, note 20.
73 Englefield, W.A.D., *The History of the Painter Stainer's Guild of London*, London, 1923, p.73.
74 Lambert, J.M., *Two Thousand Years of Guild Life*, Hull, 1891, pp.262-8.
75 Martindale, A., op cit, p.14.
76 ibid, p.15.
77 ibid, p.15.
78 ibid, p.15.

As representational production was not generally differentiated from non-representational decorative tasks along craft lines, the status of the painter and sculptor remained that of manual labourers. Further, their craft consciousness remained concentrated within the occupational group as a whole.

GUILD, CONTRACT, PATRONAGE - CRAFT PRODUCTION

The organisation of craft workers along occupational lines into guilds (79) functioned through the regulation of the activities of guild members, and the exclusion of non-members by monopolisation of occupational practice within a defined geographical location. Through the operation of guild control, the member was assured a living, guild policy being livelihood policy (80). However, the protection afforded by the guild had its negative aspects. It had to be paid for by submission to strict regulation of economic activity, and, as an extension of this, political and social life.

The guild's formal objective was equality of opportunity for all guild members.

> To realise this equality the development of capitalistic power must be opposed, especially by preventing the unequal growth of capital in the hands of the individual masters and consequent differentiation among them; one master must not progress beyond another. To this end the processes of work were regulated; no master dared proceed in any other than the traditional manner. (81)

Free competition amongst guild members was limited by regulations that fixed the number of apprentices and the length of apprenticeship to be served. Restrictions were placed on the use of materials; the correct production processes were stipulated as were the types of tools to be employed, and the quality of the finished product was as far as possible regulated by the guild.

The painter and the sculptor, like their fellow craftsmen, had to work within this system of controls imposed by the guild. They too were subject to occupational restraints which made it difficult for the individual craftsman to raise himself to a position of economic dominance and, thus, political dominance within his guild. His social status was tied to that of his guild, and his craft consciousness was largely shaped

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79 For the following discussion of guild organisation I have drawn heavily upon Max Weber's account in his *General and Economic History*, op cit, 1950.
80 ibid, p.111.
81 ibid, p.112.

by this.

The aspirations of the producer of representational form were, however, also conditioned by social relations of patronage. In the fourteenth century, the Italian city states' patronage of the representational arts increased considerably the demand for, and the social status of, this occupational group. We can see a response to this in the treatise of Cennino Cennini, *The Book of Art* (82). The concern of this book is with the techniques of the painter. There is no consideration of aesthetics; this had not yet become the object of theorisation - at least, not by the craftsman. The treatise is in the tradition of Theophilus, reproducing recipe style instructions for the artisan to follow. Cennini, however, can claim for painting a primacy within the hierarchy of the crafts. He places painting second only to science in this hierarchy, comparing it to poetry in its use of the imagination. The producer of representational art sought legitimation and enhancement of his new social status by this claim to superiority within the crafts.

Later claims for liberal arts' status were an extension of this craft consciousness, but seeking a social standing outside the guild, a significant factor in the breaking of the guild monopoly over the representational crafts. Cennini did not take his claims this far; he still advocated a traditional workshop training, with its long apprenticeship, and gradual introduction to traditional techniques under the guidance of a master (83).

It is the independent workshop that is the basic production unit, characteristic of guild organisational control. Within the workshop, the master craftsman was formally free to develop his own characteristic style of work. Stylistic considerations were relatively uninhibited by the otherwise restrictive forms of guild occupational control, which only imposed themselves on style insofar as materials and techniques were regulated. We can agree with Hauser's statement that:

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82 C.f. Herringham, C.J., op cit.
83 ibid.

> We have to recognise in the independent master craftsman of the late Middle Ages, working at his own risk and personally responsible for his own work, the immediate precursor of the modern artist. (84)

For it is in the independent workshop that we see stylistic control formally in the hands of the craftsman, the painter and sculptor.

This stylistic control, at least through to the period of High Renaissance, in the late fifteenth century, largely remained in the form of potential only. As we have seen, until the thirteenth century, stylistic innovation was very much restricted by the need to conform to the religious didactic purpose, which fixed the subject matter and also the mode of expression of the religious message (85). Innovation in style was not in the hands of the craftsman, being more subject to changes in the religious climate and source of patronage. The new social configuration emerging with the economic growth of the towns in the twelfth century, helped to break the hold of tradition and Church, and brought a new, more secular, consciousness into being - a consciousness that we observe in the humanisation of style first associated with the Gothic. The increasing wealth of the merchants in the towns was translated into patronage of large building projects that were outwardly a symbol of the triumph of God - but essentially represented an earthly triumph. The Church began to lose control of style to the new patrons, who sought to express through religious symbols this worldly success and power - a this-worldliness that infected the Church itself (86).

The commission of a painting or sculpture, like any other commission of craftware, was subject to contract. It was the contract that:

> ... preceded and brought into being the work of art, (87)

upon agreement between artisan and 'patron', the patron's wishes largely determining the character of the finished work through stipulations contained in the contract. The contract imposed a mutual obligation, this

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84 Hauser, A., op cit, p.250.
85 For a discussion of the relationship between religious text and the style of representation in the Middle Ages, see Schapiro, M., *Words and Pictures*, Berlin, 1973.
86 The Church in this period became increasingly powerful as a secular organisation.
87 Glasser, H., *Artists' Contracts in the Early Renaissance*, New York, 1977, p.ii.

being desirable for the security of both parties (88). It was usual for the contract to be in the form of a written agreement, although agreement was often sealed with an 'oath', or merely upon the handing over of the raw material by the patron (89). Obligations imposed upon the artisan were in the form of instructions as to the content of the work, the type of materials used, length of time allowed for completion, the proportion of the work that was to be undertaken by the master rather than by his assistants, and restrictions on the taking on of other contracts while the work was still in progress. With the development of interest in aesthetics that accompanied the revival of the Antique, it was often stipulated in the contract that the finished work would be even better than the 'model', which could mean an improvement upon the artisan's sketch, but also an improvement upon nature. The other side of the contract, that imposing an obligation on the patron, was usually concerned with payment. It specified the time and amount of payment, it being the usual practice to make payments payable in stages (90).

Glasser has drawn attention to the important distinction between the 'wage contract' and the 'work contract'. The work contract:

> ... controlled the fabrication of most objects necessary for the daily life of the Middle Ages. The raw material was given to the artisan, whose responsibility it was to fashion the finished product according to the stipulations of the individual (or group) wishing the work done. Only when it was completed to the entire satisfaction of the latter was payment made in full for the finished product. (91)

This is contrasted with the wage contract, where:

> ... the employer to a larger degree directs the labourer to the purposes he desires and also assumes a greater responsibility for its results than is the case with the work contract, where the artisan alone is responsible for the results. (92)

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88 Chambers, D.S., *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, London, 1970, argues that, far from the artist suffering under these contracts, he probably derived more value than did the patron. C.f. p.xxviii.

89 Glasser, H., op cit, distinguishes three forms of contract: (i) the 'Real' contract, initiated by the handing over of materials; (ii) the contract 'per Chartum', this being a written agreement; (iii) the 'Oath', with its origin in cannon law where the testimony of the divinity was evoked. All were binding on the parties involved, although a written contract was the more open to inspection by a court of law.

90 For translations of such contracts, c.f. Glasser, H., ibid, and Chambers, D.S., op cit.

91 Glasser, ibid, p.5.

92 ibid, p.6.

The painter, subject to a work contract, characteristically took entire responsibility for the finished work, while working to the stipulations laid down in the contract. The work contract allowed a significant freedom of stylistic choice, but again this freedom was in the form of potential, it depending upon the extent to which the content of the work was fixed by the stipulations laid down in the contract. The degree to which this potential was made manifest was largely dependent upon the form of patronage undertaken. It is significant that major stylistic innovations were made in the early Renaissance largely in commissions characterised by group patronage (93), a group, like a guild or the town commune, being more liable to delegate considerations of style to the producer. It must be borne in mind, however, that these stylistic innovations were in no way consciously individualistic; the craftsman painter and sculptor of the early Renaissance was, as a member of guild and commune, similarly motivated, experiencing the world very much through the collective. Nevertheless, group patronage, in freeing the painter/sculptor from strict content stipulations, enabled him to interpret the requirements of the collective patron in a more individualised manner. It also gave to the artist a greater sense of his own importance as a partner in the determination of the style of the work.

When the craftsman was contracted by a single patron, the realisation of this potential for control over style was hindered by the imbalance in social status (94). This imbalance was not so obvious when the patronage was undertaken by the guild or commune, although, as we have seen, the painter and sculptor generally held an inferior position within their own guild. A high proportion of patronage was, however, undertaken by individuals, though often in the name of the collective (95). Florence is one of the few places, at this time, where government came anywhere near to being democratic, under the limited democracy of the Republic which lasted only some ninety years. But even here, there developed a rule by a financial oligarchy of rich merchant families. The producer of

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93 ibid, c.f. discussion on p.276.
94 Throughout the Renaissance, the artist remained dependent on powerful patrons. C.f. Feldman, E.B., *The Artist*, Englewood Cliffs, 1982, p.99.
95 Chambers, D.S., op cit, identifies the main sources of patronage as Commune or City patronage, Guild patronage, Church patronage, and Court patronage. It was usual for patronage to take a collective form.

representational form could not hope to deal with these patrons as equals, not even in matters concerning style. Nevertheless, it is under this oligarchical structure that representational form begins to take on an aesthetic significance, independent of its religious purpose. As it does so, so too does the status of the painter and sculptor rise, and the potential for stylistic control move towards its realisation.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to come to a firm understanding of the concept of patronage. In art-historical practice, the term is applied very broadly to cover all aspects of support for the production of paintings and sculptures. This includes the notion of patronage as the supplying of the conditions, by the patron, for the artist, whereby the artist is left free to develop his own individualistic artistic impulses in an atmosphere of art-for-art's-sake, Mayer Schapiro has attacked this 'ideal typical' conception of patronage, arguing that:

> In the Greek and Roman world as well as in the Renaissance, most original works of painting and sculpture were made to order for a definite purpose. A sculptor produced for the decoration of a building in progress, a temple, a funerary monument, an arch or column of triumph. The subject matter was prescribed, and the materials, size, location and other features were specified by the individual or corporate body that commissioned the work. (96)

The production of paintings and sculptures was, as has been stressed throughout, dependent upon a commission and subject to contract. It is only under the influence of the 'Romantic' conception of artistic production that patronage has come to be identified with disinterested support of the arts.

> It has happened in the last hundred years that an individual has supported a painter (more often a poet or composer) with an ideal conception of their relationship, with a disinterested generosity inspired by a love of art for its own sake, and free from thought of self advancement through the association with art or possession of valuable works. More common is the episodic patronage that expresses faith in a young or unknown artist by purchasing his completed work. (97)

Patronage, then, can be conceived of as between these two extremes; it may on the one hand be viewed as completely disinterested, while on the

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96 Schapiro, M., 'On the Relation of the Patron and the Artist', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.70, p.363.
97 ibid, p.367. Of course, even with this disinterested patronage there may be an underlying economic motive.

other it is viewed as a form of 'external' occupational control:

> ... in which the consumer defines his own needs and the manner in which they are to be met. (98)

Of course, neither is often met with in its pure form; each act of patronage in the wider use of its meaning, as general promotion, must be viewed as a particular instance located between these extremes, and takes into account influences that stem from outside the patron/client relationship.

The concept of patronage has not been confined to the area of art historical analysis. Alex Weingrod (99) has discussed the way the concept has been used by anthropologists and by political scientists, the former stressing the inequality of the social positions of client and patron while at the same time seeing the relationship as reciprocal, the latter viewing patronage as a feature of government by which:

> ... party politicians distribute public jobs or special favors in exchange for electoral support. (100)

Both the anthropological and the political science model share a common stress on the 'reciprocal' and 'instrumental' character of the patronage relationship. This does not fit well with the conception of the patron as a disinterested party. It does, however, go some way towards providing an understanding of the nature of patronage in the period under discussion.

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98 Johnson, T., *Professions and Power*, 1972, p.45, opposes 'Patronage' as a form of occupational control to 'Collegiate' control, under which heading he designates guild organisation. Collegiate control he sees as that type where the 'producer defines the needs of the consumer and the manner in which these needs are catered for'. However, in the situation in which the producer of representational form finds himself in the early Renaissance, the two forms of occupational control exist side by side. They can do so because each has its own area of competence. While guild regulations impose almost total control over economic activity and the conditions of production, the patron controls stylistic considerations, largely through stipulations laid down in the contract. Once the artist begins to gain an equal status with the patron, then the absolute notion of patronage is no longer applicable, for stylistic control moves into the hands of the artist. At the same time the guild system of organisation becomes a hindrance and the Academic system is fostered in its place. The artist never fully professionalised, however, and although the academy at times controlled both production and style, it was never a complete control. C.f. next chapter.

99 Weingrod, A., 'Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol.X, 1967-8.

100 ibid, p.379.

There is little doubt that patronage, especially that undertaken by the individual as opposed to the group, in the Renaissance, had this reciprocal and instrumental character. The position is made clear by Gombrich:

> We have a letter from the son of Cennini the goldsmith humbly apologising to Lorenzo because for once the vote in the 'arte della lana' had gone against his patron's wish. Some of his fellow-consuls who were Lorenzo's supporters were out of town, and though he had implored the meeting not to turn 'patronum artis' Laurentium into an enemy he had failed. Patronum artis, of course, means the patron of the guild. For the writer thought in terms of people and communal institutions. The idea of Lorenzo offering his support for the cause of art as such, which so appealed to later generations, would very probably have left him cold. (101)

Disinterested patronage is not to be found in the Renaissance. Patronage took a political form in the commission of works through the guild in exchange for political support. The Medici family, when they first appear in the role of patron, do so within collective patronage, funding the building and decoration of churches, and also guild and communal buildings, as part of their obligation as a rich family within the collective (102). There was, also, often behind the patronage directed at religious institutions a deeply religious motivation. Gombrich suggests that Cosimo de Medici was motivated in his acts of patronage by the stigma of 'usury' that was attached to the profession of banker (103). Patronage was, then, the recognition of a debt owed to the Commune and to God.

It was also a feature of Renaissance patronage that the works that were the result of patronage were seen as the property of the patron, ownership and authorship. It was the patron who received the praise and not the producer.

> The work of art is the doner's. (104)

Indeed, this belief, and the low social status of the artisan producer, is reflected in the work, which was stylistically the property of the patron. Style and content were subject to the patron's taste. We can see this in

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101 Gombrich, E.H., 'The Early Medici as Patrons of Art', Gombrich, E.H., *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, 1966ed., p.36.
102 ibid, p.36.
103 ibid, p.38.
104 ibid, p.40.

the following extract from a letter from Gozzolis, concerning the commission of the frescoes in the Medici chapel:

> Yesterday I had a letter from your Magnificence through Ruberto Martegli from which I understand that you think that the serafims I made are out of place. I have only made one in a corner among certain clouds; one sees nothing but the tips of his wings, and he is so well hidden and so covered by clouds that he does not make for deformity at all but rather for beauty.... I have made another on the other side of the altar but also hidden in a similar way. Ruberto Martegli has seen them and said that there is no reason to make a fuss about them. Nevertheless, I'll do as you command; two little cloudlets will take them away.... (105)

So effective was the Medicis' exercise of the control of their taste over style that we are able to identify a Medici style, which was markedly influenced by the aristocratic courtly style of northern Europe (106).

The degree of freedom over stylistic innovation left in the hand of the painter and sculptor, as we have seen, varied with the type and conditions of patronage. Generally, however, this freedom remained a potential in the years of the early Renaissance. Only as the artisan metamorphosed into the artist did this potential come to be realised to any extent, reaching a high point in the work of Michelangelo.

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105 ibid, pp.48-9.

106 This ability to identify style with a patron is not restricted to Medici patronage. In the period of the early Renaissance when the producer of representational form was of craft status, the conditions of patronage that have been outlined meant that the style of the work was the patron's alone. Thus Antal, F., in his *Florentine Art and its Social Background*, op cit, is able to identify the distinctive styles of particular class factions during the period of the bourgeois Republic in Florence. In his 'Reflections on Classicism and Romanticism', *Classicism and Romanticism; with Other Studies in Art History*, London, 1966, he claims the same ability to identify the transformations in style within the work of individual artists, such as David, as they reflect changes in political power of social groups during the period of the French Revolution. In doing this, he recognises that at the time of the French Revolution there is a need to discuss the changes in terms of the consciousness of the artist, an added problem not central to the study of the Early Renaissance. The relationship between art style and class is by no means so clear in the later period, even though the individual's consciousness is sharpened by the background of class conflict. Certain periods of history are more suited to class analysis than others. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the artist, as he was then emerging, could stamp his own individual style on the work. Michelangelo's style is very distinctive, being deeply affected by the teachings of neo-Platonist theology; c.f. discussion in Panovsky, E., *Studies in Iconography*, London, 1972, and Blunt, A., *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600*, Oxford, 1960, contains a discussion of the transformations in Michelangelo's style as he is influenced by the changing social, political and religious climate; his style is in part a personal reaction, and he often went against accepted norms, not fearing the displeasure of his patrons.

NATURALISM AND HUMANISM - ORIGINS OF ART THEORY AND AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

From the twelfth century, there was a gradual break with mediaeval iconographic representation. Plastic representational form freed itself from the constraints of the religious didactic purpose, in the direction of increasing naturalism, and, under the influence of antiquity, towards an idealism based on an anthropomorphic conception of the cosmos.

The new naturalism had its origins in the Gothic art of Northern Europe, which gave a new impetus to representational form in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. New social, political and economic structures were erected, and with them new forms of expressive need pushing forth innovations in style. Already in the Gothic, figurative representation had become animated. In cathedral sculpture, the figures' functional subservience to the architectural structure, characteristic of the Romanesque, had given way to the free-standing figure, allowing for a more naturalistic and individual treatment of the subject (107). To breathe life into representation became the aim of the sculptor and the painter, bringing a new immediacy into the religious experience. Through the portrayal of human emotions the onlooker was encouraged to participate in the religious experience, which became more of this world, more human and approachable. The origins of the 'this-worldly' religious expression are not easily fixed, certainly not as the reflective expression of the ideology of new social groups. Abelard (1079-1142) had introduced the notion of Christ as companion and example to Man (108), initiating the theme of a suffering Christ with a human mother, to be found in the art of the eleventh century.

The two regions of Europe where naturalism was taken to its furthest point, between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, were the Netherlands and northern Italy. Both regions were dominated by towns

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107 We find this in the figures on the northern porch of the Gothic cathedral of Chartres, constructed in the early thirteenth century.
108 On Abelard, c.f. Grane, L., *Peter Abelard: Philosophy and Christianity in the Middle Ages*, trans. Crowley F. and Crowley, C., London, 1970.

whose economic activity was based on their participation in international trade and commerce. In these regions, cultural production was transformed under the patronage of segments of the powerful bourgeois and merchant class (109). There seems little doubt that naturalism as informative of style in representational cultural production was in large part a product of an expressive consciouness rooted in the new urban socio-economic order.

Frederick Antol has called attention to that:

> ... manner of thinking which - to put it briefly - followed naturally from the essence of capitalism, of monetary economy, a manner of thinking by which the world could be expressed in figures and controlled by intelligence. (110)

This manner of thinking derives from the belief that the world could be managed through the application of rational thought and action (111). Antol is projecting economic rationality, as the distinctive characteristic of capitalist economic transaction, into the realm of culture, into the style of pictorial representation.

The linking of the movement towards naturalism with the rational world view of the ascending urban bourgeois class in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is also a feature of Hauser's interpretation of the stylistic innovations of the period (112). He sees the new stylistic principles as expressing:

> ... the same dislike for the incalculable and the uncontrollable as the economy of the same period with its emphasis on planning, expedience and calculability; they are creations of the same spirit which makes its way into the organisation of labour, in trading methods, the credit system and double-entry book-keeping, in methods of government, in diplomacy and warfare. The whole development of art becomes part of the total process of rationalisation. (113)

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109 It is interesting to note that the same developments take place in a similar period in Japanese society. The rise of a merchant class (chonin) brought about a similar turn to 'naturalism' in seventeenth century Japan. C.f. discussion in Burke, P., *Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Italy*, Glasgow, 1972, pp.338-48.
110 Antal, F., op cit, 1964, p.118.
111 Weber more specifically identified the guilds as the bearers of bourgeois rationalism. C.f. 'Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism', Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C.W. (eds.), *From Max Weber*, London, 1970, p.321.
112 Hauser, A., op cit.
113 ibid, p.277.

Both Hauser and Antol draw attention to the advanced level of development of the productive forces at the basis of Florentine society, the advanced level of class struggle and class consciousness. They identify the class origins of particular stylistic innovations, which are indicative of the changes in fortune of the different classes and their factions.

A strong link can be demonstrated between the turn to naturalism and the patronage of representational crafts by urban wealth. Further, we can link stylistic innovation to the intensity and outcome of class conflict between social groups, class conflict causing polarisation of class interests and intensifying the opposition between stylistic traits (114). At this historical conjuncture, style was largely the reflection of the patron's taste; patronage being undertaken for instrumental purposes, it is not surprising that class interests should permeate and shape style.

The linking of naturalism to rationalism cannot go unquestioned. There is no necessary reason why increased rationalism should not lead to geometricism. Indeed, to anextent, this happened in the Renaissance, explaining the adoption of theories of proportion and the development of perspective, as well as geometric ordering of content in pictorial space. That it was the rational world view of antiquity that came to provide the model for Renaissance representational form, seems to contradict the epochal theory of Marxism. Here the issue is pushed back to the problem of the origins of Greek humanism, a subject on which I shall have more to say later. Where a rational bourgeois world view may have helped push representational form in the direction of naturalism is in insisting on the primacy of practical experience. This I believe was the initial impetus towards naturalism in the Gothic and early Renaissance, which adopted elements of the Gothic. Early Renaissance art was more influenced by 'empirical' concerns than rational, geometric, formal concerns. This, as I shall demonstrate, had its consequence for the emergent artist.

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114 Heller, A., *Renaissance Man*, London, 1978, has drawn the distinction between Florentine painting, which is full of conflict and subject to rapid stylistic change and innovation, and Venetian painting which is primarily concerned with painterly effects and demonstrates a continuity of style. He attributes the difference to the class situation of each, Florence being controlled by industrial capital and Venice by merchants. Also Florence's history is one of conflict between classes, while Venice's history is one of relative stability. C.f. p.40.

Despite this move towards naturalism, representational form throughout the period of the Renaissance remained predominantly religious in content. Even at its most naturalistic moments it expressed an essential religiosity. And yet a process of secularisation, if this is understood in the limited sense of a movement towards a this-worldly practical consciousness (115), can be observed if we view the changing style and content of representational works from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century. One only has to comnpare the *Virgin with Angels*, attributed to Cimabue (1240-1302), in the Louvre, Paris, with Giovanni Bellini's (1430-1515) *Madonna and Child* in the Accademia, Venice, to see how the more naturalistic style is adapted to the religious theme without losing any of its intensity. The latter painting is closer to our own understanding; it speaks of human emotions, it shares a physical space with the observer, is immediate and compelling. Cimabue's Madonna is only beginning to approach the onlooker, still half self-contained in a space set apart from ordinary human experience.

The movement towards increased naturalism is paralleled by a search for, and representation of, an 'ideal' derived from the revival of interest in the classical tradition, an ideal that was to provide the basis of art theorisation. With the development of art theory, naturalism is deflected by the search for an ideal. While the purpose of representation in the Netherlands became the depiction of the phenomenal world, an almost pure naturalism that remained largely untheorised as art, in Italy the natural and the ideal converged and struggled for prominence at the practical and theoretical level. Whereas Netherlandish art shed the geometricism of mediaeval religious representation without adopting the geometricism of humanism, Italian art clung more closely to geometric form (116).

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115 Here secularisation is used to refer to both the decline in the power of the Church as an institution and to the movement from an 'other-worldly' to a 'this-worldly' attitude informing everyday practice. These social trends are, however, not viewed as linear, in Wilson's sense of progressive rationalisation leading to religious loss of social significance. C.f. Wilson, B.R., *Religion in Secular Society*, London, 1966.

116 Portraiture seems to be an exception. Although Dutch painters were painting in a naturalist style early in the fifteenth century, Italian portraiture remained essentially lifeless until mid-century. Within a period of fifty years, the profile images were replaced by naturalistic animated portraits, the popularity of which continued through the next century. C.f. discussion in Cole, B., *Italian Art, 1250-1550*, New York, 1987, pp.218-74. The appeal of naturalistic portraits seems to have been widespread and not confined to a particular social group.

A fundamental influence running through the representational imagery of the Renaissance is that of 'Humanism'. This humanism takes two related forms; it is both an extension of the naturalistic impulse already identified as linked to the market orientated urban social configurations, and it is an anti-Scholastic, philosophic humanism, centring on Man and drawing its strength from a study of the Antique. In approaching humanism, I shall make a separation between 'naturalistic' and 'classical' humanism. It is the bringing together of these two strands that facilitates the development of a theory of artistic practice (117).

The development of naturalistic humanism initiates a break with the iconographic, timeless and impersonal imagery of the Romanesque, a break first discernible in the Gothic style of the thirteenth century. Giotto (1267-1337), to use Vasari's words, introduced:

> ... the practice of making good portraits of living persons. (118)

The image became personalised, being brought within the social and emotional reach of the spectator. Religious experience fused with the contemporary life world as the image became located in social space, in geographic and historical space.

> Besides a landscape full of trees and rocks, a new thing in those days, the attitude of the saint, who is receiving the stigmata, on his knees, with great eagerness, exhibits an ardent desire to receive them and an infinite love towards Jesus Christ, who is in the air surrounded by seraphim granting them to him, the varied emotions being all represented in the most telling manner imaginable. (119)

This description by Vasari of Giotto's painting of *St. Francis in the Desert of Vernia*, is an acknowledgement of this early humanism across three centuries of the Renaissance.

From the close of the thirteenth century, increasing attention was called for and paid to the naturalistic representation of scenes form the life

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117 The two strands do not converge on artistic practice until the fifteenth century, when they find a spokesman in Alberti.
118 Vasari, G., *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, first pub. 1550, trans. Hind, A.B., London, 1970, 4 vols., vol.I, p.66.
119 ibid, p.70.

of Christ and the saints (120). As can be seen from Vasari's description, this meant that greater attention was given to detail, both in the pictorial backdrop and the portrayal of the correct emotional attitude of the subjects. Figures were rendered more lifelike, gradually coming to express an individuality of their own, each being an act of portraiture in its own right, while, at the same time, the harmony of the whole was maintained. The volume of the body in space came to take on its full significance, representation becoming sculptural though fluid. The line of the body was stressed, the fall of the garments allowed to accentuate the underlying human form, just as the expressiveness of the physical gesture emphasised the human emotional state. All this demonstrated a narrowing of the divide between the sacred and the profane, an emphasis on the this-worldliness of religious experience, a centring on Man.

The thematic content of religious narrative was also subjected to a process of humanisation (121). The predominance of the Old Testament in thematic content was replaced by scenes from the life of Christ, the Virgin and Child, and the lives of the saints. Everyday life found its reflection in the religious themes and their compositional style. Christ crucified took on the form of a naked human corpse; the image of the Madonna, removed from her heavenly throne, took the form of the gentle and loving mother:

> ... the relationship between Mother and Child came to be purely material and intimate, (122)

the infant being rendered as a real human child. The overall effect was a religious representational form suited to the spiritaul and ideological needs of the new urban classes. The rational mind humanised the world and rendered it natural.

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120 This development, that took place within the general trend towards increasing rationalisation and humanisation, is more immediately associated with the growth of the Franciscan Order. It has been suggested that the turn to 'naturalism' was profoundly stimulated by the 'spirit' of the Franciscan movement, with its joyous acceptance of the beauty of the created world. C.f. Smart, A., *the Dawn of Italian Painting*, Oxford, 1978, p.6.

121 Here, particularly, attention is drawn to Antal, F., op cit, 1964, which contains a detailed exposition of this humanising trend. C.f. pp.136-58.

122 ibid, p.145.

Classical humanism finds its ealiest formulation as a reaction to the metaphysical speculation of the 'Scholastics' (123). Humanist thought was essentially practical; it sought universal human values and their realisation in the world. Through a study of Classical texts and their emulation, humanists consciously tried to bring about a 'rebirth' of Classical humanism (124). There was a fundamental belief in the perfectability of man that went against the mediaeval Christian conception of man after the 'Fall'. Man was not only active within the natural realm, an active intervention in the material world being sanctioned by the Christian tradition, he could achieve perfectability, his own actions being directed to the transcendental realm of universals through the application of reason. The cosmos came to be viewed as anthropocentric.

By 1300AD, groups of humanists were meeting at Naples, Padua, Verona, Vicenza, Venice, Milan and Florence (125). Their purpose was to gain a clear understanding of the Roman, and later the Greek, world, through the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and ethics, in the classical authors. From this understanding, they hoped to perfect their own literary and intellectual abilities, even beyond those of the ancients. The notion of perfectability spread to include all areas of human activity, government, art, war, even etiquette.

The deep concern to emulate and, as it were, reconstruct the Latin tongue, had a profound effect on the development of literary and art criticism. Bexandall (126) has argued that strict attention to the Latin model led to the imposition of a new conceptualisation of reality, such that the world was viewed through categories derived from the ancient Roman past.

> The existence in Latin of names for various categories of visual interest - let us say 'decor' and 'decus' - drew attention to the existence of these categories, and when a humanist had to learn to use these words in an acceptable neo-classical way, he necessarily also learnt to distinguish the kinds of interest or stimulus they corresponded to. (127)

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123 C.f. discussion in Dickens, A.G., *The Age of Humanism and Reformation*, London, 1972.
124 On the notion of rebirth, c.f. Panofsky, E., *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, Stockholm, 1960, and, with particular reference to the revival of the Classical languages, c.f. Baxandall, M., *Giotto and the Orators*, Oxford, 1971.
125 Dickens, A.G., op cit, p.6.
126 Baxandall, M., op cit.
127 ibid, p.48.

The Latin texts studied by the humanists brought to the fore a concern with expressive form that led to the development of a critical attitude and vocabulary. Petrarch, greatly influential over later humanists, included a chapter on painting and sculpture in *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae* (1354-1366), and laid the groundwork for such a critical vocabulary. Bexandall has distinguished in the text six contrasting pairs of concepts: the contrast between Classical antiquity and the present, between the informed beholder and the uninformed, between sensuous delight and a more discriminating useful pleasure, between matter and form, or, in another aspect, between matter and skill, and between nature and art. These are all central to the later development of an art critical vocabulary (128).

Filippo Villani, in *De Origine Civitatis Florentiae et Eiusdem Famosis Civibus* (1381-2), imposes a developmental scheme upon the artistic practice of the fourteenth century (129). He introduces the notion of rebirth, seeing Cimabue as the first to revive the art of painting,and Giotto as the artist who returned painting to its true stature and greatness, through a faithfulness to nature. The scheme seems to have been taken from Pliny's account of the relationship between Apollodorus and Zeuxis and their followers (130). This provides a good example of the way in which the content of the works of the Roman authors shaped the humanist perspective on contemporary events.

The leading role played by Florentine humanism in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century can be partly explained by its intensity. Florentine humanists were among the first to apply the principle of the centrality of Man to the interpretation of history. Following the Classical model, history came to be seen in terms of individuals, parties and states. Through the historical glorification of great men and of the state, humanist study was given a patriotic purpose; the state had to be

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128 ibid, p.58.
129 ibid, pp.70-2, contains a translation from Vallani's work, of the chapter which deals with the history of the great painters of Florence in terms of an evolutionary scheme.
130 Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus, 23-79AD) is looked to as a source for information on Greek painters and sculptors. His writings are believed to have drawn on earlier, Greek, critical works. C.f. *The Natural History*, vol.VI, trans. Bostock, J., Riley, H.T. and Bohn, H.G., London, 1957.

established and legitimised through the past (131). For the Florentine Republic, Republican Rome provided both a model for emulation and historical legitimation. Against the threat posed by the expansion of Milan, under the autocratic rule of the Visconti, at the close of the fourteenth entury, a history of the city state became an important unifying concept. The heroic stand of the Florentine Republic could be seen to have its counterpart in the struggles of the Roman Republic - the height of Roman civilisation with the state of Florentine culture. The emphasis on humanism, on the city state as a unit giving moral purpose to the actions of its citizens, on the centrality of Man and upon Man's cultural achievements, intensified the hold of secular humanism (132).

The close of the fourteenth century saw the introduction of Greek humanist thought. An interest in the Greek language and literary texts had its origins outside of Italy, in the Byzantine world. Turkish advances into the Eastern Empire both aroused the attention of the West and ensured an inflow of Greek scholars. In 1396AD, the Florentine State secured the services of Manuel Chrysoloras (133), a Byzantine scholar, and, from this point onwards, the influence of Greek texts spread, a result of a large personal following and the availablity of his translations. Manuel Chrysoloras's contribution to the intellectual atmosphere that was to give rise to theorisation about artistic production, was to question the nature of the pleasure that is derived from an object such as a painting or sculpture. In a letter written in Rome to Demetrius Chrysoloras this question is posed:

> And it has often occured to me to wonder about this: how is it that when we see an ordinary living horse or dog or lion we are not moved to admiration, do not take them for something so very beautiful.... Yet when we see a representation of a horse, or ox, plant, bird, human being,.... we are much impressed.... Though they are not, I suppose, any more meticulously formed than the living objects, the representations are praised in proportion to the degree in which they seem to resemble their originals.... And the beauties of statues and paintings are not an unsightly thing to behold; rather they do indicate a certain nobility in the intellect that admires them.

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131 All the early humanist writings on history take this patriotic form, to which the history of great men must conform. C.f. Ferguson, W.K., *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, London, 1948, Ch.I.

132 C.f. Baron, H., 'Fifteenth Century Civilisation and the Renaissance', *The Cambridge Modern History VI*. This conception that the unique character of Florentine culture must be explained in terms of an external threat and an internal patriotic response, has become known as the Baron-thesis. C.f. esp. p.71.

133 Reproduced from Baxandall, M., op cit, p.79.

> What is the reason for this? Is it that we admire not so much the beauties of the bodies in statues or paintings as the beauty of the mind of their maker.... through portrayal and skill the passions of the soul can be seen in them. The artist's mind, though it is not itself disposed particularly to laughter or pleasure, anger or sorrow - and may indeed be disposed to their contraries - yet impresses these passions on the materials. This is what we admire in these representations. (134)

Already we see the conception of the 'special' ability of the artist, an emphasis on the centrality of the artist's mind in the construction of aesthetic form, that was to become prominent in art theorisation of the sixteenth century. Chrysoloras gives tacit recognition to the existence of the aesthetic object, viewing representational forms as works of art, the object of critical aesthetic appreciation (135).

Classical humanism, its initial concern the purification of the Latin tongue, extended its domain to the critical appreciation of representational form. Here it met the naturalist humanism emergent from the urban social configurations of the late Middle Ages, giving rise to a dualistic, partial synthesis of the ideal with nature, as the guiding principle of artistic practice. The early humanists' critical attitude which measured all by recourse to the classical models, met the naturalistic humanism which had turned to nature for its model. Classical 'idealism' and bourgeois urban 'naturalism' meet as the constitutive element of an art-theoretical consciousness.

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134 ibid, p.82.

135 The example for critical essay writing also appears to be found in the Greek-Byzantine world. There existed in Byzantium the practice of making detailed accounts of the visible world with the purpose of bringing about seeing through the written word. This type of essay was called the 'Ekphrasis', and was a form of rhetorical exercise codified by Hermogenes of Tarsus in the second century BC. C.f. Baxandall, M., op cit, p.85.

CHAPTER IV

CLASSICAL AESTHETICS - ART THEORY AND PRACTICE

ORIGINS

The Classical tradition in art has its intellectual origins in fifth century B.C. Greece. The Classical aesthetic that gave rise to art theory and practice, that is the central concern of this chapter, takes its distinctive form from a later 'classicism', that of the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D. As the terms, 'Renaissance' and 'Classical' denote, the Italian Renaissance saw itself as, and to some extent was, a re-birth and a high point in cultural development. While wanting to make a distinction between Classical art, as part of the modern tradition, and Classical Greek art (480-430 B.C.), it is important to recognise the debt owed to Greek artistic and philosophical endeavour. The Italian Renaissance, like the twelfth century Renaissance before it, looked to Greece and Rome for a model of human achievement, seeking to emulate the greatness of these past epochs. But in translating, the past was inevitably distorted and reconstructed in the hermeneutic enterprise.

It is Greek art of the fifth century B.C. that is often heralded as the 'great awakening' (1), the 'turning point' (2), in Western artistic development. As Gombrich puts it:

> ... it was no longer a question of learning a ready-made formula for representing the human being. Every Greek sculptor wanted to know how he was to represent a particular body.

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1 Gombrich, E.H., *The Story of Art*, London, 1978, p.52.
2 Robertson, M., 'The Visual Arts of the Greeks', Lloyd-Jones, H. (ed.), *The Greek World*, Baltimore, 1962, p.168.

> The great revolution in Greek Art, the discovery of natural forms and of foreshortening, happened at the time which is altogether the most amazing period of human history. It is the time when people in Greek cities began to question the old traditions and legends about their gods, and inquired without prejudice into the nature of things. (3)

We may question this notion of freedom from prejudice, the extent to which all the citizens of the city state shared in the break with tradition and the juxtaposition of a philosophy of reason with the existence of a slave class, in a 'democratic' social order. Marx referred to the Greek world as the 'childhood of humanity', recognising the achievement of their art and its hold on the mind of modern Man, but also seeing its dependence on a mythological tradition (4). Greek art and philosophy never entirely freed themselves from their past, their myths, nor from their social conditions. But with the growth of faith in reason, some philosophers and some craftsmen took a step beyond the constraints of this tradition. To rely on reason was necessarily - to use Bacon's term applied to a later age - to question the authority of 'idols', to subject all things to rational scrutiny.

Under the influence of reason and its application to practical experience, the Greek City State gave voice to a humanitarian spirit. It was a spirit that saw in Man the potential for perfectability - 'arete' (human excellence). The Greek world was never 'secular'. The life of the city was integrated with its religion. Perfectability of the individual was never separated from perfectability of the State; the two ends were seen as one and the same; there was no individualism in the modern sense and it is doubtful that the portraits and sculpture of the Greeks ever truly presented or sought to present the physiognomy of the portrayed in all its detail. The particular was never divorced from the general, content from the form that gave it substance. It was not individualism that the Greeks sought, but rather identity in the general.

The outstanding cultural achievement of the Greek City State was its attempt to reconcile the realm of the particular, of human action and

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3 Gombrich, E.H., op cit, p.52.
4 Marx, K., *Grundisse*, Harmonsworth, 1973, pp.110-11. Marx's comments here have stimulated many attempts to explain not the achievement of the Greek world, but the problem of why this art still gives pleasure. C.f. Wolff, J., *The Social Production of Art*, London, 1981, p.73 and p.155, note 6.

history, with the realm of the general, the timeless order of forms. The Greeks sought to bring their life into harmony with the law of existence - physically, morally, politically, aesthetically. To this end, they both sought answers through reasoning and through attention to nature. In philosophy, reason always kept a tight hold on nature, but in art, the sensuous and the perceivable took the stronger hold. Hegel saw in the Greek representation of the human figure the most perfect sensuously perceivable unities of the particular and universal (5). The arts, as we know them today, were integrated into public life, but painting and sculpture were never raised above the status of crafts, while poetry, theatre and music, were given a liberal arts, hence educative, status.

> The public religion of the polis featured poetry and dramatic performance - the latter being civic enterprises in which in Athens the various political subdivisions or demos competed to put on the best performance. Citizens, not slaves or aliens, performed tragedies, comedies, and satyr plays. The plays, especially in the fifth century, explored the human condition, fate and virtue or arete. These activities which the Greeks called Mousike because they were inspired by the muses - included tragedy, comedy, elegy, oratory, music (in our sense), dance, even history and astronomy. There were no muses for the arts of painting, sculpture, metal workings, pottery or architecture. (6)

The craftsman painter and sculptor in Greece had the status of an artisan, a skilled worker (techne) and was not conceived of as being inspired by wisdom (sophia); his activity was too close to that of a slave, a manual labourer, to merit higher status. But the craftsman developed a consciousness of identity that separated him from the slave, a pride in his skills. Around this craft consciousness emerges what Feldman has termed a 'mystique' (7), that provides a psychological escape from the low status and the commitment to ensuring a high standard of work, the impetus for craftsmen's fraternities and guilds, and to seeking social recognition for their skills.

A large number of craftsmen did receive high acclaim in the Greek and Roman world. Pliny claims amongst the most celebrated two hundred and twenty-five sculptors and four hundred and five painters (8). Pliny's

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5 Hegel, G.W.F., *Aesthetics; Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. Knox, T.M., Oxford, 1975, ii pp.756-61 and iii pp.137-42.
6 Paseson, Jr., T.D., 'Art and Paideia', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol.19, no.1, 1985, p.68.
7 Feldman, E.B., *The Artist*, New Jersey, 1982, pp.62-3.
8 Pliney (the elder), *The Natural History VI*, trans. Bostock, J., Riley, H.T., Bohn, H.G., London, 1857.

accounts, which are taken from earlier Greek and Roman texts, often anecdotal, are a catalogue of achievements, and have proved to be a constant source for art historians to the present day. Phidias receives most attention by historians, for his work on the Parthenon, from 447 to 432 B.C., of which fragments still remain, but in the Greek world for his statue of Zeus at Olympia, and the bronze Athena Promachos, reputed to be twenty-five feet high, erected on the Acropolis, both now lost, only living in accounts to be found in Classical texts (9). It is Phidias who is usually credited with introducing a new spirit into Greek art, taking that crucial step from the formal Archaic style to the more naturalistic and expressive style associated with the Classical period.

The naturalism of the Classical period developed out of a more abstract Archaic style. Perhaps best exemplified by the votive statues or 'Kouvoi', the Archaic style resembled that of the Egyptians in its austerity and transcendentalism. The Egyptian sphinx (c. 2500 B.C.) has the same facial appearance, expressionless but for a hint of an inward contemplative smile, with the eyes slightly raised to the sky. The style is essentially other-worldly; the body of the Kouros statue conforms to rigid geometric rules, it possesses no indication of motion other than the setting of the left foot slightly in front of the right - identical to the stance adopted in many Egyptian statues. The Archaic cosmology of the Greeks, like that of the Egyptians, looked beyond the phenomenal world of nature to a life after death, an eternal order where the uncertainty of earthly existence could not penetrate. The overriding concern of art was not life, but the transition through death to immortality.

To understand the styles of representation of the Archaic and Classical periods in Greek art, as well as the later Hellenistic, it is necessary to perceive the interplay on consciousness of the order/chaos dualism (10). The Archaic period is marked by the separation of this duality into the chaos of the phenomenal realm and the orderliness of the transcendent

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9 C.f. discussion in Abbate, F., *The Art of Classical Greece*, London, 1972.
10 C.f. Pollitt, J.J., *Art and Expression in Classical Greece*, Cambridge, 1972.

(11). In Classical art, we perceive order being brought into existence; the transcendent no longer has to be awaited and approached through death - Man has some control over his own destiny on earth. Classical art, in abandonning the abstraction of the Archaic style, looks to nature for its model. The geometricism is still present, but it now informs the natural, it does not stand opposed to it. In Classical art we have a balance between these contrary forces, and it is balance and harmony that the Greeks of the Classical period sought in all their dealings with the world (12).

Classical Greek art is a turning point in the history of style, because it represents and signifies a point in time when Man broke free of external determinancy of his fate (13) by, on the one hand, transcendental forces, and on the other, the chaotic flux of phenomenal existence. Human life, individual and social existence, came to be seen as being within the control of Man, who had an active part to play in the determinancy of his own future. An active role but not a free hand; there could be order in the world, but it had to be brought back in conformity with the timeless order of the universe. The Greeks did not abandon their gods. In Classical Greek philosophy, 'reason' showed the way to the universal order of forms, to the reality corrupted in nature; a cosmology very different from that of the eighteenth century 'Enlightenment', where reason allied to the empirical study of nature sought to derive the laws of nature from the phenomenal world of particulars. In Classical Greek philosophy reason retained its dominance over nature. In the Enlightenment, nature, as sense experience, came to dominate reason.

The point of rupture with the Archaic past seems to have occured with the Greek defeat of the Persian invasion, led by Xerxes, in 481/2 B.C. The

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11 For discussion of the development of Greek philosophy from 600BC, c.f. Armstrong A.H., *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, London, 1947.

12 Jacquetta Hawkes has conceived of this balance in terms of male/female principles, having its roots in the meeting of the feminine civilisation of the Minoans, and the masculine Indo-European. Athena most symbolises this union. I would not disagree with this, but this does not detract from the primacy of the order/chaos duality. C.f. Hawkes, J., *Dawn of the Gods*, London, 1968.

13 This moment has been referred to as the 'conquest of the bondage of the past', exemplified by the 'gentle curve of the lips', the smile that is not the 'internal smile' of contemplation, but that of a race master of its own destiny, a smile that reigns again in the Gothic statue. C.f. Malraux, A., *Museums without Walls*, London, 1967, p.174.

Greek City States for the first time acted as a nation, giving them an identity confirmed in opposition to the Persian invaders:

> Victory in such a conflict was interpreted as something more than a successful, heroic act of self-preservation; it was a triumph of order over irrationality, a divinely sanctioned justification of Greek culture. (14)

In Athens under the leadership of Pericles (460-439 B.C.), Classical art reached its most confident and anthropomorphic moment. As the most powerful city in the Dorian League, Athens sought to provide a model for all Greece in its cultural achievements. Pericles initiated a programme of reconstruction that was to be a monument to Greek victory over the 'barbarian' Persians (15). And it was Phidias who was appointed to oversee the reconstruction programme. Although to Phidias is often attributed the new naturalism to be found in the sculptural work on the Parthenon, denoting truly human subjective conditions for the first time (16), this stylistic achievement must be recognised also as a product of Athenian democracy - democratic principles allowing men to be seen in terms that are essentially human, the need for external conventions ensuring status differentiation replaced by a common language of human movement and expression. Here there is a close parallel with the 'naturalism' in the art of the Florentine state, itself inseparable from the democratic ideal contained within.

The ideal contained in Classical Greek art was a truly general conception that penetrated all outward manifestations of collective life. Art was too much a part of life, of religious and institutional existence, for the Greeks to make it the object of a conscious aesthetic. The Greeks were aesthetically aware - this is obvious from their achievements - but they did not subject art to a conscious theorisation so as to identify the

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14 Pollitt, J.J., op cit, p.14, traces the transition to the 'classical moment' in Greek art in some depth.

15 The Greek states had undertaken to do no rebuilding while war was on with the Persians, to leave the Persian destruction as a monument and reminder for all Greeks. But Pericles signed a treaty ending the war in 449/8BC, and using money given by the States of the Dorian League for the defence of Greece, commenced his rebuilding programme.

16 Phidias did have his stylistic forebears. Pliny mentions Myron as the first artist to introduce rhythm into his art and break with the stylised Archaic forms (early fifth century BC). But the transition can be observed at a still earlier date, with the interest shown in the depiction of the human figure on Athenian vases during the sixth century BC. C.f. Powell, A., *The Origins of Western Art*, London, 1973, pp.103-8.

aesthetic object. Art had a collective purpose, and this was the subject of theorisation, but art's aesthetic objective was not theorised, nor was the artist (artisan) ever conceived of as 'special'. If an artist, like Phidias. was upheld as an example, then it was because of his human skill and achievement. He was measured by the quality of his product in the same manner as the athlete was viewed in terms of the skill with which he could throw or run. The craftsman, through his abilities to reproduce human form, could attain collected recognition, and receive a high reward for his work, but he did not achieve the status of artist in the sense that this term came to be applied in the Renaissance - he did not 'create', but rather 'imitate'. The art of Archaic Greece had the ability to evoke a presence, but remained subject to religious ritual and stylistic traditionalism; the power lay in the iconography. To the extent that art was freed from ritual in Classical Greece, it imitated the human condition in accordance with the laws of reason, its purpose was essentially practical, it did not, like philosophy, aspire to the status of knowledge. The power of art - of theatre and poetry in particular - to excite the emotions, was recognised, and as the Archaic ritualism gave way to collective entertainment, this power was subjected to theorisation - viewed in terms of its opposition to reason (Plato) or its collective function (Aristotle).

FORM, EMOTION AND THE FINE ARTS IN THE WORKS OF PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

To what extent is it possible to speak of a theory of 'fine art' in the works of Plato and Aristotle? Of Aristotle, Butcher (17) has claimed that in his writings there is the development of a clear theoretical basis for distinction between the 'fine arts' and the 'useful arts'. Whereas:

> ... useful art supplements nature and at the same time follows her guidance, (18)

fine art is conceived of as:

> ... a free and independent activity of the mind, outside the domain both of religion and politics, having an end distinct from that of education and moral improvement, (19)

There is, however, no such clear distinction in Aristotle's works; he left no systematic theory of fine art, as Butcher himself acknowledges, and such claims can be no more than projection, largely informed by a modern conceptual framework. It is true that Aristotle did isolate a number of arts for special attention. In his *Poetics*, he places painting in company with poetry - poetry, itself, incorporating elements of drama, dance and music. The seeds of this concern with certain arts can be found in Plato, and do not originate with Aristotle. In Book X of the *Republic* (20), the painter and the poet receive his attention, and in the *Ion*, the art of the poet is approached through criticism of its claims to knowledge (21). In the case of both Aristotle and Plato, those arts that we call 'fine' are discussed with a purpose in mind that is not itself internal to the practice of fine art. Despite Butcher's claims for Aristotle, fine art never escapes consideration in terms of ends greater than its own.

Rather than viewing Aristotle's and Plato's interest in fine art as being part of the development of a theory of fine art, it is more informative

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17 Butcher, S.H., *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, London, 1902.
18 ibid, p.120.
19 ibid, p.115.
20 Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Shorey, P., London, 1946.
21 Plato, 'Ion', *Plato: Politicus Philebus*, trans. Lamb, W.R.M., London, 1948, pp.406-47.

to see it as a response to claims to knowledge and practical value made by the useful arts in general, and certain fine arts in particular, ie. poetry. R.S. Brumbaugh has argued that the philosopher's discussion of art is only one side of an ongoing debate concerning the status of the arts and philosophy (22). The fine arts, particularly poetry, did have a high status in the Greek world. The poet was viewed as:

> ... [the] arbiter of conduct and of Truth, (23)

and even the humble craftsman would claim a function of some importance. This contrasts with philosophy which, for a long time, was considered as mere talk and useless speculation. The fine arts, to the extent that they received special attention, were discussed in the context of such a debate. It is their claim to knowledge and their appeal to the emotions and by extension their influence over men's lives, that makes them the focus of critical attention. The following discussion will be concerned with these two central themes in the work of Plato and Aristotle. Firstly, I shall discuss the method of dealing with fine art's claim to knowledge, which involves a consideration of the fine art product in relation to the 'Forms'. Secondly, the role of the emotions will be considered in the light of their challenge to reason. In so treating their 'theory of fine art', I hope to show in what ways Aristotle and Plato differ, and to view this divergence in the light of their respective conception of the nature of reality in general.

Both Aristotle and Plato have a mimetic theory of art. The artist in his work imitates the objects and actions present in the phenomenal world of sense experience. Plato's mimetic theory is set forth in Book X of the *Republic*. He begins by positing a 'Form' which stands outside of, and yet gives shape to, the particular. He uses the example of the bed or table that is manufactured by the craftsman in conformity to the dictates of this transcendental form. And, as a third stage of the argument, he introduces the work of the painter as one who holds a mirror up to reality to produce an image of the particular, producing an appearance of the original object. For Plato, then, there are three beds: the bed that exists in nature (the form of the bed), the bed made by the carpenter,

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22 Brumbaugh, R.S., 'Plato's Relation to the Arts and Crafts', Werkmeister, W.H. (ed.), *Facets of Plato's Philosophy*, Amsterdam, 1976.
23 Grube, G.M.A., *Plato's Thought*, London, 1935, p.180.

and the bed made by the painter. Whereas the first two beds are manufactured, one by God, the other by the craftsman, the third kind is imitated, and it is not so much an imitation of what is, as what appears to be. The stress on appearance is important because it excludes the painter from access to true knowledge of the forms, a knowledge that a craftsman has better claim to through his skill at manufacture.

> Then the mimetic art is far removed from the truth, and this, it seems, is the reason why it can produce everything because it touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object and that a phantom.... If he were a painter, by exhibiting at a distance his picture of a carpenter, he would deceive children and foolish men. (24)

It is not only the painter, or even the painter primarily, that Plato is attacking, for the poet is also classified as an imitator of appearances; he resembles the painter:

> ... in that his creations are inferior in respect of reality, and in the fact that his appeal is to an inferior part of the soul. (25)

This last reference is to poetry's involvement with the emotions which will be dealt with later.

Grube has argued that in the *Republic* can be found a concern with the possibility of a higher value of art practice (26). What may seem at first sight an out and out condemnation of painting and poetry, is in fact only condemnation of one particular type of art: that of imitative production. Grube wishes to maintain a distinction between imitative and real art. There does seem to be some basis for such a distinction in the *Republic*, for in several places Plato uses the analogy of artistic production to describe the philosopher's task (27), and Socrates in Book X says he will only welcome poetry that is free from corruption (28). It seems that if poetry would only conform to reason as does the philosopher, then it would be given its place in the ideal state. The fact is that, historically, poetry has not done so. And one could argue that if it did, then it would lose its distinctiveness as poetry and

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24 Plato, op cit, 1946, 598bc, p.431.
25 ibid, 605a, p.457.
26 Grube, G.M.A., op cit.
27 Plato, op cit, 1946, 472,484,500,501.
28 ibid, 607.

become philosophy (29).

Aristotle, like Plato, groups the fine arts according to their mimetic intention. But imitation, for Aristotle, is of a different order from that conceived of by Plato. Whereas for Plato the artist's task was to hold a mirror up to the world of particulars, for Aristotle it is to select from amongst the diverse forms found in the phenomenal world. By such selection, the artist is able to produce an object that is more ideal than the original model. Of the portraits of the painter, Zeuxis, Aristotle argues that it is doubtful that there were such people:

> ... but it would be better if there were; for the type should improve on the actual. (30)

Lucas sees this claim to be able to produce an object which perfects nature itself, as less significant than it appears, viewing it as simply a reference to the ability of the artist to modify phenomenal form, rather than to reach beyond it to an ideal (31). But in the structure of poetic form, especially tragedy, there is the ability to concentrate that action and harmonise the form, so as to produce a perfectly proportioned whole. In so doing, poetry is able to make universal statements about the nature of the world. This ability leads Aristotle to claim for poetry a high status:

> Poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths, while history gives particular facts. (32)

Poetry, is not, however, viewed as in competition with philosophy, even if it is given a place above the other arts, useful and fine.

The differing conceptions of imitation put forward by Plato and Aristotle can to some extent be explained by reference to their respective theory of the forms. Plato's transcendental Idea is posited as free from involvement in the particulars that it informs. The reality of the world

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29 Though, as Iris Murdoch has argued, Plato's writings owe their power to 'art', to imagination, as much as to reason. C.f. Murdoch, I., *The Fire and the Sun*, Oxford, 1978.
30 Aristotle, 'The Poetics', Page, T.E. et al (eds.), *Aristotle, the Poetics, Longinus on the Sublime, Demetrius on Style*, London, 1949, 1447a.
31 Lucas, D.W., *Aristotle's Poetics*, Oxford, 1968, p.265.
32 Aristotle, op cit, 1451,3.

of forms is in sharp contrast to the world of sense experience. Plato, in seeking true knowledge, seeks access to the forms. Because of their otherness to the objects of the phenomenal world, he cannot gain access to the forms through sense experience. Coming to know the forms is a process of recollection, for the higher immortal soul has known them in its former existence. The process of recollection depends upon reason freeing itself from the sensate body within which it is encased; it requires a turning away from the world, although never a rejection of it. In places, Plato seems to modify this stance, by giving to phenomena the ability to stimulate recollection through the senses, and present to the mind an image of the forms. He could have developed this theory of recollection to give a positive value to fine art practice, but he chose not to, although later Platonists did grasp the possibilities. What Plato does is to oppose reason to the claims of the imitative arts.

Aristotle dismissed Plato's theory of forms and presented in its place his own theory in the *Metaphysics* (33). He refused to accept the possibility of different levels of being, the general and the particular, and Plato's advocacy of the general as the only basis of knowledge. In opposition, Aristotle presents his doctrine of substance. Substance is a reference to the reality of the particular, viewed as a combination of 'form' and 'matter' (34). Form is intimately bound up with matter to give shape to the phenomenal world of particularity. Thus, any particular object, a table or bed, is not a mere imitation or reflection of some transcendent form which is itself free from matter; it is itself a unity of form and matter. Form does not have a separate existence (except in the heavenly realm where pure forms are posited). The implications of this view of the forms for a theory of fine art should be clear. As Aristotle's epistemology is not given over entirely to *a priori* reason, but instead stresses the need for empirical investigation allied to reason, any enquiry that deals with the phenomenal realm in a systematic manner has some claim to knowledge. The doctrine of substance also

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33 Aristotle, *Mataphysics*, trans. Tredennick, H., London, 1947.
34 Form and matter, for Aristotle, only have existence in and through each other. 'Form cannot exist apart from matter, nor can there be matter wholly divested of Form; nor is it generally fruitful even to try to consider them apart;' Allen, D.J., *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, Oxford, 1970, p.29. Form and matter together constitute reality, whereas for Plato reality is form. C.f. Lloyd, G.E.R., *Aristotle: the Growth and Structure of his Thought*, Cambridge, 1968, pp.47-57.

allows a more directly creative function to the arts, which can now be viewed as involved with shaping substance itself. Aristotle believed that all substance carried in itself the potential to be other than itself. In the same way that a seed of a tree carries within it the potentiality of the tree (Aristotle's example), so the sculptor's block carries within it the finished sculpture in potentiality (35). Form is then subject to change and transformation.

> Form is not something transcendent and separate, as it had been for Plato, but something that is gradually acquired and brought into actuality during the process of change. (36)

Aristotle's doctrine of substance and his conception of potentiality contribute towards his positive view of fine art practice. It takes art beyond mere imitation.

If we now turn to a consideration of the role of the emotions, a similar divide between the theorisation of Plato and Aristotle can be found. Plato saw any involvement with the emotions as disruptive of reason. This is why, in the *Republic*, he excludes the poet from the ideal state - the poet plays on the emotions of the masses. The emotions were to be supressed, however pleasureable the experience may appear, in the higher cause of reasoned cognition. In the *Ion*, he had given to the poet almost divine status; Socrates tells Ion:

> ... this is not an art in you whereby you speak well of Homer, but a divine power, which moves you like that in the stone which Euripides named a magnet.... For this stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts in them a power whereby they in turn are able to do the very same things as the stone and attract other rings.... In the same manner also the Muse inspires men herself, and then by means of these inspired persons the inspiration spreads to others, and holds them in a connected chain. (37)

The poet is inspired, but it is an inspiration of a lower order to reason, for although it gives direct participation with the gods - as does the trance of the mystic, or participation in the bacchanal - it does not give knowledge of the divine. True knowledge can only be of the forms, and these can only be approached through reason. The poet is given his place below that of the philosopher. The theory of inspiration does not

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35 This conception appears again and again in post-Renaissance art theory.
36 Lloyd, G.E., op cit, p.64.
37 Plato, 'Ion', Plato, op cit, 1948, 533d, p.421.

appear in the *Republic*; any value that inspiration has is outweighed by the adverse effects that follow from emotional involvement for reason.

Aristotle's theory of the emotions brings them more into line with reason, for he explains emotional response in terms of its cognitive and empirical base. For Aristotle:

> ... mimetic or imitative poetry and in particulr tragedy and comedy were related to cognitive emotions, and therefore recognised as art forms invoking intelligent responses compatible with reason. (38)

Like Plato, Aristotle was aware of the power of poetry to call forth emotional states and raise the level of emotional involvement of the audience. It was generally acknowledged by the Greeks that this was part of the enjoyment to be gained from attending the theatre. Poetry - drama, dance, music - had long been usd in religious ritual to heighten emotional states of the participants, producing a collective response. Whereas Plato viewed emotional involvement as a bad thing, Aristotle took a more favourable attitude. Starting from the observable pleasure received by the audience he sought a purpose for this pleasureable experience.

In Chapter VI of the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines the purpose of tragedy as the 'Katharsis' of the emotions. In the instance of tragedy, it is the emotions of fear and pity that are brought into play. Tragedy actively seeks to produce these emotions in the audience. Katharsis refers to a process of purification, associated with both medical cleansing and religious ritual acts of purification (39). Aristotle viewed the audience as witness to the passions played out before them, actions that filled them with the emotions of pity and fear (and others), not simply for the characters involved, but for their own possible plight. Being at a distance from the play of events, and being presented with them in a structured manner, the audience undergo a controlled purging of the excess emotions, leaving them with a balanced and healthy emotional make-up. To quote Dr. Johnson:

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38 Fontenbough, W.W., *Aristotle on Emotion*, London, 1975, p.18.
39 C.f. discussion in Lucas, D.W., op cit, Appendix II.

> The passions are great movers of human actions; but they are mixed with such impurities that it is necessary they should be purged or refined by means of terror or pity. For instance, ambition is a noble passion; but by seeing upon the stage that a man is so excessively ambitious as to raise himself by injustice, is punished, we are terrified by the fatal consequences of such a passion. In the same manner a certain degree of resentment is necessary; but if we see that a man carries it too far, we pity the object of it, and are taught to moderate that passion. (40)

As is stressed in the above extract, the emotions are a necessary component of action, but they need restraining and moderating under cognitive control. In this way they become aids to reason rather than its opponent. Aristotle's empirical concerns do not allow him to drift into the realm of the ideal; he instead theorises about the nature of existent states - there is nothing beyond this that reason can know. Knowledge is access to the forms, but these are bound in substance. Whereas Plato could dismiss the emotions as of a lower order of reality, and therefore dismiss the arts that practised on them, for in the last instance they were 'unreal', Aristotle, rejecting Platonic dualism, saw them as real as any other phenomena, and therefore available to critical attention.

In discussing the theory of fine art of Plato and Aristotle, it is not possible to ignore one further aspect: that of the involvement of the concept of beauty. This is not because beauty plays a significant role in their theorisations of fine art; it is rather because of the stress laid on the theory of beauty by later critics, who have often given it an importance out of all proportion to its role in Plato's and Aristotle's thought. There is little in the writing of either philosopher to link their respective theorisation about art with the concept of beauty, to enable any claim to be made concerning art's purpose. Beauty is the end of all action, and the impetus to aestheticise it as the specific end of fine art is a later development. In the *Philebus* (41), Plato outlines his views on beauty. Here he is concerned to combat the assertion of Philebus that the 'good life' is consistent in every way with 'pleasure'. Socrates argues that 'thought' is superior to 'pleasure', and a preferable choice for human life. But thought and pleasure are both inferior to the 'good' itself:

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40 Passage from Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, quoted in ibid, p.277.
41 Plato, 'Philebus', Plato, op cit, 1948.

... they are devoid of self-sufficiency, adequacy and perfection. (42)

It is fineness (beauty), truth and measure that are presented as inseparable (except analytically) components of the 'good'. Fineness is a characteristic of the forms, represented by harmony and proportion. The end of all action is the good life and, by extension, the accomplishment of the beautiful. The beautiful is not, then, a specific concern of art, nor is art given any special powers to achieve this end. This is also the case with Aristotle's theory. Of course, with Aristotle, beauty can be found in the particular, and the particular can be modified and made to conform more nearly to beauty. Thus, the artist has the end of beauty in mind, but so does the statesman, philosopher, and producer of artefacts. Aristotle may allow more scope for the creative powers of the artist, but he does not make these powers peculiar to art. If anyone has primacy of place in the search for beauty, it is the philosopher himself.

Aristotle's and Plato's writings on art are not, then, concerned with the development of a systematic theory of fine art. This is because fine art is not recognised as an area of social practice, or as an intellectual concern. Fine art is dealt with insofar as is in conformity with the high status of certain arts in Greek society. Poetry in particular, had a claim to knowledge that was not based on reason, and because of this it had to be theorised. The arts also had a strong hold on people's lives through their ability to manipulate the emotions; again this could not be ignored. The divergence in response between Aristotle and Plato, as I have tried to demonstrate, owes much to the distinctiveness of their particular philosophic systems. Their common concern is with the status of philosophy, and with the setting forth of prescriptions for the moral life. Any discussion of their respective art theories must acknowledge the primacy of such concerns. There could be no notion of art as it developed in the Renaissance, even though this later development itself built upon the philosophical speculations outlined here. There had to be another ingredient - that of the Christian conception of creativity.

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42 ibid, 67a, p.397.

ART THEORY IN RENAISSANCE ITALY - THE EMPIRICAL IDEAL AND THE CLAIM FOR LIBERAL ARTS STATUS

The humanists brought a critical attitude to bear on the objects of representational form, constituting a history of style that was also a panegyric to the greatness of the artist. The producer of representational form was given a goal to attain, an ideal that could be sought in nature or in the representational form of Antiquity. However, the development of a theory of artistic practice had to stem from a close association with the production process itself. The conditions were ripe for the producer of representational plastic form to assert his claim, not merely to a superior craft status, but for acceptance into the 'liberal arts'. Art theory, as it was formulated in the fifteenth century, reflected this claim for liberal arts status in its 'scientization' of the practice of the painter and sculptor. The achievement of both the reproduction of nature and the depiction of an ideal, the dual ends of representation, were subsumed by the practical scientizing purpose. The development of a theory of artistic practice cannot be understood outside the context of the conscious struggle of the craftsman for liberal arts status.

Cennino Cennini had given recognition of the purpose of representational production as the imitation of nature. He advises the artisan that:

> If you wish to draw mountains well, so that they appear natural, procure some large stones, rocky and not polished, and draw from these, giving them lights and shade as the same rule guides you. (43)

Such a statement was the product of the Giottesque tradition (44), with its fidelity to the goal of naturalism; there is no advice as to how to extract from the variety that nature holds before us an essence or ideal. Cennini's is a pure naturalism, restricted to the world of appearances. His concern is with the technique of the painter and not with questions of aesthetics. These had not yet become the object of theorisation by

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43 Cennini, C., *The Book of the Arts of Cennino Cennini*, trans. Heringham, J., London, 1899, p.78; and of animals he suggests, 'draw them as frequently as you can from nature', ibid, p.65.

44 He recognises his own debt to Giotto, both as regards style and training. He sites his lineage through a line of master painters. Of Giotto, he says: 'He possessed a more perfect art than ever anyone else had had.' ibid, p.5.

the producer of representational form. Naturalism was not itself incompatible with the continued existence of traditional workshop organisation and guild regulation. Indeed, Cennini's treatise remains firmly in this tradition; not differing fundamentally from Theophilus's *On Divers Arts*, it remains a recipe book for the artisan. As we have seen, he placed painting second to science in the hierarchy of the arts of man, while painters and sculptors of the fifteenth century claimed an equality of status with the liberal arts based on the assertion that their skills were specialisations within science. Cennini's consciousness remains that of a craftsman (45).

Gradually the painter and sculptor must have become aware of the possibilities for social advancement opened up by the humanist appraisal of representational form, which saw, through a comparison with the Antique, the move to naturalism as an indication of the coming of a new age of human achievement. The state of the representational arts became a prime indicator of the level of Man's intellectual and moral advancement. This gave an added incentive to patronage, which, as we have shown, was not disinterested. The patron could reap the social reward from his efforts in the interest of the enhancement of Family Guild, City or Nation. A city's greatness lay in its cultural achievements as much as in its political, military and economic. The painter and sculptor were soon to seize on this humanist perspective, attempting to theorise the basis for their own social advancement to the status of liberal arts. Lorenzo Ghiberti's (1378-1455) *Commentaries* (46) provides early evidence of this, demonstrating a deep concern with the Antique, undertaking a history of contemporary art, and calling for painters and sculptors to be trained in the liberal arts. However, Ghiberti lacked the intellectual training necessary for the systematisation of his, and his contemporaries', thoughts, and it is left to Alberti (1404-72) to give full expression to the theoretical moment.

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45 He still traces his craft back to Adam's subjection to manual labour after the fall from grace, and judges the worthiness of each craft according to the amount of mental effort it employs.
46 For selected translations from Ghiberti's *Commentaries* (c.1450), c.f. Goldwater, R., and Traves, M. (eds.), *Artists on Art*, London, 1976, and Holt, E.G. (ed.), *A Documentary History of Art*, vol.VI, New York, 1957.

Battista Alberti, a nobleman and a humanist, practised painting, sculpture and architecture as an amateur, not for his livelihood. What Alberti achieved was the incorporation of the practical concerns of the contemporary Florentine artist with an aesthetic objective derived from the writings of the scholars of Ancient Greece and Rome, producing a theory of art as the imitation of nature by scientific means (47). Alberti's theory of art as the imitation of nature, appears to contain within itself a contradiction. On the one hand, he calls for a totally unqualified naturalism:

> The function of the painter is to draw with lines and paint in colours on a surface in such a way that, at a fixed distance and with a certain determined position of the centric ray, what you see represented appears to be in relief and just like those bodies. (48)

To this end, the first book of *De Pictura* is taken up with the demonstration of the scientific and mathematical basis of the painter's art:

> ... to explain the art of painting from the basic principles of nature, (49)

a task requiring the elaboration of a theory of perspective. As with Cennini, the concern would seem to be with the exact reproduction of appearances, a pure naturalism. But this is not the case. Alberti again and again insists that it is the painter's duty to seek beauty.

> The early painter Demetrius failed to obtain the highest praise because he was more devoted to representing the likeness of things than to beauty. Therefore, excellent parts should all be selected from the most beautiful bodies, and every effort should be made to perceive, understand and express beauty. (50)

Beauty is seen as the ideal to be found in nature and to which the painter should direct his gaze; nature is approached through Aristotelian forms.

At this point, a distinction needs to be made between two types of mimetic theory of artistic practice, and here I follow Abrams in

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47 For translation of full text of Alberti's 'De Pictura' and 'De Sculturi', c.f. Grayson, C. (ed.), *Alberti on Painting and on Sculpture*, London, 1972.
48 Alberti, 'De Pictura', Book III, Grayson, C. (ed.), ibid, p.95.
49 Alberti, ibid, Book I, Grayson, C. (ed.), ibid, p.37.
50 Alberti, ibid, Book III, Grayson, C. (ed.), ibid, p.99.

distinguishing between the 'Empirical Ideal' and the 'Transcendental Ideal' (51). All mimetic theory seeks its object in the external world, and yet reproduction of that world is never an end in itself. Art theory demands an art object, and in the case of mimetic theory that object is a generalised 'ideal', the reproduction of which constitutes an improvement on the world of everyday experience. The painter's or sculptor's task becomes the disclosure of this ideal and therefore its imitation.

The empirical theory of the ideal originates in the *Poetics* of Aristotle.

> It maintains that the models and forms of artistic imitation are selected or abstracted from the objects of sense perception. (52)

For Aristotle, poetry captured the essential 'form' that was combined with 'matter', to bring into being the phenomenal world of sense experience. This form, that gave to species their essential characteristics, was joined by the artist to the matter of his product, producing a true imitation of nature. The conception of the empirical ideal somewhat distorts Aristotle's original theory, identifying the essential forms with generalised empirically observable forms found in nature. Thus, Alberti, who holds to this branch of mimetic theory, makes the distinction between the two ends for which the sculptor seeks to achieve a likeness. One end is concerned with achieving the likeness of the species 'Man', the other with the achievement of the likeness of a particular man. The former is undertaken by the application of *dimensio*, the latter through the application of *finitio*.

> *Dimensio* follows and governs that which is more stable and fixed by nature, and more commonly found in living creatures, such as lengths, thicknesses and widths of limbs, whereas *finitio* records and determines the variations in limbs from time to time caused by movements and new dispositions of the parts. (53)

Thus, for Alberti, the form of Man is derived from some generalised average, empirically observable and tabulated as a series of proportions that constitute the ideal (54). This conception of the ideal as in some way empirically renderable from nature is dominant throughout the

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51 Abrams, M.H., *The Mirror and the Lamp*, London, 1976. For his discussion of the empirical ideal and the transcendental ideal, which is concerned in the main with literature, c.f. pp.35-46.
52 ibid, p.36. C.f. previous discussion of Aristotle's 'theory of art'.
53 Alberti, 'De Sculturi', Grayson, C. (ed.), op cit, p.137.
54 Thus, at the end of 'De Sculturi', he presents a table of proportions based on the unit of the human head. Ibid.

fifteenth century, and recurs in art theory at least through to the nineteenth century. It is manifest in theories of proportionality based on the empirical average and in the belief that beautiful parts found in nature may be combined by the artist into an ideal whole.

Whereas the empirical ideal has its origins in Aristotle's *Poetics*, the transcendental ideal originates in the philosophy of Plato, but again a distortion of the original philosophy takes place. For Plato, art imitates the world of appearances, not the realm of essences. Socrates, discussion of the nature of art in Book X of the *Republic*, in which he distinguishes between three 'beds': the Idea or essence of the bed, the bed made by the carpenter, and the bed depicted in a painting, demonstrates this separation of essence from observable and practical existence (55).

As all things are judged by their relationship to the Idea, the truth and the good, the artist is given a low status. Because his concern is with appearances, he is liable to corrupt others, turning them away from their search for truth and virtue, and thus the perfection of the state. He is thus barred from Plato's ideal republic. The Idea, itself transcendental, cannot become the object of artistic practice while art is held to be the imitation of appearances. The conception of a mimetic theory, whose object is the transcendental Idea, requires a mechanism by means of which the artist can gain direct knowledge of the realm of the transcendental, and towards the theorisation of this was the direction in which Neo-Platonism developed the Platonic cosmology.

For the artist to gain access to the transcendental Idea, he must by-pass the world of sense experience. Cicero (56), a major influence on Renaissance humanism, has developed a Neo-Platonic theory of art, placing the image of the Idea within the mind of the artist:

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55 C.f. discussion in previous section.
56 Cicero (106-43BC), c.f. Griffin, M., 'Cicero and Rome', Boardman, J., Griffin, J., and Murray, O. (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, London, 1986, pp.454-78, and esp. pp.454-59.

> Nor did [Phidias] when he formed Jupiter or Minerva, have before his eyes a model which he followed strictly, but in his own mind did he have an extraordinary idea of beauty, this he contemplated, on this he fixed his attention, and to rendering this he directed his art and hand.... These forms of things Plato calls ideas.... and these, he maintains, do not arise occasionally in our minds, but are permanently present in reason and intelligence; other things are born, die, flow, disappear and never remain long in the same condition. (57)

This inner idea, in removing the artist's reliance on the world of appearances, enables him to surpass in beauty nature herself, nature being a corrupt reflection of the Idea. The artist is seen as reproducing the idea in its purest form. This conception is expressed by Plotinus:

> When someone looks down upon the arts because they are concerned with imitating nature, it must first be replied that also the things of nature, too, imitate other things; then you must know that artists do not simply reproduce the visible, but they go back to the principles in which nature itself had found its origin; and further, that they in their own part achieve and add much whenever something is missing, for they are in possession of beauty. Phidias produced his Zeus according to nothing visible, but he made him such as Zeus himself would appear should he wish to reveal himself to our eyes. (58)

The Middle Ages, adapting the Platonist Idea to the Christian doctrine of an omnipotent Creator, came to see the rational Idea as emanating from God, as His conscious plan set in motion at the creation. The Idea is thus transformed into the will of God. It was from this conceptual stance that the Platonism of the Renaissance took its form and was to find its way into art theoretical practice in the sixteenth century.

As we have seen, from these two available models for the construction of a mimetic theory of art, Alberti chose the empirical ideal. It was this conception of artistic practice that served most the needs of the producer of representational plastic form in the Quattrocento. Following the naturalistic orientation of the bourgeois urban rationalising world view as embedded in the Giottesque school, the empirical ideal gave priority to the natural and phenomenal forms. Beauty is simply seen as the most pleasing. But, at the same time, beauty can be mathematically derived from the empirical average, a conception in line with the rationalising world view, while also advancing the claim for liberal arts

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57 Cicero, *Ad M. Brutum Orator*, ii, 8-10. C.f. Seneca, *Epistle*, LXV, trans. quoted in Abrams, M.H., op cit, p.43.
58 Plotinus, *Ennead*, V, vii, 1, trans. quoted in Panofsky, E., *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, Carolina, p.26. Plotinus (204/5-70AD) is recognised as the founder of Neo-Platonism.

status by stressing the mathematical component in the art of painting, and detracting from the manual aspect which fixed it in the category of a craft. The elaboration of a theory of perspective is both conducive to a greater naturalism and to the claim that painting is based on intellectual mathematical criteria. Alberti takes from the classical tradition the conception of an ideal and, in humanist vein, concedes to the artist the ability to grasp its essence, beauty, truth. He specifies both the object of artistic endeavour, and the means to its attainment. The end of such endeavour is the perfectability of man.

The empirical ideal is taken to an extreme, at the level of theory and of practice, in the person of Leonardo da Vinci (59). We find in Leonardo:

> ... [a] profound belief in the value of experiment and direct observation. (60)

It is with Leonardo that painting attains its most scientific formulation, becoming the end product of the application of the empirical method. Richter, summarising the method of the science of painting, states that:

> ... [the] controlling idea would be to enquire into the causes of the complex evanescent impressions received through the sense of sight and to disentangle them into various examples of a few permanent laws, and to show that all appearances of our ever shifting vision are but examples of these general laws. The conformatory experiment would then be the application of these laws by putting them into practice on canvas. (61)

There is no contradiction between the search for these laws and the existence of an ideal (62); for Leonardo they are one and the same.

Leonardo's overriding concern is the demonstration of the scientific basis of painting, thus providing theoretical justification for its entry into the liberal arts, for Leonardo was conscious of the restraints imposed upon the artist by his designation as an artisan. The division between mental and manual labour, about which the categories of liberal

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59 The most authoritative collection of Leonardo's literary output is Richter, J.P. (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, two vols. New York, 1970.
60 Blunt, A., *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600*, Oxford, 1960, p.24.
61 Richter, J.P., op cit, p.24.
62 Blunt, A., op cit, has noted that Leonardo does not give advice on how to make the painting conform to some *a priori* conception of beauty (p.27). However, the notion of an 'Ideal' is implicit in his writing, and it takes the form of an 'empirical ideal', that is to be extracted from nature.

arts and crafts were formulated, proved a problem for the painter and sculptor to overcome, for there is an unavoidable manual component in the production of representational plastic form. Leonardo's answer was to challenge the traditional understanding of what science was.

> They say that knowledge born of experience is mechanical, but that knowledge born of the mind is scientific, while knowledge born of science and culminating in manual work is semi-mechanical. But to me it seems that all sciences are vain and full of errors that are not born of experience, that is to say, that do not at their origin, middle or end pass through any of the five senses. (63)

In his scientization of art, Leonardo is redefining science in terms of empirical method. To eyes accustomed to viewing artistic practice and scientific practice as antagonistic, this seems a strange formulation. However, it must be remembered that for the Renaissance there was no such division of human activity into science and art. Art, in its modern sense, had not yet emerged, and science, in the form of contemporary rational-empiricism, was finding an early formulation in the work of Leonardo himself. The object of scientific and artistic method did not differ: the empirical ideal was also the scientific law for Leonardo.

That Leonardo's theoretical works have a practical purpose - the establishment of painting as a liberal art - is shown in the extent of his praise of painting which leads him to claim for it a superiority over sculpture and poetry. He claims that painting:

> ... serves a nobler sense than poetry and represents the works of nature with more truth than the poet, (64)

for, whereas painting imitates nature, poetry imitates speech, which is the action of Man. As to sculpture, he sees it as requiring:

> ... less mental effort (65)

and

> ... lacking in the beauty of colours, (66)

when compared with painting. Leonardo's writings were not, however,

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63 Richter, J.P., op cit, vol.I, p.33.
64 ibid, p.55.
65 ibid, p.96.
66 ibid, p.98.

merely propagandist; theory did inform practice. He analysed the nature of the mathematical point and line, and found them to have no existence. Applying this mathematical knowledge to the outlines of bodies in his drawing, he allowed shade to take the place of line, producing a softness of contours often referred to as 'sfumato'. It must be remembered that nature as expressed in the phenomenal world remained, throughout the fifteenth century, the primary objective of imitation, as can be seen from Leonardo's empiricism. Theory could not come to dominate and, thus, lead to abstraction, other than in the arrangement of bodies and limbs in pictorial space. For Leonardo, it was a case of giving theoretical formulation to his acute sense of scientific observation.

Leonardo's status was not that of a mere craftsman. He had gained in his lifetime a reputation as a great artist. He was patronised by court and Pope, and was on intimate terms with his patrons. Nor did he lack in learning. His claims for liberal arts status were thus an affirmation of his social standing. It is not surprising, however, to find that his claims, in places, exceed even this, moving towards a mystification of the trade of painter, rather than its scientization. Thus, he writes:

> The painter's mind must necessarily enter into nature's mind in order to act as an interpreter between nature and art. (67)

It leads him to conceive of the artist as 'creator':

> If the painter wishes to see beauties that charm him, it lies within his power to create them, and if he wishes to see monstrocities that are frightful, bufoonish, or ridiculous, or pitiable, he can be lord and god.... In fact, whatever exists in the universe, in essence, in appearance, in the imagination, the painter has first in his mind and then in his hands. (68)

Here we are moving beyond the empirical ideal towards the transcendental ideal that was to find its full formulation in the second half of the sixteenth century. Despite this, Leonardo's theory of art remains essentially within the empirical ideal, typical of the fifteenth century, while displaying the seeds of a new era in theorisation.

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67 ibid, p.97.
68 ibid, p.54.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ACADEMY OF ART AS A FORM OF OCCUPATIONAL ORGANISATION

The painter's and sculptor's bid for recognition of their trade as liberal arts did not go unchallenged. The mediaeval classification, which made no distinction between painting and sculpture and other crafts, had placed them firmly in the mechanical arts, and this tradition persisted well into the fifteenth century. Lorenzo Villa excludes them from the liberal arts in mid-century (69), as does Savonarola in the last decade of the century (70).

The claim for liberal arts status, taking the form of a scientization of the trade of sculptor and painter, attempting to place it on a mathematical basis and, thus, playing down the manual component in the production process in favour of the intellectual, was a cause of conflict within the crafts. The traditional master's workshop, with its craft practices and craft consciousness, intrinsic to the guild system of occupational control, could not provide a suitable practical and theoretical training for the new 'artist' as he was envisaged by the advocates of liberal arts status. The artist, it was recognised, in order to fulfil his task, was in need of a liberal education (71).

The new claims amounted to an attack upon the guild and workshop system of occupational organisation, and not surprisingly we find that the guilds organised to oppose this threat to their power. The power of the guild, however, was already weakening, with the shift away from free democratic government in the independent urban centres, in the formation and maintenance of which the guilds had been instrumental. The autocrats, Prince and Pope, did not hold themselves accountable to the guilds and the commune, and in their competition to outbid each other in the patronage of the arts and the splendour of their courts, they

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69 Blunt, A., op cit, p.48.
70 Richter, J.P., op cit, vol.I, p.19.
71 Ghiberti, in his *Commentaries*, (c.1450), calls for a training in Grammar, Geometry, Philosophy, Medicine, Astronomy, Perspective, History, Anatomy, Theory of Design and Arithmetic. C.f. Goldwater, R., and Treves, M. (eds.), op cit, p.28.

showered honours upon the artist (72). In the sixteenth century, a number of artists attended court and lived in the household of the autocrat. In social status and economic reward, the artist, who was able to attach himself to such a patron, was far removed from the master craftsman of the late Middle ages. The court provided an outlet for representational art that was outside the reach of the occupational control of the guild, thus breaking that monopoly of occupational practice (73), and allowing artists to become more geographically and socially mobile.

The new situation raised a number of problems. Not all the exponents of liberal arts status were lucky enough to find themselves patronised at court, and civic patronage was in decline. They needed a type of occupational organisation in which their interests could be formalised and represented. And there was the all-important problem of the training of the artist, which alone was the real guarantee of liberal arts status, providing him with the necessary intellectual and scientific training. These two considerations, the need for training and representation, aided by the increasing tendency in the direction of authoritarian and hierarchical forms of religious and political social control in the climate of Catholic Reformation, were the constitutive forces in the formation of the academic system of control of the plastic arts in the sixteenth century.

Academies, or at least bodies with the name, 'Academia', were to be found from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards. The organisation and function of these academies were, however, fundamentally different from those that were to be established in the late seventeenth century (74). The early academies were of the nature of informal gatherings of humanists, usually centred around some distinguished figure (75). The

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72 Titian was made Count Palatine by Charles V of Spain. On Court patronage, c.f. Trevor-Roper, H., *Princes and Artists*, London, 1976.
73 ibid. It became a feature of the new courtly patronage that the artist, often on recommendation, was invited to the Prince's court, wherever this may have been situated. Thus, work was undertaken outside the workshop and away from the control of the guild.
74 The following discussion draws heavily upon Pevsner, N., *Academies of Art, Past and Present*, Cambridge, 1940. For early development of the Academies, c.f. pp.1-13 and Chapter 2.
75 One of the earliest academies was the 'Academia Platonica', centred on the person of Marsilio Ficino, in Florence. C.f. Kristeller, P.O., 'The Platonic Academy of Florence', *Renaissance Thought II*, London, 1965.

earliest known connection of the term, 'academia', with artists, is that found on engravings enscribed, 'Academia Leonardi Vinci'. However, there is no reason to believe this academy to have been anything other than an informal gathering of scholars (76). The first sign of the transition of these academies into teaching schools appears in Florence with Lorenzo the Magnificent's sponsorship of a small, and still largely informal, school for students of painting and sculpture (77). The importance of this school lies in the example that it sets, in its independence of guild control, and its implicit recognition of the shortcomings of the system of workshop training (78).

The second quarter of the sixteenth century saw the formation of the academy as an organised and rule-governed body. It was the academies of science that were the first to take this step. In Florence, an informally organised academy was transformed by Cosimo de Medici into the Academia Fiorentina in 1541, and this example was soon followed in other cities (79). It was not long before the academy of art also organised in a similar manner. The first of these academies of art was the Academia del Designo of Giorgio Vasari, which, like the Academia Fiorentina, was formed in Florence under the protection of Cosimo de Medici.

Florence in the mid sixteenth century was ripe for such a development. The traditional forms of organisation of the painter and sculptor were in decline and too weak to resist change. The painters and sculptors had traditionally belonged to different guild organisations (80), and had been able to find common ground for expression of their interests as kindred arts only in the Compagnia di S' Luca, a confraternity that was originally a voluntary organisation undertaking religious and charitable functions. It was Vasari who was instrumental in exploiting this

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76 Pevsner, N., op cit, c.f, Ch.2.
77 C.f. Vasari's account of the 'school' in his *Lives*, 1550, trans. Hind, A.B., *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, London, 1970, vol.4.
78 Michelangelo as an apprentice was sent to Lorenzo's school by his master, Ghirlandajo. It is significant that it is Michelangelo's lifestyle that provides inspiration for those artists seeking an academic form of occupational organisation.
79 For a discussion of the Academies of science, c.f Pevsner, N., op cit, pp.14-23.
80 The painters belonged to the 'Arte dei Medici Speciale a Mercuia', while the sculptors were members of the 'Arte dei Fabbricanti'. C.f. ibid, p.1.

situation in order to set up the first academy of art, and also in obtaining Cosimo de Medici's backing. The academy was established under the twin guardianship of Cosimo and Michelangelo:

> ... a combination of Prince and artist eminently characteristic of the state now reached in the development of the artist's social standing. (81)

This academy took upon itself the function of a representative body, but developed little in the direction of providing an alternative training for the artist to that of the workshop (82). However, that the academy filled a need can be seen from its membership, which not only included all the leading artists of Florence, but also Titian (1487-1576), Tintoretto (1518-94), Palladio (1508-80) and others from Venice. What is most significant for our purposes is that the academy became the centre of theorisation about artistic practice and the leading authority on art. This represents a fundamental shift from the position in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, where taste was largely dictated by the patron. Also theorisation, which in the fourteenth century was entirely the province of the humanist, and in the early fifteenth century was largely concerned with the promotion of painting and sculpture as liberal arts, moved towards the delineation of a sphere of fine art practice.

The development of the educational function of the academy of art was given an impetus by Frederico Zuccari, who proposed the introduction of lectures on all subjects pertaining to the arts and instruction in mathematics and the sciences (83). Through his efforts, the Academia di S' Luca, in Rome, was opened in 1593. The Academia di S' Luca embodied all the essential characteristics of academies through to the nineteenth century, providing the model for the French, British and German Academies of Art. Thus, by the end of the sixteenth century, the academic system of occupational control had taken root, although it would take another half century of battles with the guilds before it emerged supreme, and then in France, which by that time could justifiably claim to rival Italy as the artistic centre of Europe.

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81 ibid, p.45.
82 ibid, pp.46-9.
83 Zuccari's plans for the reorganisation of the 'Academia del Designo' are contained in a letter quoted in Pevsner, N., op cit, pp.51-2.

ART THEORY - THE TRANSCENDENTAL IDEAL AND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SPHERE OF FINE ART PRACTICE

In Italy, the close of the fifteenth century saw a discernible shift away from the empirical ideal. The artist had now largely freed himself from the control of the guilds; patronage by Prince and Pope had come to overshadow that of the bourgeois and merchant classes, and liberal arts status had been attained. Aristocratic patronage, that we have identified as a major cause of the weakening of the guild system of occupational control, while strengthening the position of those calling for liberal arts status, threatened to undermine in its turn the occupational independence of the artist, leaving him subject to the dictates of the autocratic patron. It became necessary for the artist to maintain control over artistic practice by claiming a 'special' insight, that enabled him alone to grasp the ideal that was the object of artistic practice. Taking advantage of the high status the artist now held, there was a movement towards the personalisation of artistic achievement.

Leonardo, as we have seen, despite his commitment to the scientization of painting, maintained a view of the artist as creator of the work of art. With Raphael (1485-1520), we also find this belief in the 'specialness' of the artist, in the ability to construct in his own mind an image not to be found in nature.

> In order to paint a beautiful woman I should have to see many beautiful women, and this under the condition that you were to help me with making a choice; but since there are so few beautiful women and so few sound judges, I make use of a certain idea that comes into my head. Whether it is of any artistic value I cannot say, I try very hard just to have it. (84)

Raphael thus described the creative role played by the artist in the depiction of the ideal, of the beautiful. The idea, first in his head, is the prototype from which the externalised image takes its form.

It is Michelangelo, more than any other artist, who is seen as the embodiment of the Renaissance ideal of the artist. It is he who provides

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84 Raphael's letter to Castiglione. Extract taken from Panofsky, E., op cit, 1968, p.59.

an example and inspiration to the artists of the sixteenth century (85). His personal standing as an artist reached a height undreamed of by painters and sculptors of the early Renaissance, and yet, he in no way fits the model of the rational scientific seeker of an ideal based on the empirical average, that was projected by those early advocates of liberal arts status. For him, beauty is not sought in the material world. Physical beauty is merely:

> ... [the] reflection of the ideal in the material world. (86)

It emanates from God, not from the forms contained in the world of appearances. He, like Raphael, emphasises the formative role of the idea contained within the mind of the artist, but, unlike Raphael, he has a clear conception of its source:

> As my soul, looking through the eyes, draws near to beauty as I first saw it, the inner image grows, while the other recedes, as though shrinkingly and of no account. (87)

Here we find an echo of the Neo-Platonist philosophy of Marsilio Ficino and the Florentine Platonic Academy. The philosophy of Ficino is central to the development of the theory of the creative artist as it emerged in the sixteenth century. It is a philosophy that blends two traditions, the Judaeo-Christian and the Antique, and it is a particular combination of these that facilitates the theoretical formulation of the concept of the creative artist.

Let us turn to a consideration of this philosophy and its conception of Man (88). For Ficino, the cosmos is viewed as consisting of a hierarchy of being, with God at the apex. God, the creator, the cosmic mind, inhabits the super-celestial realm of pure intelligibility. Below this dwells the cosmic soul, the celestial realm of the heavens. Lower still, the terrestial world of nature, and below this, the realm of matter, of

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85 Michelangelo is the only Renaissance artist to have biographies written and published in his lifetime: Vasari's section on Michelangelo in the *Lives*, 1550, and Gondivi's *Vita di Michelangelo Bounerroti*, 1555. C.f Wilde, J., 'Michelangelo, Vasari and Gondivi', *Michelangelo*, Oxford, 1978.
86 quoted from Blunt, A., op cit, p.62.
87 ibid, p.63.
88 For Ficino's philosophy, c.f. Kristeller, P.O., *The Philosophy of Marcilio Ficino*, Mass. USA, 1964. For shorter overview, c.f. Panofsky, E., *Studies in Iconology*, London, 1972, ch.6. Ficino's ideas were influential in Florence under Lorenzo Medici, informing the work of such artists as Botticelli (1444-1510) and Michelangelo (1475-1564), and later Raphael (1483-1520).

formless substance. The whole is unified through the divine love of God. From God there radiates divine goodness. It descends through the hierarchy of being, only to be divided into individual rays, like the rays from the sun, and it is interrupted in its progress by the heavenly bodies, reaching the realm of nature in dissipated form, and giving rise to less than perfect beauty. Just as all being originates in God, so it is sustained by His divine goodness, to which all being is drawn in contemplation, while held within the hierarchy by their materiality.

Man, the microcosm, is analogous to the cosmic macrocosm. His being also is composed of the material and the spiritual, and ordered hierarchically. Man's spiritual being, his soul, is divided into five faculties, together forming the higher and lower souls. The lower soul mediates, and is bound by, material existence; it is concerned with the fulfilment of animal needs that sustain life, with all dealings with the exterior world of phenomena as received through the senses, and with the internal ordering of the imagination. The upper soul is composed of mind and reason. Reason orders experience according to logic, and is constantly drawn in two opposite directions, towards a reliance on sensual information handled by the lower soul and so towards the concerns of material existence, or towards contemplation of mind and freedom from the demands of the material world. Mind itself does not rely on lower order stimulation; it is able to grasp, intuitively, divine goodness. Through inner contemplation, mind can free itself from its terrestial chains to partake in the ecstasy of God's divine love.

Man, endowed with reason and mind, and thus placed above the animal kingdom, is able to contemplate truth and beauty, in the phenomenal world by use of reason, once reason is freed from worldly restraint, and in the realm of spirit by intuitive apprehension, this being the most direct and therefore most pure experience. Knowledge acquired from the phenomenal world is acted upon by reason, so stimulating the mind to inward contemplation, the means by which the soul can rise above its earthly existence. It is able to do this, because God's divine love, the 'Idea', is given in the mind of man, as pure spirit, by virtue of his creation in the image of God. Man cannot help but be drawn to contemplation of God,

for it is the universal law that all things in the hierarchy of being contemplate the source of their own existence.

Ficino's philosophy builds upon the human capacity to love and the human desire to look upon beauty.

> When we say love one must understand the desire for beauty, for this is the definition of love among all philosophers.
>
> Love has the enjoyment of beauty as its end. (89)

Beauty can be conceived of as existing in two forms, although one is merely the image of the other: natural beauty that is realised in the corporial world, and celestial beauty which is totally spiritual in form. Correspondingly, each of these has its own kind of love. This philosophy of love was adopted by many artists and poets in the sixteenth century (90).

Michelangelo's works are informed by this philosophy of love; beauty becomes the object of contemplation and of representation. He sets himself the task not to study empirically and measure the beautiful in the world of sense experience, but to reach that ideal and transcendental beauty that is the rightful object of Man's contemplation. Thus, his sculpture and painting is not directed at the reproduction of the natural world, but instead towards the depiction of that spiritual ideal beauty. Because of this, we do not find in his works a 'likeness' of any particular thing. Instead we find the portrayal of Man in the ecstasy of his union with God, the struggle of the soul to free itself from its earthly enslavement, and the idealised image of Man. Although he did not produce a systematic theory of art, it is contained, implicity, in this philosophy of beauty, which recognises the transcendental ideal as the object of artistic endeavour. For Michelangelo, it was God who infused beauty into nature, and that beauty, once approached, kindled in the soul the memory of that beauty that dwelt within the super-celestial realm of

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89 Extracts from Ficino, 'De Amore', taken from Kristeller, P.O., ibid, p.263.
90 We can see this conception of two 'Beauties' depicted in Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, (1515-16), Villa Borghese, Rome.

being. The artist's mind thus already contained the image of the ideal; it is not restricted by, or dependent on, the world of nature as mediated by the senses.

Not only was Michelangelo the first artist to adopt this transcendental ideal, he was also among the first to recognise his own 'specialness' as an artist and to form his actions around this belief, presenting himself equal to Prince and Pope. This helps explain the power of his image in the minds of artists of the sixteenth century. He presented the artist with an image upon which to hang a new identity, in the changed atmosphere of Catholic Reformation. Vasari opens the section of the *Lives* dealing with Michelangelo with what can only be described as an expression of reverence:

> While industrious and choice spirits, aided by the light afforded by Giotto and his followers, strove to show the world the talent with which the happy stars and well balanced humours had endowed them, and endeavoured to attain to the height of knowledge by imitating the greatness of Nature in all things, the great ruler of Heaven looked down and, seeing these vain and fruitless efforts and the presumptuous opinion of men more removed from truth than light from darkness, resolved, in order to rid them of these errors, to send to earth a genius universal in each art. (91)

This 'genius' was Michelangelo, who is depicted here as a Saviour. The passage also demonstrates Vasari's discernment that a transition from the empirical ideal of the fifteenth century to the transcendental ideal of the sixteenth century had culminated in Michelangelo.

The sixteenth century saw a turn in artistic style towards Mannerism (92), a style marked by the distortion of natural form and a heightened emotionality, trends already observable in Michelangelo's work. The Mannerists prided themselves on the speed of execution of their work, a speed that showed an effortless outpouring, for they argued that inspiration was immediate not laboured (93). Because Mannerism took a variety of forms (94), due mainly to the subjective determination that is bound to arise when the representational form is seen as the product of a

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91 Vasari, G., op cit, vol.III, p.108.
92 C.f. Friedlaender, W., *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Painting*, New York, 1967.
93 Blunt, A., op cit, p.94.
94 Friedlaender, W., op cit, has identified three sub-styles within Mannerist art.

special capacity of the artist to portray an image which has its source in the mind, it is impossible to identify a single style. It moves between the expressive and the decorative, the individualistic and the mannered, and it is deeply religious, conforming to the new revitalised religious didactic purpose, so that in many ways it is a return to mediaeval forms, an anti-Classicism (95).

There emerged in the closing decades of the sixteenth century an academic Mannerism (96). Two groups formed, one around Frederico Zuccari at the Academy in Rome, the other in Milan where Lamazzo was a leading figure. These were the first to ask the question, 'What makes artistic production possible (97)?' They wanted a theory that accounted for the origin of the work of art (the 'desegno') in the image formed in the artist's mind (the 'concetto'), while retaining the objective reality of the object of artistic practice (the 'Idea').

Limazzo developed such an art theory after the fashion of Ficino's philosophy of beauty. To reproduce an ideal beauty, he maintained, was the objective of artistic practice, this ideal beauty being seen as:

> ... nothing more than a certain spiritual and lively grace, which by means of the divine ray is first infused into the Angels, in whom the shapes of any sphere may be seen; reflected in the Angels these are called examples or Ideas. Then it passes on to the spirits, in whom these shapes are called reason and notions, and finally into matter where they are called images and forms.... This beauty shines from one and the same visage of God into three mirrors arranged in order, in the Angels, in the Spirit and in the Body. In this first as the nearest, in the clearest way; in the second as more remote, less clear; and in the third as most remote, very dimly. (98)

The spirit, weighed down by its earthly body, forgets the beauty that is the Idea contained within it:

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95 ibid. Friedlaender argues that Mannerism was consciously anti-Classical - yet it remained in the Classical tradition as I shall demonstrate in Ch.V.

96 C.f. Blunt, A., op cit, p.137.

97 Panofsky, E., has suggested that the emphasis upon teachability at this time may have been a counter to the movement towards subjective arbitrariness, that was the result of the belief in the centrality of the artist's mind in the process of the creation of an image. C.f. Panofsky, E., op cit, 1968.

98 From Lamazzo's *Idea del Tempio della Pittura*, 1590, trans. from Panofsky, E., op cit, 1968, p.143. This contains all of ch.26 in translation.

> Hence it does not behold the beauty that abides within it, until the body has matured and reason has awakened, with which it observes the beauty that shines in the sight of the whole world and there abides. (99)

Beauty is recognised by means of:

> ... [an] inner intellectual sense and recreated only on the basis on an inner intellectual image. (100)

The artist thus finds the universal within himself.

Zuccari also proceeds from the premise that that which is revealed in the work of art is first present in the mind of the artist (101). The inner idea, or design, is engendered in the mind through the grace of God, it being:

> ... only a spark of the divine mind. (102)

> [God], having created man in his image and likeness with respect to the soul, endowing it with an immaterial, incorruptible substance and the powers of thinking and willing, with which man could rise above and command all the other creatures of the world except the Angels and be almost a second God, He wished to grant him the ability to form in himself an inner intellectual Design; so that by means of it he could know all the creatures and could form in himself a new world, and could internally have and enjoy a spiritual state that which externally he enjoys and commands in a natural state; and moreover, so that with this Design, almost imitating God and vying with Nature, he could produce an infinite number of artificial things resembling natural ones, and by means of painting and sculpture make new paradises visible on earth. (103)

The creation of the work of art is thus in the same manner as the creation of nature. There is then:

> ... [a] predestination which permits the artist to be certain of an objective correspondence between his products and those of Nature. (104)

The artist attains a true imitation of nature through an intuitive grasp of the transcendental ideal. Thus, rejecting the method of Leonardo and Durer (1471-1528), Zuccari writes:

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99 ibid, p.143.
100 ibid, pp.96-7. Panofsky's own words.
101 ibid, c.f. discussion on p.85.
102 ibid, p.85. Panofsky's own words.
103 Extract from Zuccari, *Idea of Painter, Sculptor and Architect*, 1607, Panofsky, E., op cit, 1968, p.88.
104 ibid, p.89.

> The artist's mind should not only be clear but free. His fancy should not be trammeled and restrained by a mechanical slavery to such rules. (105)

With these Mannerist theorists we enter the sphere of fine art practice after a long period of transition that was the Renaissance. They united the artist and the art object in a relation of 'specialness'. The work of art was established as the visible expression of the 'idea' formed in the artist's mind, an idea that came into consciousness as a flash of divine inspiration. The artist was privileged to be able to use such a gift and could rightly claim to share in the 'aura' that surrounded the work of art itself. A doctrine of artistic exclusivity thus emerged from the newly founded Academies, institutions that were also attempting to establish a form of occupational control through a monopolisation of the ability to provide a course of artistic training. In the long run, it was the conception of specialness of the artist which was to outlast the Academy as a training establishment. The Academy as a system of occupational control could only succeed as long as there was agreement that the object of artistic practice had a universal objectivity.

From their very constitution the academies had embedded within their structure a contradiction. The emphasis placed on training pointed to the universality of the ability to undertake artistic practice; the centrality of training in the liberal arts, and taking instruction from ancient models, being a product of the fifteenth century movement to scientise art, and originating in the theory of artistic practice based on the identification of the empirical ideal. On the other hand, incorporated into the ideological structure of the academy was also the conception of artistic specialness, that saw the artist as inspired, almost divine, with the ability to create an image in the mind without reference to the phenomenal world, and yet achieve a perfection greater than that found in the world of nature. Each work of art was itself a creative act. The debate between 'inspiration' and mathematical 'rule' was to dominate discursive activity within the academic system into the nineteenth century, but the scales were decisively tipped towards inspiration at the time of the late eighteenth century Romantic revolt, which saw the beginning of the end of the academic system.

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105 Extract from Zuccari, op cit, Goldwater, R., and Treves, M. (eds.), op cit, p.115.

RENAISSANCE FINE ART THEORY AND PRACTICE

In the three centuries that form the historical backdrop to Giorgio Vasari's (1511-74) *Le Vite de' piu Eccelenti Architetti, Pittori, et Scultori Italiani* (106), the painter and sculptor of representational form are elevated in social esteem, from the mediaeval category of mechanical (practical) arts to a place within the liberal (speculative) arts, and beyond this to the specifically modern category of fine (creative) arts. As the mediaeval craftsman made way for the artist, so the guild as a form of occupational control was replaced by the system of academic control. This transformation in the social position of the painter and sculptor was itself contingent upon the birth of an aesthetic consciousness that viewed representational form as an object of critical appreciation, the purpose of representation being seen as the imitation of an 'ideal', of perfect form, and judged against a standard of perfectability.

Three stages can be identified in this transition. Vasari, writing in the sixteenth century, had divided the history of style from the time of Cimabue (1240-1302) into three stages: a period of growing naturalism up to the turn of the fifteenth century; followed by a century in which the artist, looking to Antiquity, had almost perfected the ability to portray nature through the application of laws of proportionality and the observation of nature; and a final period beginning with Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), but culminating in the person of Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564). in which a perfected nature was reproduced through portrayal by the artist of its most beautiful aspects first finding their form in the mind prior to depiction on the canvas (107). Vasari views these periods as stages in the evolution and perfecting of artistic practice. This may be contested, but the stages do have a historical reality, and not solely at the level of style. Modern art-historical practice has modified Vasari's original scheme, designating stage one as the Early Renaissance, stage two as the High Renaissance,

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106 Vasari's *Lives* was published in 1550 and reprinted, with additions, in 1566. For a full translation, c.f. Hind, A.B., op cit, 4 vols.
107 C.f. in particular the Preface to each of the three 'Books' of Vasari's *Lives*.

and a final phase leading through to the close of the sixteenth century as Mannerist (108). My intention has not been to enter into an art-historical extension, but rather to complement such classification by viewing developments in terms of the transformation taking place in the social organisation of production and consumption of representational form.

In this chapter, and the preceding one, it has been the producer of representational form who has retained the centre stage. The conditions, both institutional and ideological, under which production takes place, have been considered, viewed as dialectically related to the producer's own consciousness of the historical process. The conditions of production and consumption impose upon the producer structural limits to the possible definition of the social function of representational form, while at the same time determining the producer's social status and economic position. Because the social totality is a dynamic rather than a static configuration, especially so during the period under consideration, the social definitions imposed upon representational form and production, and the social consciousness of the producer, are fluid. The purpose has been to follow the transition from craft production to fine art production, involving, as it does, a shift, both in the social definition of representational production and in the consciousness of the producer of representational form.

Three stages in this transformation, paralleling, but overlapping synchronically, those stylistic periods identified by art historians, can be discerned. Firstly, there is a period of craft production and craft consciousness, in which the producers of representational form gradually find a collective identity within their traditional occupational groupings, within the guild system of organisational control. The growth in social significance of representational form, and rising status of its producers, is ushered in with increased civic and religious patronage by merchant and bourgeois in the independent urban centres. A rational

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108 The importance of this third distinctive phase was firmly established by Walter Friedlaender, op cit. The article on 'The Anticlassical Style' was first published in 1925, and was previously given in lectures as early as 1914. Wölfflin has argued that Mannerism was not simply anti-Classical, but a sign of decline. He writes of perceptions being 'dulled by the mediocrities of Mannerism': Wölfflin, H., *Classic Art*, London, 1968, p.203.

humanistic consciousness, embedded in the social configuration of the democratising towns, fosters a process of humanisation and naturalisation of plastic representation, moving towards the portrayal of a this-worldly human condition. In this period, in Italy, an aesthetic consciousness is born and a language of critical appreciation is applied to the productions of representational form, a consequence of the humanist vogue for Classical revival, fostered in a climate of urban achievement and seeking for national identity. This stage has been outlined in the previous chapter.

In the second period, the producer of representational form responds to the acknowledgement given by patron and critic to the social importance of his work. This is a period in which the claim for liberal arts' status is made by the producer. A stress is placed on the mental component in production bringing about a 'scientisation' of practice - the development of a theory of perspective and theories of proportionality, and an increasing attention to empirical observation. A theory of artistic practice is developed by the producer of representational form for the first time. This theory, which I have identified as the 'empirical ideal', incorporates the conception of an ideal derived from the study of Antique plastic form and classical philosophy, with the practical concern of the scientisation of production as a means to liberal arts' status. This stage marks a break with traditional workshop and guild organisation, a break facilitated by the growth in courtly and papal patronage, which frees the producer from the control of the guild, which has now weakened with the turn away from democratic control in the urban centres to more autocratic government. The status of painter and sculptor is raised, in part by their own efforts, and with the aid of the spread of the influence of humanist thought, as well as increasing competition among patrons for the services of distinguished artists.

The final stage in the transformation is marked by growing recognition among artists that they are in some way 'special', a result of the critical praise and social esteem they have gained by the end of the fifteenth century. Their acceptance into the liberal arts means that less attention needs to be paid to the scientisation of their practice, and there is a turning away from the empirical observation of the phenomenal

world - from nature as given to the senses. Increasingly it is the centrality of the role of the artist's mind in the construction of images that is stressed, the artist's creative ability. The sixteenth century sees the establishment of the academic system of occupational control, part of the general move towards hierarchical and bureaucratic forms of control, but also a consequence of the success of claims for liberal arts' status, and patronage by court and Church, that had taken the painter and sculptor beyond the control of guild organisation and made traditional workshop training appear to be redundant. Within the academy, an aesthetic based on the notion of a 'transcendental ideal' is theorised, giving form to the distinctly modern conception of the creative artist. Artist and art object are joined in a relationship of 'specialness'. The image in the artist's mind is conceived of in terms of a subjective production, the creation through inspiration of an ideal that has an objectivity more real than that given through sense experience of nature alone - a transcendental ideal. The creative artist finds an analogy in God the creator, and it can be no accident that the culmination of this third stage took place under the conditions of a reimposed religiosity of the Catholic reformation. It is the notion of artistic practice as the ability to apprehend inwardly some universal truth that is at the heart of the modern conception of fine art practice. It is this that comes to sustain the artist in a commitment to art, even when he finds his work rejected by the public.

Some account must be given of the general phenomenon of the Italian Renaissance, for it is in the Quattrocento in Italy, and nowhere else in Europe, that the modern system of the arts emerges. It has been referred to as a period of transition, and yet it possessed a character all of its own. The idea of renaissance, or rebirth, originated in the thought of the early humanists, who undertook a revitalisation of the Latin language, which they saw as having been corrupted after the Germanic migrations following the fall of Rome (109). The Middle Ages, the age of Christianity, came to be seen as the Dark Ages, in contrast to the pagan Roman era of enlightenment and reason (110). The conception of

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109 For a discussion of the historiography of the Renaissance, c.f. Ferguson, W.K., *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, London, 1948.
110 Panofsky, E., has attributed the origin of this contrast to Petrarch. C.f. Panofsky, E., *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, Stockholm, 1960.

renaissance or rebirth spread into all areas of human endeavour, but none more thoroughly than the representational arts. The humanists looked back to ancient Rome, and later Greece, for guidance in their act of purification, but they looked back to learn so as to be able to apply their lessons to the perfecting of language, more generally cultural production, but also the State. Jacob Burckhardt (111) gave recognition to these attempts at perfectability, when he entitled the first part of his book, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance*, 'The State as a Work of Art', by which he meant that political affairs were made the object of conscious reflection, of rational calculation. This rational treatment of the state extended into all spheres, the making of war as well as cultural life, and into the manner of expressing the human condition.

Jacob Burckhardt's conception of the Renaissance has been accepted in its essentials, though dispute has centred on the extent of the break with the Middle Ages, and the significance of the twelfth century Renaissance (112), the degree to which society was irreligious, and the mechanism that was its instigator. Burckhardt gives primacy of place to the politial situation in Italy, the rise of the despot and individuation, encouraged by the political vacuum and comparative isolation of the Italian state. But he stressed, also, the importance of the revival of the Antique, and, in the case of Florence's leading role during the period, its advanced level of economic activity and class conflict. Burckhardt sees the Renaissance as making a great breakthrough, giving expression to modern individualism. In the Middle Ages:

> ... man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family or corporation - only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air; an *objective* treatment and consideration of the state and of all the things of this world became possible. The *subjective* side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis, man became a spiritual *individual*, and recognised himself as such. (113)

The individual locates himself at the centre of the cosmos, as spiritual

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111 Burckhardt, J., *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, first pub. 1860, London, 1944.
112 C.f. discussion in Ch.III. A strong position is taken by Trevor-Roper, who dismisses the fifteenth century Renaissance as a backwater, contributing little to the expansive development of Europe. 'Lavish patronage of the arts is perfectly compatible with economic decline'. It is a period of 'conspicuous waste'. Trevor-Roper, H., *The Rise of Christian Europe*, London, 1966, p.186.
113 Burckhardt, J., op cit, p.81.

being, and as active being makes the external world his object (114). From this, arises the conception of the universal man as exemplified by Alberti and Leonardo.

The same themes that are to be found in Burckhardt can also be found in Agnes Heller's recent Marxist treatment of the Renaissance (115): the same conception of a dynamic break with the past, the birth of the individual and the objectification of the world of phenomena, of history and social process, the secular outlook and the development of the 'many-sided man'.For Heller, the Renaissance:

> ... signifies a total social process, extending from the social and economic sphere where society's basic structure was affected to the realm of culture, embracing everyday life and everyday ways of thinking, moral practices and ethical ideals, forms of religious consciousness, art and science. (116)

Certainly the Renaissance does appear to be a total social process, and as such irreducible to change in the relations of production and the forces of production - the Marxist economic base. Such a change did play a part, but it alone cannot explain the extent of the phenomenon, its spread throughout Europe, among merchant, bourgeois, aristocrat and clergy. The new mood of individualism, of faith in the ability of Man to perfect his world, to act and make choices within it, the development of a rational view of the cosmos with Man at the centre, had a reality that was irreducible. We cannot reduce the thought of an Erasmus (117), a Thomas More (118), or even a Machiavelli (119), to reflections of social relations.

It is not possible to give adequate discussion here of the issue of causation. All that I can hope to indicate is the reality of the

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114 Steven Lukes has traced the semantic history of individualism back to the nineteenth century, indicating the range of meanings the term carries. He also demonstrates the multiple origins of individualism, which is a warning against taking Burckhardt's view of a Renaissance 'first' too seriously. However, it is clear that the period makes a significant contribution and is a turning-point in the consciousness of individuality; certainly this is the case in art. C.f. Lukes, S., *Individualism*, Oxford, 1985.
115 Heller, A., *Renaissance Man*, London, 1978.
116 ibid, p.2.
117 Desiderius Erasmus, Christian humanist, C.f Bainton, H., *Erasmus of Christendom*, New York, 1969
118 Thomas More, best remembered for his *Utopia*, 1516, but he was no radical, suffering a martyr's death rather than accepting Henry VIII's rejection of the Catholic Church.
119 Niccolò Machiavelli, best known for *The Prince*, in which he advocates a pragmatic approach to maintaining power in society; yet in it he also appeals to the idea of Italian unity.

phenomenon of Renaissance, and very few historians have denied that reality. The Renaissance is an epoch that appears to break with its immediate past, a past of which it became conscious and consciously externalised. It is no accident that here we see the birth of modern historiography and of autobiographical studies (120). It is to this period that we must look for the birth of modern science and, as I have argued, the modern system of fine art. It has been claimed that here also we find the beginnings of the modern state, with its rational approach to government and obligation, the growth of national consciousness and patriotism (121). But there is no unanimity here (122). Nonetheless, as Peter Burke observes:

> ...the period is full of firsts (123)

in all fields of endeavour.

Despite the epochal characteristics that have been identified, it would be wrong to deny the debt owed by the Italian Renaissance to the Middle Ages, and especially the twelfth century Renaissance in northern Europe, which supplied the foundations upon which the culture of the Renaissance built (124). The economic revolution that fostered the growth of the cities, in the main a revolution based on technical advances in the wool trade and the opening of international markets stimulating the spread of a money economy, had its origins in the late Middle Ages. And yet the Renaissance also had another past, just as real (125), wrongly dismissed by some because of the Christian content of most of the art of the period (126): the world of Antiquity, upon which it not only drew for content, as

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120 C.f. Ferguson, W.K., op cit.
121 C.f. Shennan, J.A., *The Origins of the Modern European State, 1450-1725*, London, 1974. In fact, state foundation begins earlier, but the Renaissance saw the machinery of state rapidly advanced.
122 Hall, J.A., *Powers and Liberties: The Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*, Harmondsworth, 1986, locates the birth of the modern state in the twelfth century. Ashworth, C. and Dandeker, C., 'Capstones and Organisms: Political Forms and the Triumph of Capitalism: A Critical Comment', *Sociology*, vol.20, no.1, pp.82-7, date national consciousness to the Middle Ages. Pirenne, H., *Economic and Social History of Europe*, London, 1936, was very precise, dating modern patriotism to the Hundred Years' War between France and England. It is probably true to say that the nation state emerged from many roots out of the Middle Ages, some roots going deeper into Europe's past.
123 Burke, P., *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy, 1420-1540*, Glasgow, 1972.
124 Ralph, P.L., *The Renaissance in Perspective*, London, 1973.
125 C.f. Jung, C.G., 'Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of Self', *Collected Works*, London, 1959. Jung argues that the Renaissance had little to do with Antiquity; it was the 'spirit of Medieval Christianity that underwent a strange transformation, exchanging the heavenly God for an earthly one'. (p.43).
126 This view is taken by Murray, P. and Murray, L., *The Art of the Renaissance*, London, 1963.

was the practice in the Middle Ages, but upon the form of which it also fed. The humanists' influence was considerable (127), providing a focus on contemporary affairs through a lens shaped by their contact with the ancient Roman and Greek world. The two pasts, the Judaeo-Christian and the Antique, found a new synthesis. But this synthesis was not uniformly spread throughout society; it was a dynamic and fragmental synthesis. The complex dialectic occuring at different levels within the social fabric of society fragments the totality; at one and the same time we find Alberti constructing a theory of the empirical ideal and Ficino working on his doctrine of Neo-Platonism, and both within the city of Florence. The unstable historical synthesis of the two traditions in the Italian Renaissance provides a particularly fluid social milieu (128); groups and individuals became socially mobile as traditional hierarchies were broken down, the ideal of the universal Man cut across the mediaeval hierarchy of estates. An artist, such as Michelangelo, could truly be considered as the equal of a prince. No less fluid was the realm of ideas; no longer subjected to, or contained within the walls of ecclesiastical debate, philosophical speculation could be harnessed to more particular and secular ends.

Through the period of Italian Renaissance, style in representational form changed dramatically, but there is a sense in which this change was not unilinear as is often assumed. Representational form in the mediaeval world possessed a transcendental quality, which was challenged by a this-worldly consciousness from the thirteenth century and especially in the Quattrocento, only to give way to a new transcendentalism during the High Renaissance and Catholic Reformation. The Judaeo-Christian tradition, which provided the period with its thematic continuity, was radically weakened by the humanist challenge of the early Renaissance, but in its turn prevailed over humanism in the seventeenth century. I have already charted to some extent the dynamics of this movement. What is important to note here is the role that humanism played in the emergence of art theory and of the artist. The craftsman of mediaeval transcendental form was merely the 'technician', whilst by the seventeenth century he had

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127 C.f. Dickens, A.G., *The Rise of Humanism and Reformation*, London, 1972; Baxandall, M., *Giotto and the Orators*, Oxford, 1971; Gilmore, M.P., *The World of Humanism*, New York, 1962; and Kristeller, P.O., op cit, 1965.
128 A fluidity on which Agnes Heller has remarked; op cit.

become the 'interpreter' as well as the technician; this combined the role of priest and craftsman. It is humanism that accounted for this transformation. Despite the secularising tendency of humanist thought, art energed from the Renaissance as more than just a conveyor of religious themes. The theory of art that united artist, art object and aesthetic object, in a relation of specialness in the seventeenth century, was in essence religious - or perhaps 'spiritual' would be a better term. The system of fine art practice and consumption, its many transformations acknowledged, has remained dependent on an art theorisation that identifies an aesthetic object. This is true of the Classical system and equally so of the Romantic and Modern. Art has retained throughout a spiritual purpose, for this aesthetic object has always been viewed as the source of an essential and humanly 'meaningful' reality. The notion of artistic specialness is intrinsically bound to the aesthetic theorisation of art's meaningfulness in its absolute sense, described in Chapter I.

CHAPTER V

FOUNDATIONS OF THE MODERN PERIOD

CLASSICISM IN TRANSITION

Michel Foucault, in his Preface to *The Order of Things*, declares that his archaeological enquiry has revealed:

> ...two great discontinuities in the episteme of Western culture, (1)

one at the opening of the Classical period, which he dates from the mid-seventeenth century, the other, marking the transition to the Modern age, he dates to the early nineteenth century (2). It is with the historical period between these two 'discontinuities' as identified by Foucault, a period that shall be shown to be in many essential elements continuous with the thought of the Renaissance, that we are concerned in this chapter. Through an analysis of the influences acting upon the fine arts, and the potential for their development opening in intellectual and social space in the two centuries that saw the maturation of Enlightenment thought, it will be possible to gain an understanding of the manner in which the sphere of fine art production entered the Modern era, as continuous and as reconstituted in the transforming intellectual and social environment.

Discontinuity is a useful term to apply to historical process to demarcate structural rearrangements, so long as we do not read into this too abrupt a break with the past. As Foucault acknowledges, any line drawn between two historical periods is necessarily.

> ... no more than an arbitrary division made in a constantly mobile whole. (3)

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1 Foucault, M., *The Order of Things*, London, 1970, p.xxii.
2 ibid, p.xxii.
3 ibid, p.50.

Whem the curtain falls across the stage of cultural history, it is carried by actors living the present, acting within and upon the social fabric that largely determines their lives. Here I may be seen to be at variance with Foucault, whose analysis of what he terms the 'fundamental codes of culture' appears to give to social actors the status of carriers of structure - appears to give this status, but in fact allows scope for some personages to indulge in discourse and practice that escapes or:

> ... deviates from the empirical orders prescribed (4)

by the primary codes. Foucault postulates a middle ground, between:

> ... [the] encoded eye and reflexive knowledge (5),

where order itself can be, is, liberated. In his archaeology, in tracing this middle ground in historical development, it is the sense of structure as opposed to liberatory praxis that preponderates. Social practice remains embroiled in structure. I would not entirely disassociate myself from this view; the curtain that I perceive falling between epochs is, however, more transparent. The structures that inform and provide the possibility for social action are never hermetic at the interface with practice; they embody contradictions, are subject to shifts in the configuration of relationships between components, and co-exist with components that remain external to the hegemonic order of things (6). History is not simply the unfolding of potentiality in structure; it is creative of structure and therefore of potentiality itself.

Foucault asserts that his analysis has shown:

> ... the coherence that existed, throughout the Classical age, between the theory of representation and the theories of language, of the natural order, and of wealth and value. It is this configuration that, from the nineteenth century onwards, changes entirely; the theory of representation disappears as the universal foundation of all possible orders; language as the spontaneous tabula, the primary grid of things, as an indispensable link between representation and things, is eclipsed in its turn; a profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them

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4 Ibid, p.xx.
5 Ibid, p.xxi.
6 I am using hegemony here to refer to the dominance of certain cultural forms, of the range of structural possibilities that the dominant culture allows, recognising that these possibilities are related to institutional control by certain social groups at any particular historical moment. Here I depart from Gramsci's use of the term. C.f. discussion of the concept in Bocock, R., *Hegemony*, Chichester, 1986.

> the forms of order implied by the continuity of time; the analysis of the exchange of money gives way to the study of production, that of organism takes precedence over the search for taxonomic characteristics, and, above all, language loses its privileged position and becomes, in its turn, a historical form coherent with the density of its own past. (7)

With this transition, this shift in Man's way of knowing, one could almost say, to an order of things which is outside the reach of the knowable, we enter the Modern period.

The Classical period according to Foucault, set between the mid-seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, is equally set apart from the Renaissance and the Modern age. I would argue, however, that this period was marked by transitional elements whilst remaining essentially Classic in outlook, a Classicism the rebirth of which had its origins in the Renaissance. The boundary that Foucault draws with the Renaissance is at a point when:

> ... thought ceases to move in the element of resemblance, (8)

knowledge no longer is based on 'similitude', but submits to the power of reason and the scientific intellect - rationalism. With this new rational empiricism, thought has indeed entered the Modern period. Bacon's rational empiricism and Descartes' rationalism are at the root of the modern scientific tradition, but so too was the scientific perspective of the world held by Leonardo da Vinci. It was during the Renaissance that Man came to see himself as active in the world. As Ortega y Gasset demonstrates, the 'imaginative' element in modern scientific thought, the ability to develop rational constructs that can be applied to empirical reality to explain, and at the same time give form to it, can be traced to the sixteenth century (9). What takes place in the period of historical change that Foucault labels the 'Classical', the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is the gradual overcoming of obstacles in the way of a more heuristic conception and application of rational constructs, accompanied by a loss of certainty in the fit between construct and nature. The tragic irony of the period is that the advocacy of reason as the guiding

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7 ibid, p.xxiii.
8 ibid, p.51.
9 Ortega y Gasset, J., *Man and Crisis*, trans. Adams, M., London, 1958. C.f. also Bronowski, J., and Mazlish, B., *The Western Intellectual Tradition*, Harmondsworth, 1970.

light for humanity set in motion a critique that eroded those very foundations that were to be Man's salvation. The predominant philosophical concern came to be that of epistemological enquiry.

Although the origins of scientific thought can be traced back to the Renaissance, for the period up to the last decades of the eighteenth century this scientific endeavour was based on a mechanistic and universalistic conception of the universe, a conception that provided a model for diverse areas of human enquiry, down to the very mechanisms that underlay the psychology of intellectual and emotional life. The shift that Foucault's archaeology indicates as taking place towards the close of the eighteenth century represents a radical transformation in the cosmology of the age. It is a transformation towards an organic model of a shifting universe. This transformation, in scientific thought and in art, is traced by Jacob Opper:

> The change is most clearly characterised by the contrast between Newtonian science and its derivative, logico-mathematical cosmology dominating the so-called Enlightenment, and Darwinian science and its derivative biologico-evolutionary worldview dominating the Romantic era. (10)

It is not that one system suddenly and completely replaces the other, but rather that the model developed by the human sciences displaces that of the physical sciences, and nowhere more thoroughly than in the arena of cultural production. Opper suggests that it was the success of first the physical sciences then the human sciences that led to the wider adoption of their models. However, this would not explain, by itself, the depth of penetration of the new cosmology throughout European society. As Foucault indicates, the possibilities for thought were, largely, present in the 'primary codes' ordering discourse and informing social practice. There was a shift in the structure of thought, not simply the adoption of a new model; reality could no longer be constructed in the same way.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the period of 'Enlightenment', cannot be adequately contained within and illustrated through the model of a mechanistic universe alone. The Enlightenment faith in 'reason' led to a critical mentality; that it led to system-building and an emphasis

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10 Opper, J., *Science and the Arts*, New Jersey, 1973, p.33.

on rule-governed behaviour is also true, but this is often given undue weight, especially by those looking for an explanation for the Romantic reaction. Essentially, the theorists of Enlightenment were radicals, seeking freedom from the constraints of tradition and Christian dogma.

> The men of the Enlightenment united in a vastly ambitious program, a program of secularisation, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom, above all, freedom in its many forms - freedom from arbitrary power, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, freedom to realise one's talents, freedom of aesthetic response, freedom, in a word, of moral man to make his own way in the world. (11)

This programme of freedom has, itself, to be set against a background of constraint: political, religious, economic and aesthetic. In France, where the tentacles of the state were most extended and intertwined with the Church, the critique was most fully developed, preparing the ground for revolutionary change. The 'philosophes' were aware of their own historical mission; they possessed a belief in the possibility of progress and saw clearly the obstacles in their path. They opposed 'critical-scientific' thought to 'mythico-religious thought' (12); an oft quoted example of this critical reaction being Bacon's dismissal of 'idols', idols of the tribe, of the den, but above all, of the market. For it is discourse itself that ensnares men's minds, corrupting most the understanding (13). Rousseau was developing this critique of culture when he wrote *A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, in which culture is compared to ornament, masking Man's understanding, placing:

> ... garlands of flowers over the chains which weigh them down. (14)

It was this very attitude, a critique that sought certainty in the possibility of unmasking an absolute reality, that also gave birth to doubt, first in the possibility of knowing and later in the existence of such a timeless order. Throughout the period of Enlightenment, the belief in the presence of a timeless universal order was sustained. God may have been removed from the mechanism that maintained the order of worldly things, but the laws that governed their movement were not

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11 Gay, P., *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol.I, London, 1973, p.3.
12 ibid, p.37.
13 C.f. Bacon, F., *The Advancement of Learning*, first pub. 1605, Davey, J., (ed.), *The Physical and Metaphysical Works of Lord Bacon*, London, 1911.
14 Rousseau, J.J., 'A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences', first pub. 1750, Rousseau, J.J., *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. Cole, G.D.H., London, 1975, p.4.

mutable. The Modern technological age has its foundations in the thought of the 'philosophes'; a belief in progress sustained by a scientific outlook underpinned by a radical doubt. There was a confidence that reality could be acted upon, grids imposed on the universe based on rational computation and empirical observation, but in essence the reality outside men's minds sustained an obmutescent presence. Attention naturally turned to the analysis of the causes of Man's own actions; towards a psychology of human understanding. David Hume set forth such a psychology attempting to fix the limits to understanding, identifying 'the objects of human reason' as of two types: 'relations of ideas', which are demonstratably certain, and 'matters of fact', which can never be more than probable (15). Reason dictates that Man can no longer have certain knowledge of reality: he may assume that reality conforms to reason but proof can be no more than probable. With Hume, Man is grounded in his own reality. This represents both a rejection of Christian dogma as expounded by the scholastics, demonstrated by Hume, and of the cosmology of the ancients, the Aristotelian and Platonic tradition. Man's reality, however, remains a shared, or potentially shared, experience; reason and recourse to empirical facts facilitate discourse and provide the basis for understanding and action. Despite the vagary of human nature, there are not limitless possibilities open to consciousness, the imagination:

> ... cannot exceed the original stock of ideas furnished by the internal and external senses, (16)

and these remain open to critical attention.

The emergence of modern critical empirical science owes much to the revival of humanism during the Renaissance, but it also owes a great deal to the possibilities contained within Christian thought. Although it is possible to stress the secularising tendency of the Enlightenment, as does Peter Gay (17), viewing this in terms of the removal of God from within the realm of nature, opening this to practical enquiry and action, this in itself need not be seen as leading to an atheistic consciousness, and, it has been argued, is indeed more compatible with a purely

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15 Hume, D., *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, first pub. 1748, Hendel, C.W., (ed.), London, 1955, pp.40-53.
16 ibid, p.61.
17 Gay, P., op cit.

Christian outlook (18). What the Philosophes rejected was not God but the Church dogma of the Scholastics. Descartes' *a priori*stic method allowed him to derive the rational certainty of his own existence, but also it confirmed the presence of God. And Bacon, while advocating a subjection of reason to empirical test, never abandonned the certainty of God's presence. Hooykaas argues that the image of a machine is connected with that of a maker, with theistic faith in a transcendental God. It was the notion of a deified natural order, common to the Middle Ages, that was rejected by the Enlightenment. This rejection led to a stronger, not a weaker, conception of God, putting God back into the position of absolute creator (19). In the Scholastic tradition, accepting as it did the Antique notion of the formation of nature out of a combination of form and imperfect matter, nature as God's creation was always less than perfect. It follows that, if God achieved the full design of nature, then it would conform to the mathematical order that is the underlying reality, and that this could now be found from empirical study. It is from such empirical observation that Kepler discovered that the orbit of Mars did not follow the perfect circular path theorised for it (20); he rejected the dogma on the basis of observed fact. There is little doubt that the Reformation and Protestantism played a significant role in the advancement of scientific endeavour (21), and not solely through the 'secularising' tendency documented by Weber (22). An important factor in explaining scientific motivation has to be the importance given by Protestantism to the need for the individual to seek his own understanding of God's will, an understanding that was to be gained through study of the two great books, the Bible and Nature (23). These were viewed as in no sense competing; both were God's work, though the Bible as the 'Word' had to take priority if there was a dispute with Nature.

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18 Hooykaas, R., *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, Edinburgh, 1977.
19 Those accepting Enlightenment Deism were not the majority; for most theologians and populace, God remained as an active providential reality, in Catholic and Protestant countries.
20 Kepler, *The New Astronomy*, first pub. 1609.
21 Hooykaas, R., op cit, pp.98-101 - a discussion of the role of Protestantism in the development of science. C.f. note 23.
22 Weber, M., *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Parsons, T., London, 1974.
23 Hooykaas, R., op cit, pp.98-149. Hooykaas presents evidence for the view that Protestants played a significant role in the development of science and technology in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though he does admit that it is impossible to separate the influence of religious belief from the stimulating effects of social and economic advance in Protestant countries. '... it was almost inevitable that a thriving and church going burgher class should have sought for religious sanction a posteriori for their growing wealth' (p.103). On the viewing of nature as a book comparable to the Bible, he points to evidence from the Netherlands' Confession, and elsewhere, and points to the notion of the 'general priesthood of believers' which makes everyone his own authority and encourages the study of the book of nature (p.109).

Art theory throughout this period is greatly influenced by the developments in Enlightenment philosophy (24). Theory remains caught up in its Classical structure, whilst at the same time being in a state of transition. The Cartesian rationalism that dominates continental thought, tempered in England by a strong empirical impulse, informs the debate within art criticism and theory. Unlike Coleman (25), I do not draw a sharp distinction between 'critical' and 'aesthetic' theories. It is not possible to isolate the practical and didactic purpose from pure theory, although at certain historical moments this separation may be attempted, as it appeared to be in the eighteenth century, as part of the general taxonomic programme. In the development of Enlightenment philosophy, reason provided the only sound guide to understanding, but the importance of 'sentiment' could not be neglected in the sphere of the visual arts, although this concern was often an attempt to minimise the appeal to sentiment. Even the writing of poetry, which had sustained itself as a high status activity during the Renaissance, when the poetic form was viewed within the system of similitudes (26), during the seventeenth century lost its dominant position, giving way to prose as the most adequate form of expression and vehicle of reason (27).

Descartes wrote:

> We commonly call 'good' and 'bad' that which our inner senses judge to be helpful or hurtful to our nature, but we call something 'beautiful' or 'ugly' which is represented by our exterior senses, chiefly that of sight which is considered to be the highest. And so it results that there are two species of love, to wit, that which we have for good things and that which we have for beautiful things.... of all the feelings, those of the beautiful and the ugly deceive the most and are those against which one must be the most on guard. (28)

Here Descartes echoes the neo-Platonism found in Titian's *Divine and Profane Love* (1515-16). Most of the theorisation concerned with the experience of the visual arts up to the mid eighteenth century struggled with the problem of the relationship between reason and sentiment, and it

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24 C.f. Beardsley, M.C., *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present*, London, 1966, pp.140-241; Coleman, J., *The Aesthetic Thought of the French Enlightenment*, Pittsburgh, 1971; Chambers, E.P., *The History of Taste*, Westport, Connecticut, 1971, pp.101-60; Gay, P., op cit, vol. II, pp.216-318.
25 Coleman, J., op cit, c.f. discussion in the Preface.
26 Foucault, M., op cit, Ch.2, pp.17-45.
27 Willey, B., *The Seventeenth Century Background*, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp.266-77.
28 Taken from a passage reproduced in translation from Descartes, R., 'Trait des Passions', Coleman, J., op cit, p.5.

did so within a context where sentiment, because it was grounded in sense experience, was to be distrusted. Theories that were developed in order to explain Man's response to the beautiful in art and nature had to struggle with the dualism, to look for a synthesis that was not possible within the rationalist epistemology. The tendency was for beauty to be relocated in the 'idea' that we form on seeing an object, an idea of beauty that can only be corrupted by sentiment, or for sentiment to be acknowledged as essential to the experience of beauty, which is known, nonetheless, intuitively (29). Later in the century Diderot still holds to the rationalist and Classical view:

> I call, therefore, something outside of me beautiful if it contains within itself that which will awaken in my understanding the idea of relationships, and I call something by relation to me beautiful everything that awakens this idea. (30)

In England the fine arts played a minor role until the eighteenth century, but the rational empirical tradition influenced theory towards a more naturalistic interpretation of beauty. Bacon (1560-1626) wrote of beauty:

> In beauty, that of favour is more than that of colour, and that of decent and gracious motion more than that of favour. There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. A man cannot tell whether Apelles or Albert Durer were the more trifler; whereof the one would make a personage by geometrical proportions, the other by taking the best parts out of divers faces to make one excellent. Such personages, I think, would please nobody but the painter that made them. Not that I think a painter may make a better face than ever was, but he must do it by a kind of fellicity (as a musician that make an excellent air in music), and not by rule. (31)

This shows a clear preference for sentimental involvement in the work of art. This tendency towards sentiment, may help to explain why English writers developed an early concern with the sublime and the beautiful in nature, if initially under the influence of rational enquiry. Cazamian may have been correct when he suggested that the English Romantic impulse was held at bay by the influence of French rationalism and

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29 C.f. ibid for a discussion of eighteenth century French aesthetic theory. These contrasting approaches are found in the theorising of Crousaz, J.P., 1715, and Dubos, J.B., 1719, pp.7-21.
30 ibid, p.41, translation from 'Recherches Philosophiques sur l'Origine et la Nature de Beau', 1772. Diderot remains in the Classical tradition in his attempt to identify the ideal, writing on the 'Salon de 1767', he asserts that the man of genius seeks the true model by combining his imagination with observation from nature, pp.110-5. For discussion of Diderot's more progressive views on art, particularly the theatre, c.f. Gay, P., op cit, vol.II, pp.249-318, where the affinity between Diderot's and Lessing's ideas is explored.
31 Bacon, F., *Bacon's Essays, including his Moral and Historical Works*, first pub. 1597, London, (n.d.), p.79.

experienced a 'slow transition' from 1708, when Shaftesbury published his *Apology for Enthusiasm*, through to the nineteenth century (32). I will return to the notion of the sublime later. Suffice it to note that, although thought was predominantly contained within the Classical mode, we here find a transitional element, not entirely new, but as yet to unfold.

Art theory throughout the period of Enlightenment remained within the 'order of things', within the classical tradition, but it was less at ease with the horizon available to it than was theorisation of the scientific impulse, and not surprisingly, as it was this later programme that dominated intellectual enquiry. Already, a rupture between art and science was emerging, with the possibility of two ways of knowing reality.

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32 Cazamian, L., *The Social Novel in England, 1830-1850*, London, 1973, p.77.

CLASSIC AND BAROQUE

The central precept of Classical art theory is that of 'imitation', art cannot be other than mimetic; we have seen this in the formulation of the transcendental and empirical ideals during the Renaissance. Usually, in art historical discourse, the distinction between these two ideals is not made explicit. Greenhalgh offers a set of tenets (33), Classicism seen as being concerned with Antiquity, the ideal, the typical and with morality in its widest sense. These tenets, however, must be woven into the fabric of a mimetic theory of art. From the Italian Renaissance through to eighteenth century Neoclassicism, Classical art theory prevailed as the only possible guide to artistic practice, having its institutional base in the Academic system. However, the artistic style, or rather styles, of the Baroque did not conform to the rules laid down by Classical theory so as to produce, what one would expect, a unified style. The 'age of Baroque' is an age of contrasts. It encompasses the restrained Classicism of Nicolas Poussin (1593/4-1665) and Claud Lorraine (1600-82), the expressive mannerism of El Greco (1541-1614), Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), the dramatic realism of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573-1610) and Rembrandt (1606-69), the naturalistic style of Vermeer (1632-75) and Frans Hals (1580-1666), the mediaevalism of Pieter Bruegel (c.1525-69) and Bosch (c.1450-1516), and much more by way of variety. Germain Bazin claims that this period is the:

> ... richest in expressive variety,... the moment at which each of the peoples of modern Europe invented the artistic forms best suited to its own genius. (34).

The period is generally, and unjustly, underrated and neglected in comparison to the Italian Renaissance and the Romantic period, during the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Clearly, the Baroque is an all-encompassing category, gathering together diverse styles into an uncomfortable whole. The Baroque is not one style, but many. and yet an appearance of unity was maintained through allegiance to the Classical past, where artists located their roots and found a source of inspiration in the great Masters.

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33 Greenhalgh, M., *The Classical Tradition in Art*, London, 1978.
34 Bazin, G., *Baroque and Rococo*, London, 1985, p.8.

Through the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Rome was a focal point to which artists were drawn for inspiration and example. The age of Baroque starts in Rome with the new found confidence of the Catholic Reformation. Rome, having been sacked by German mercenaries in 1527, and the Papacy shaken by the Protestant Reformation, set about rebuilding the city and the Church. By the seventeenth century, confidence had returned, a confidence that can be seen in the flamboyant and expressive strain of Baroque art; the art of the Church and Court, which reimposed order on a chaotic universe. It is Annibale Carracci's (1560-1609) decoration of the ceiling of the dining room in the Palazzo Farnese (1597-1600), undertaken for Cardinal Oduardo Farnese, that is often cited as the first example of the new style (35). It departs from the style of the Renaissance in its dramatic qualities and emotional intensity. This is a simplification of reality; to discern starting points in the history of style is an aim of art history that is notoriously difficult to achieve. In the painting of Carracci can be found the influence of the Venetian School, half a century of Mannerism and its foundations in the High Renaissance. In a sense, the age of Baroque does not 'begin' but rather 'blossoms' forth along its many branches from the Renaissance, taking on colour and form from the cultural matrix that is Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Possibly Friedlaender is right to suggest that in the analysis of style:

> ... a period should always be restricted to one or two generations. (36)

Each new generation recreates anew the past, through interpretation and selection. This is why such diverse strains as are contained by the Baroque can still claim to adhere to the same root.

Rome remained the cradle of artistic inspiration through to the nineteenth century, attracting artists from every country of Europe, who went to view the work of the Masters and to learn from them. The new religious fervour inspired by the Catholic Reformation aimed to make Rome the spiritual centre of the world; the architecture it engendered during

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35 C.f. Mainstone, M. and Mainstone, R., *The Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge Introduction to the History of Art, Cambridge, 1981, pp.3-7.

36 Friedlaender, W., *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Painting*, New York, 1967, p.81. Pevsner, N., 'The Counter-Reformation and Mannerism', trans. Britt, D., *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, two vols., London, 1969, vol.I, pp.11-34, limits Mannerism to a generation, and views it as a counter-Reformation art, quite distinct from the Baroque.

the first half of the sixteenth century, through the patronage of Bernini and Carlo Maderno (1576-1636) and others, became a model for the Courts of Europe to emulate. Rome attracted admiration, and it also attracted artists, both for its Antiquity and its Modernity. Bazin gives as examples of artists who were attracted to work in Rome - Rubens (1577-1640) and van Dyke (1599-1641) (Flanders), van Baburen and Terbrugghen (1588-1629) (Holland), Elsheimer (1578-1610) (Germany) and Simon Vouet (1590-1649) (France) - all artists who returned to their own countries to influence the developing national styles. Others remained in Rome as part of the Roman School - Poussin, Claud Lorraine and Moise Valentin (1591/4-1632) (37).

The influence of Italianate style and Classical art theory had reached Holland before its emancipation from Spain in 1609. Carel van Mander (1548-1606), an artist heavily influenced by Mannerism, published a book in the style of Vassari in 1604, *Schilderboeck* (The Book Of Painters), which reveals an attempt to establish a national tradition of art firmly on the soil of the Netherlands, but also an acceptance of the leadership of Rome.

> Rome is the city where before all other places the Painter's journey is apt to lead him, since it is the capital of Picture's (i.e, Painting's) Schools. (38)

Artists like van Mander, sought in the Classical tradition the liberal arts status that had been granted to artists through organisation in the Academy. In Holland it was the Guilds and independent workshop that remained as the system of occupational control, though, increasingly, artists were to use middlemen to seel their work on the market, in a bourgeois economy that provided no aristocratic or Church patronage, although Dutch artists could see fellow artists elsewhere in Europe attaining a glory that they could not without the patronage and status that came with history paintings. Confined as they were by bourgeois taste and Protestant doctrine to the subject matter of daily experience, they accomplished a most distinctive national style and a reputation for

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37 Bazin, G., op cit, p.13.
38 Reproduced in Nash, J.M., *The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer*, Oxford, 1972, p.15. van Mander, C., *Shilderboeck* provides the earliest account of the lives of Netherlandish and German artists from the time of van Eyck. There is also a section on Italian artists, mainly a condensed version of Vasari's *Lives*, and a section dealing with instructions to the artist. He was instrumental in the foundation of an academy in Haarlem.

painting of a 'lower order' - portraiture, land and seascapes, still-life and genre. Dutch artists, more so than their contemporaries in the rest of Europe, were subject to the taste imposed through the 'buying power' of their public. Art became a commodity (39), and artists were limited in determining the direction of style even though they gained a personal independence from their public. Their status, although some became rich through selling their, and other artists', works, was that of producer in a commodity market. Progress towards the modern conception of the fine artist had to be made elsewhere. There is no doubt, however, that Dutch art, as it developed through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, retained the quality of an art of the people, and here it departed from the Baroque which was the art of Church and State. Although Dutch art is art-historically included in the Baroque, it appears to be out of step with the rest of Europe and is stylistically distinct.

One seventeenth century commentator on the Dutch scene, Peter Mundy, writes:

> As for the art of Painting and the affection off the people to Pictures, I thincke none other goe beyond them, there having bin in this Country Many excellent Men in thatt Faculty, some at presentt, as Rimbrantt, etts, All in generall striving to adorne their houses, especially the outer or street roome, with costly pieces, Butchers and bakers not much inferiour in their shoppes, which are fairely sett Forth, yea many tymes Blacksmithes, Coblers, etts, will have some picture or other by their Forge and in their stalle. Such is the generall Notion, enclination and delight that these Countrie Native[s] have to Paintings. (40)

This provides an insight into how important art was to Dutch culture, a culture that saw God,s work in everything and took its theological lessons from everyday events and scenes (41). Beginning with the iconic naturalism of Albert Outwather and van Eyck, owing its perspectival and expressive qualities to lessons learned from the Italian Renaissance, Netherlandish Realism developed towards the emblematic Naturalism that

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39 C.f. Larsen, E., *Calvinist Economy and 17th Century Dutch Art*, Lawrence, Kansas, 1979, p.6. Larsen points out that the Dutch Calvinist economy saw a rupture between art and Church; art could be freed for purely aesthetic enjoyment and embellishment. It became a commodity and the artist an entrepreneur.

40 Mundy, P., *Travels in Europe, 1639-47*, Temple, Sir R.T. (ed.), *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, vol.4., London, 1925, quoted in Nash, J.M. op cit, p.51.

41 It was more than a religious art, it was an art of the people. 'Dutch painting,.., was not and could not be anything but the portrait of Holland, its external image, faithful, exact, complete, life-like, without any adornment': Fromentin, E., *The Masters of Past time: Dutch and Flemish Painting from van Eyck to Rembrandt*, first pub. 1875, Gerson, H. (ed.), trans. Boyle, A., Oxford, 1981, p.97.

spawned the Genre paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Contrasting with the Catholic preference for Baroque extravagance and distortion, Dutch art strove for a:

> ... variety of detail [rather than a] variety of action, (42)

and it showed its mastery of detail, earning a reputation for depiction of the particular. However, the emphasis on, what appears to the outsider to be, the mundane, in a Europe saturated by the art theory of the Classical tradition, earned for Dutch art only limited acclaim. It was not until the nineteenth century that the value of Dutch art was fully appreciated and an artist like Rembrandt raised to the status of a Master. For Daniel Daulby, writing in 1796, Rembrandt, despite his obvious talent, was to be labelled one of the 'empirics of art', working from 'false principles' (43). None of this is to deny the important influence Dutch Landscape painting had on the development of the English Landscape through the eighteenth century helping it to break with the Classical example of Poussin and Lorrain (44). The point that I wish to make is, although Dutch art flourished on the boundary of Classical tradition and theory, it in no way undermined it. Of the art forms contained by the umbrella concept of Baroque, Dutch Naturalism is the most autonomous, but it was the Academic tradition that was to carry the artist forward into the Modern age and from which the theory of artistic specialness was to emerge as the instrument of its own negation. The appearance of naturalism within a bourgeois state can be taken to demonstrate a link between bourgeois ascendency and a preference for naturalistic form, but naturalism in the history of style does not take a commanding role in the formation of the Modernist era in art. There is no evidence to support Hauser's view that there is a historical movement towards increasing naturalism in style (45).

The diversity of Baroque art enriched the Classical tradition, it did not weaken it, as the strength of the Neoclassical revival in the eighteenth

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42 ibid, p.17.
43 C.f. extract from Daulby, D., 'A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works of Rembrandt', Liverpool, 1796, Nash, J.M., op cit, pp.52-4. For other attitudes to Dutch painting, c.f. pp.51-7. C.f. also Sir Joshua Reynolds' comments, Reynolds, J., *Discourses on Art*, London, 1969, Discourse 4.
44 C.f. Gaunt, W., *A Concise History of English Painting*, London, 1978, pp.83-138.
45 Hauser, A., *The Social History of Art*, London, 1951, vol.I, p.623.

century shows. Diversity was in part due to the incorporation of the Classical with national tendencies, but it was also a product of the increased freedom of the artist to invent his own style. The notion of 'inventione', developed in the seventeenth century, placed control in the hands of the artist; in line with the theory of the transcendental ideal, artists were freed to invent their own compositions as a necessary part of encapsulating the ideal. The distortion of the Mannerists flowered into the enriched atmosphere of the Baroque.

For Wölfflin there was a shift in perception and experience with the transition to Baroque:

> The fundamental principle which forms the basis of the art of the Italian Renaissance is that of perfect proportion. In architecture as in statuary, this period tried to give form to the idea of static perfection. Each form tends to constitute a reality which is closed and free in its articulations: more than this, each part has an independent existence. The mind, conscious of a sensation of infinite well-being, sees in this art the image of a higher, freer reality, but one in which it is able to participate.
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> The Baroque uses the same system of forms; only instead of seeking total perfection, it seeks movement and change; instead of what is restricted and tangible, it seeks the unrestricted and the immense. The ideal of beauty of proportion disappears; what counts is not what is, but what is in process of change. The mass begins to move, a mass only vaguely defined. (46)

This shift in mind (47) finds its correspondence in style with a shift from the 'linear' to the 'painterly', from 'presentation by planes ' to 'presentation by depth', from 'closed' to 'open' form, from 'multiplicity' to 'unity', and from 'absolute clarity' to 'relative clarity'. This description fits best the art of the Catholic Church and Courts, but, despite the many differences in style within the Baroque, the force of this shift in sentiment can be found at work in most art of the seventeenth and eighteenth century; even in the Neoclassicism of the pre-Revolutionary period, itself consciously anti-Baroque.

Neoclassicism heralds the close of the Baroque period, by reasserting Enlightenment faith in the human condition as active and creative in the

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46 Wölfflin, H., *Renaissance and Baroque*, trans. Simon, K., London, 1964, p.44.
47 For discussion of Wölfflin's art historical method, c.f. Podro, M., *The Critical Historians of Art*, New Haven, 1982, pp.98-151.

world. Baroque art portrays Man as passive, subject to the forces of nature acting upon and within the individual, ultimately subject to the will of God. The art of the Catholic Reformation asserts the Church's spiritual dominion over Man; it is concerned with the experience of the soul in the world, art:

> ... expressing the passions of the soul. (48)

Artists were attempting to depict the most intense of experiences of the passions - love, anger, suffering, fear, etc. - and to do so through their outward manifestation. This is why so much of the art of the period appears to us as dramatic invention; life itself is dramatised, and art given over to instruction and exhaltation. Take the example of Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa* (1645-52). There can be no more extreme example of the intensity of the passions. St Teresa receiving the Holy Spirit is totally enraptured, body and soul act as one, caught at the very moment of ecstasy. The spiritual experience has to be externalised in a show of emotion. This stress on emotion threatens to undermine the Classical - as interpreted by the Renaissance - concern with harmony and line; the sculpture is not contained within its own contour, but reaches out to the audience and up to the heavens. However, this expressive style is incorporated into the tradition of Classical art; examples are found from Antiquity and Renaissance to validate artistic practice - Bernini could find no better advice for aspiring artists than to imitate the models provided by Antiquity (49).

It is a feature of Baroque, no less than eighteenth century Neoclassicism, that artists saw themselves as continuing the work of the Classical masters; it is the perspective on the past that changes (50). In France the Academy imposed rules to govern artistic practice more strictly than anywhere else in Europe; artists could not have total freedom to interpret subjects, there had to be rules for the attainment of the Ideal in art. Charles Lebrun (1619-1690), The Premier Peintre du Roi, gave detailed instruction on the depiction of expression, which he saw as the

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48 Bazin, G., op cit, p.23.
49 C.f. Sieur de Chantelou's account of Bernini's Lecture at the French Academy, Sept. 5th, 1665, trans, in Goldwater, R., and Treves, M., *Artists on Art: From the 14th to the 20th Century*, London, 1976, pp.135-6.
50 ibid, pp.122-91, contains artists' accounts, showing commitment to the Classical tradition, durimg the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

outward appearance of the motion of the soul. On the depiction of simple love he admonishes:

> The Motions of this Passion, when it is simple, are very soft and simple, for the Forehead will be smooth, the Eye-balls shall be turned. The Head inclined towards the Object of the Passion, the Eyes may be moderately open, the White very lively and shining, and the Eyeball being gently turned towards the Object, will appear a little sparkling and elevated; the Nose receives no Alteration, nor any of the parts of the Face; which being only filled with Spirits, that warm and enliven it, render the Complexion more fresh and lively, and particularly the Cheeks and Lips; the Mouth must be a little open, the Corners a little turn'd up, the Lips will appear moist, and this moistness may be caused by Vapours arising from the Heart. (51)

This most mild of passions, involving a minimum of physiological expression, must nonetheless find its ideal portrayal; recognition of an underlying order in the universe asserts the presence of the general to the detriment of the particular - the universe is rule governed, an assertion being made by Church and State, and by Enlightenment philosophy. But whereas Church and State seek validation for the earthly order at the apex of which they are placed, Enlightenment thought seeks change in the possibility of human and earthly perfection. The art of the Baroque is the art of Church and Court; but in its concern with human expression, the psychology of expression, it is also typical of Enlightenment enquiry.

The religious and secularising tendencies meet in the analysis of spiritual being as sensory experience. In 1548 Ignalius Loyolo, founder of the Jesuits, had published his *Spiritual Exercises*, emphasising the self induction of sensory experience through spiritual fervour, providing a model for attainment of religious expression for the Catholic Reformation (52). The importance of the work of Lucretius (99-55BC) as example for a more secular order, has been indicated by P. A. Tomory (53). It is in Book IV of *De Rerum Natura* where Lucretius boldly asserts:

> Well now, what standard can be regarded as more reliable than sensation? If the senses are false, will reason be competent to impeach them, when it is itself

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51 Lebrun, C., 'Conference upon Expression', first pub. 1667, trans. Smith, J., 1701, quoted in Goldwater, R., and Treves, M., op cit, p.160.
52 On Ignalius Loyolo, c.f. Pevsner's comments, Pevsner, N., op cit, p.18, who argues that the Jesuit 'suppression of human personality, reflects the prevalent tendency of the age towards mysticism'.
53 Tomory, P.A. 'Passions, Imagination and Intellect: Poussin, Claud, and Gaspard Dughet in the Roman Campagne', Hardy, J., and McGredie, A. (ed.), *The Classical Temper in Western Europe*, Melbourne, 1983, pp.37-44.

> entirely dependent upon the senses? If they are not true, all reason also is rendered false. (54)

Increasingly, as Enlightenment developed so the Epicurian philosophy of Lucretius became a significant anti-religious and anti-rationalist text (55). Conflicting with the Classical prioritisation of reason that informs the philosophical enterprise, but at the same time complementing it as part of the Enlightenment's critical project, was a new-found, or possibly rediscovered, eminence attached to sensory experience. Tomory believes that it is this underlying concern with sensory experience that explains the growing interest in landscape painting within the classical tradition. Starting:

> ... from passion, the seventeenth century term for feeling, through imagination, to intellect, that is the artistic order of creation, particularly as regards landscape and the ennobling process, which was to promote it as a subject in its own right. (56)

If this is correct, as it appears to be, then the most Classical of Baroque artists, Poussin and Claude Lorraine, are epitomised by this tension between reason and sensual experience; they provide an attempt at synthesis. And as we shall see, so too is the Neoclassical revival of the eighteenth century, in England so closely aligned with the increasing status of landscape painting and concern with the 'picturesque'. It is obvious from the artistic range and sensibility of the Baroque that reason did not dictate, and from the debates that took place in academic circles where a codification of practice was being attempted (57).

When Wolfflin describes the shift from Classic to Baroque, he presents the two styles as oppositional. But Rennaissance Classicism was not one static whole; as demonstrated in the previous two chapters, it was split by the presence of two 'ideals', the empirical and the transcendental. These ideals remain intact through to the nineteenth century. But the expressive form of the ideals changes; they are corrupted by contact with the new sensuality of the Baroque. Artists are now painting and sculpting for the senses as well as the intellect, because sense

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54 Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. Smith, M.F., London, 1969, p.143.
55 On the revolt against reason, c.f. Gay, P., op cit, vol.II, pp.187-207.
56 Tomory, P.A., op cit, p.43.
57 C.f. Coleman, J., op cit.

experience is a, possibly the only, vehicle of reason. It is also the case that they are depicting inner experience as it is outwardly manifest through the emotions, whether the restrained emotionality of Poussin or the heightened sensations of Bellini. The central tenet remains that of mimesis; Antiquity is still looked to for example, and a strong sense of moral purpose is retained. In its reliance on sensual experience, Dutch art goes further than the art of Catholic Europe towards naturalism, yet it remains a naturalism giving priority to symbolic purpose.

NEOCLASSICISM

> The first modern movement.

This is the appellation used by Edward Lucie-Smith to describe the contribution made by Neoclassicism to the history of art (58). The first Modern movement because it was a style:

> ... brought into being by an act of will,... [the] dominance of theory,... [cutting] Neoclassicism off from the styles that preceded it. (59)

Also marking it out as a turning point, according to Lucie-Smith, is the cult of feeling and the idea of a philosophy of aesthetics, both central ingredients of Neoclassical theory. As I have tried to demonstrate, there are no such clear turning points in the history of culture, although it would not be incorrect to speak of landmarks - of historical events and forms of cultural representation, that most fully actualise historical traits (60). In Neoclassicism, the seeds of the Modern movement begin to sprout after a long germination in the soil of Renaissance and Baroque culture.

It is Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) who best exemplifies, through his writing, the theoretical moment of Neoclassical art. Through the writings of Winckelmann, Antiquity was revived and reinterpreted for a generation of artists in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was not that he discovered the true nature of Greek art, rather that he constructed a variation on the 'ideal', turning his knowledge of Greek culture to contemporary use. Most of what was known of Greek art at the time was derived from Roman copies, very little Greek sculpture being unearthed until the following century. His *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755) (61) is as much a manifesto for the contemporary artist as a historical account. In this, as Lucie-Smith recognised, theory attempts to lead art. But Classical art theory has always given guidelines to the artist, it may be objected, with

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58 Lucie-Smith, E., 'Neoclassicism: The First Modern Movement', *Thinking about Art*, London, 1968, pp.153-5.
59 ibid, p.153.
60 I refer the reader back to the first section of this chapter and the discussion of Foucault's notion of discontinuity.
61 Winckelmann, J.J., 'Reflections on the Painting and the Sculpture of the Greeks', first pub. 1785, Irwin, D. (ed.), *Winckelmann: Writings on Art*, London, 1972.

justification; it has possessed a didactic purpose and broad moral concerns. What appears as new in the writings of Winckelmann is the theoretical grounding of art in social life. In the past, art had been used to demonstrate the level of attainment of civilisation, often linked to a particular political form of social organisation, as in republican Florence. Here the model presented by Antiquity had served to bolster the state, to express republican values and lay claim to a glorious tradition. With Winckelmann, art theory takes a more revolutionary stance:

> Art claims liberty: in vain would nature produce her noblest offsprings, in a country where rigid laws would cloak her progressive growth .... (62)

The Greeks, like Rousseau's noble savage, are viewed as in possession of a pure nature, uncontaminated by the distorting effects of modern culture. They are an example of a free people, in a state of innocence as regards their relation to nature - physically and intellectually uncontaminated, their art draws its models from pure forms. As Eitner rightly points out, the document is:

> ... [an] attack on the civilization of the Rococo; the picture of a beautiful humanity it paints is meant to offer the sharpest possible contrast to 18th century reality. (63)

Winckelmann rejects both the emotional excesses of Baroque art and its tendency to particularise by following too closely the examples found in nature. He stresses the need for 'noble simplicity' and 'sedate grandeur' in gesture and expression (64), and to follow the dictates of an ideal nature. His theory is a version of empirical idealism and remains in many essentials Classical. But in his *History of Ancient Art* (1764), he offers a history based on changes of style, no longer tied to individual artistic achievement, but on:

> ... [the] essential of art, on which the history of the individual artist has little bearing. (65)

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62 Winckelmann, J.J., 'On the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', Irwin, D. (ed.), ibid, pp.63-4.
63 Eitner, L. (ed.), *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750-1850*, Englewood Cliffs, 1971, vol.I, p.5.
64 Winckelmann, J.J., 'On the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', in Irwin, D. (ed.), op cit, p.72.
65 Winckelmann, J.J., *History of Ancient Art*, first pub. 1764, in Irwin, D. (ed.), ibid, p.104.

This is a radical shift in perspective compared with Vasari's *Lives*. Art is seen as having a growth cycle, from its origin in necessity, to its perfection in the search for beauty, and on to decline, to the superfluous. This organic conception takes Winckelmann into the Romantic camp. According to Winckelmann, art can only fully develop in a society free from tyranny, and in a temporate climate. And, of course, the arts must be promoted:

> The superiority which art acquired among the Greeks is to be ascribed partly to the influence of climate, partly to their constitution and government, and the habits of thinking that originated therefrom, and, in an equal degree also, to respect for the artist, and the use and application of art. (66)

It is easy to see why artists were attracted to this rendering of art history.

Whilst holding to the empirical ideal of an ideal beauty to be found in the selection of beautiful parts taken from nature, Winckelmann acknowledges that each age and nation has its own idea of beauty.

> To each age, even as to the goddesses of the seasons, there belongs its peculiar beauty, but differing in degree. (67)

In this, again, he displays an underlying tension in his Classicism, grounds for the breaking of that very unity that he professes to seek. The conception of epochal developments in the ideal of art is to be more fully, and adequately, formulated by Hegel (68). Neoclassicism is not, then, a purely Classical form, but contains many Romantic strains, a Romantic spirit that can be seen surfacing in the very language of sensible experience used by Winckelmann in the description of Greek art (69). Where Winckelmann remains a Classicist is in his belief in generalised forms and the possibility of knowing these through the application of reason to the observation of nature. And, in the tradition of Enlightenment thought, reason is proposed as a tool for transforming through demonstration. A moral and political statement, such as that carried in David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1791), clearly demonstrates the revolutionary adaptation of Classical art form to the contemporary

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66 ibid, p.108.
67 ibid, p.113.
68 Hegel's theory of art is discussed later in this chapter.
69 C.f., for example, his account of the Laocoon, Winckelmann, 'History of Ancient Art', Irwin, D. (ed.), op cit, pp.135-6.

context. This is at the heart of Neoclassical theory.

> Let the artist's pencil, like the pen of Aristotle, be impregnated with reason; that having satiated the eye, he may nourish the mind: and this he may attain by Allegory; investing, not hiding his ideas. (70)

Neoclassicist style is not so easily identified as is the theory that largely inspired it. There existed a variety of approaches to the imitation of the Antique. Using the theme of the selling of Cupids, taken from a Roman painting discovered in 1759 at Gragnano in the suburbs of Naples, Robert Rosenblum has demonstrated this diversity of style:

> The dissimilarities among Vien's, Juchtzer's, Fuseli's, and David's interpretation of the identical Roman source may begin to suggest that in the late eighteenth century, as before, antique stimuli could produce a wide range of stylistic and expressive results. (71)

Such dissimilarities show that there was room for individual contributions to style and that Neoclassicism was not so prescriptive as has been assumed by some art historians seeking to explain the nature of the Romantic revolt at the close of the century. Indeed, Fuseli's particular brand of Neoclassicism is heavily inclined towards the Gothic, and open to inclusion in the category of the Romantic, drawing as it does on the unconscious and imagination (72). Neoclassical art may have been a revolt against the extremes of Baroque and Rococo, as Hugh Honour perceives it (73). Certainly this is the case at the theoretical level, but purification did not lead to a stylistic straitjacket, nor did it mean the abandonment of the Classical tradition as it had unfolded during the Baroque age.

The motif of 'the death bed', identified by Rosenblum as one of the most popular Neoclassical themes, was used throughout the Baroque, Poussin's

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70 Winckelmann, J.J., 'On the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks', Irwin, D. (ed.), ibid, p.85.
71 Rosenblum, R., *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, New Jersey, 1970, pp.9-10.
72 A painting like *The Nightmare* (1782) makes it difficult to classify Fuseli as a Neoclassic painter, yet his concern was to warn those who drifted from the light of reason, of the irrational depths of human nature. In a similar attitude, Goya (1746-1828) produced the etching *The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters*. There is no doubt that these works contain a Romantic impulse towards the irrational.
73 Honour, H., *Neo-Classicism*, Harmondsworth, 1975, p.15.

portrayals being taken as an example by later Classicists. As a Classical theme it was identified with stoicism and virtue; for the Neoclassicist artist it warned against the prevailing hedonism pursued in Rococo art, serving:

> ... to evoke a new aura of gravity and seriousness. (74)

The death bed scene in Classical art remained a social event, death, or how one died, being a public concern. This began to change with the removal of the public from the scene of death; death became not only a public tragedy but a personal tragedy too. David's *Death of Marat* (1793) is a blend of Neoclassic and Romantic; it retains its identity as a public and moral statement, yet it cannot escape being viewed as a personal tragedy. There is a sharp contrast between this calm contemplative scene depicting Marat still in his bath after the exit of the assassin and the earlier portrayal of the *Death of Seneca* (1773) which is full of dramatic effect, or the *Death of Socrates* (1787) where stoic virtue is attested. In Marat's face there exists an echo of the crucified Christ, a man who died for his people, and a resemblance of Romantic melancholy. Marat is alone in death, even though this is brought about in the service of the Republic. Neoclassicism begins by finding examples of virtuous conduct in Classical sources (75), but broadens to take in examples from periods and cultures other than the Greek and Roman, investing scenes with a historical realism and social purpose, finally allowing artists like David to focus on contemporary issues.

Being concerned with virtue, Neoclassicism could equally be the adopted style of progressive and conservative groups; it could portray revolutionary heroism or patriotic conservatism. It is not that style is indifferent to ideology; the two tendencies could not have equally been served by the Baroque which in its Rococo phase could only gild the decaying glory of monarchy. Baroque, despite its outward display of movement and expressive fervour, its dramatic effects, portrayed a static reality in which Man's condition was determined by an underlying order. By contrast, Neoclassicism, despite its insistence on restraint and order

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74 Rosenblum, R., op cit, p.28.
75 ibid, pp.50-106; 'The Exemplum Virtutis'.

in the portrayal of universal human values, acknowledged, if not insisted upon, the possibility of change. The revolutionary outlook upheld the necessity of change for the re-constitution of a society in which universal human values would be guaranteed. Equally, conservative thought asserted patriotic values exemplified in the virtuous citizens and deeds of a bygone 'golden age'. This is why the conservative elements in French pre-revolutionary society could support a style that rejected the decadence of the Rococo. Hugh Honour comments:

> It is certain that Neo-classical artists found as much if not more support and encouragement amongst the aristocrats and wealthy as they did among the bourgeois. (76)

In England, Neoclassicism was associated with the rise of a truly national style and the growing eminence of native artists. Horace Walpole could proclaim in his *Anecdotes*:

> How painting has rekindled from its embers, the works of many living artists demonstrate. (77)

The rise of the artist was seen as evidence of England's new-found prosperity, Neoclassicism being greated in:

> ... [an] atmosphere of confidence. (78)

and soon became the official ideology of the newly founded Royal Academy (79). As such, it exerted an important influence on art throughout the nineteenth century. It may be, as Piper asserts, that this imposition of Classical style and theory:

> ... quickened the dormant romantic spirit, (80)

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76 Honour, H., op cit, p.18. This contradicts Antol's assertion that 'realistic classicism' was the 'genuine style of the European Middle class'. Antol, F., *Hogarth and his Place in European Art*, London, 1962, p.57. The separation of Neoclassic from Baroque by class association is not an easy matter; as Antol recognises in Hogarth's art, there is a dominant Baroque style, though combined with realism and tending towards the Neoclassic (ibid, pp.23-6). His work was appreciated by both middle class and aristocracy, though his moral conversation pieces were favoured by the former.
77 Walpole, H., *Anecdotes of Painting in England, 1762-1780*, Dallaway, J. and Wornum, R.N. (eds.), two vols., London, 1976, vol.I, p.xiii.
78 Honour, H., 'Neo-Classicism', *The Age of Neo-Classicism*, The Royal Academy of Arts and the Victoria and Albert Museum, Catalogue, Nov 9th-12th, 1972, p.xxii.
79 The Neoclassic theory of art is clearly expressed in Reynolds' *Discourses*, 1769-90. C.f. Reynolds, J., op cit.
80 Piper, J., *British Romantic Artists*, London, 1942, p.8. C.f. also Cazamian, L., op cit, p.77 - already referred to in note 32.

thus giving Neoclassicism in England a reactionary bias, but there is no doubt that it did contribute positively to the development of English art and to the increased status of native artists.

In an interesting comparison of the introduction of Neoclassic portraiture to the realm of ceramics, in the work of Wedgewood and Serves, S. Taylor demonstrates the different ideological tendencies at work (81). Taylor records that Royal commissions for paintings and sculpture increased throughout the eighteenth century in France, including a growing interest in portrait busts of great men of the past. Official taste finds its way into Serves' porcelain, in a form that contrasts with the parallel series of portrait busts undertaken by Wedgewood in England. Serves' *Figures des Grand Hommes* had clear links with the Neoclassical movement, but served conservative patriotic ends. As a series of busts, it excluded all traces of French eighteenth century philosophy and English empiricism (82). In contrast, Wedgewood's *Heads of Illustrious Moderns, from Chaucer to the Present Time*, contained a wide selection of seventeenth and eighteenth century figures from French Classical culture. While Wedgewood's series was:

> ... a mirror held up to modern science and philosophy, literature and society, (83)

the Serves' series was:

> ... a looking-glass reflecting an enhanced image of the nation in its prime. (84)

This shows that Neoclassicist art could be adapted for both conservative and radical purposes, for the purpose of state ideology or enlightenment.

For the artist Neoclassicism was associated with the opening of new possibilities in the nineteenth century. On the eve of the Modern era, as Pevsner points out, there were three types of artist (85): the master in

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81 Taylor, S., 'Artists and Philosophes as Mirrored by Serves and Wedgewood', Haskell, F., Levi, A., and Shackleton, R. (eds.), *The Artist and the Writer in France*, Oxford, 1974, pp.21-39.
82 ibid, p.33.
83 ibid, p.34.
84 ibid, p.34.
85 Pevsner, N., *Academies of Art, Past and Present*, Cambridge, 1940, p.139.

his workshop, still within a guild system of occupational control (Italy, Flanders, England, Germany); the academician (France); and the artist working for a market economy (Holland). Through the eighteenth century, accompanying the emergence of Neoclassical theory, there was a rapid development of academies of art throughout Europe (86). The guild system gave way to market and academy. Pevsner suggests that these provide the fundamental polarity determining artistic attitudes to the present (87). But the modern conflict is between artistic freedom and academic rule, not academy and market *per se*. The academic system flourished in a developing market economy for art, it provided a secure status for its members, and offered itself as arbiter of taste. What the academy could not accommodate was change, and this was at the core of the emerging Modernist aesthetic. Nor could it accommodate the growing numbers of artists fom all social classes. Nonetheless, the academies played an important part in the attribution of moral and cultural values to the art object, and the establishment of a high art tradition. In the eighteenth century, art collecting became fashionable for a growing public, the status of artists rose, and the demand for art saw the further development of the art market. Despite this, Gay argues that the artist:

> ... had to be dragged into the market place of modernity. (88)

Artists were reluctant to give up their new-found academic security, and to an extent the artist came to refuse the opportunities of the market, insisting on artistic freedom. Neoclassical theory played an important role in raising the status of the artist, who could now begin to claim an intellectual standing alongside the philosopher and poet, a trend that was completed by the Romantic movement in Germany and the Revolution in France (89). It was the development of a Modern artistic consciousness, a consciousness that the artist had a leading role to play in the shaping of cultural and, by extension, social life, that evolved out of the eighteenth century, taking the transitional channels of Neoclassicism and Romanticism towards Modernity.

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86 C.f. discussion in ibid, pp.131-3.
87 ibid, p.139.
88 Gay, P., op cit, vol.II, p.228.
89 Malcolm Easton has argued that the French revolution was a turning point for the artist, whose position outside of a small group of artists patronised by the court and the rich, and those who gained entry to the Academy, had remained little better than that of the artisan. Preparation for the change in status began in the mid eighteenth century: 'the academy now urged [the artist] to be conscious of a mission in life, ' and this was supported by the encyclopédistes outside the academy. C.f. Easton, M., *Artists and Writers in Paris, The Bohemian Idea, 1803-1867*, London, 1964, pp.1-7.

ROMANTICISM

Classical and Romantic art are often set in opposition, as though they represented conflicting, yet autonomous, socio-psychological realities. Historically, this opposition takes the form of the identification of a Romantic epoch in the history of style, Romanticism rising triumphant from its battle with Neoclassicism during the second half of the eighteenth century. Ahistorically, the contest is viewed as fought in every generation, corresponding to a psychological tension within the individual and society as a whole, becoming manifest in the sentiment of the age exemplified in the concrete cultural product. Jacques Barzun has formulated the distinction between 'Romanticist', referring to the art-historical movement, and 'Romantic', denoting characteristic traits to be found within human beings throughout history (90). Kenneth Clark also draws attention to the ahistoric nature of this opposition, between the appeal to the emotions and the intellect, a dualism that:

> ... often exists within the same work; the same artist. (91)

This ahistorical conception of the Romantic-Classic duality, like its historical counterpart, tends to lead to an oversimplification of reality. The situation is more confused than this oppositional model would suggest. Within the totality of the social and intellectual configuration that is European society in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Neoclassic and Romantic movements prove to be malleable and multi-faceted. As Geraldine Pelles remarks:

> Viewed as a mirror of the prevailing mood, Romanticism and Neoclassicism seem to be trick mirrors and even reverse images of their times. If an art style reflected its epoch, French Neoclassicism would be the product of a quiet, well-ordered world, and Romanticism, the social and political turbulence. Actually, both styles incubated and grew in times of drastic social change. (92)

Romantic and Neoclassic art - and it is not always possible to draw a clear distinction between styles - originate at the same historical moment, marking the close of the Classical tradition and the birth of the Modern. In their oppositional traits, as in those that are shared, there

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90 Barzun, J., *Classic, Romantic and Modern*, London, 1961, pp.1-17.
91 Clark, K., *The Romantic Rebellion*, London, 1973, p.19.
92 Pelles, G., *Art, Artists and Society: Origins of a Modern Dilemma*, Englewood Cliffs, 1963, p.151.

is a unity emerging at a higher level to form a new cultural canopy. Such oppositional categories as reason and feeling, form and content, finite and infinite, are universally present, but in the second half of the eighteenth century they find a social and intellectual climate that sets a new agenda for artistic practice, transforming old conflicts and unities.

Only a briefest of introductions to Romanticism is intended at this point; a closer analysis of the Modern movements will follow in the next chapter. Attempts to provide a definition of the Romantic have faltered amidst the diversity of content and stylistic elements to be found in the art of the period. Lovejoy, after giving a summary of the attempts at definition undertaken by art historians in the century up to 1924, concluded:

> The word 'romantic' has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing. It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign. (93)

Focusing on the geographical and historical divisions within Romanticism, Lovejoy argued that:

> When a Romanticism has been analysed into the distinct 'strains' or ideas which compose it, the true philosophic affinities and the eventual practical influence in life and art of these several strains will usually be found to be exceedingly diverse and often conflicting. (94)

Over half a century has elapsed since Lovejoy wrote these words, but very little progress towards a delineation of the Romantic has been made in that time. Lilian Furst's recent review of the literature concludes in similar vein to Lovejoy, but draws sustenance for that very search for understanding of the Romantic phenomenon, that seems to be halted by its confrontation with diversity, in the richness of a movement that in essence was an opening of doors in all directions:

> ... [a] searching of every kind. (95)

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93 Lovejoy, A.O., 'On the Discrimination of Romanticism', first pub. 1924, Abrams, M.H., *English Romantic Poets*, New York, 1975, p.6.
94 ibid, p.22.
95 Furst, L., *Romanticism*, London, 1979, p.62. This book provides a summary of approaches to the definition of Romanticism.

Romanticism is a movement that, by its very nature, escapes clearly defined boundaries. It is a movement in which art tends towards the abandonment of all rules, seeing in the changing reality it seeks to represent no foundations on which to anchor art in a timeless spatial order. This is where it is the counterpart of Neoclassicism, which also concerns itself with change but seeks to control the historical process by imposing order, an order that is no longer the timeless order of Classical art, but order derived in time. In both movements artists are attempting to carve a style out of a reality that offers itself to cognition as processual.

Lovejoy returned to the consideration of a categorisation of Romantic art in his article of 1941, 'The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas' (96). He offered a structural classification based on three criteria to be found at the root of Romantic art; organicism, dynamism and diversitarianism. As Peckham has noted (97), these criteria demonstrate a fundamental shift in European thought, that takes place during the second half of the eighteenth century, a shift that Lovejoy had already argued in 'The Great Chain of Being' (98). It does indeed make sense to define Romanticism in terms of this shift in the intellectual climate of Europe, a shift from a philosophy of being to one of becoming. Lovejoy viewed the three criteria of Romantic art as independent and often conflicting, but, as Peckham argues,they may be seen as:

> ... related and derived from the same basic root metaphor, the organic metaphor of the structure of the universe. (99)

However, the organic metaphor should not be taken as the only metaphor suitable for the depiction of the Modern world; process can be other than organic in kind, and it is here that Peckham's analysis falters. Peckham views those individuals who display a conception of dynamic organicism in their work as 'Positive Romantics', but he acknowledges that within the Romantic period can be found individuals who do not attain this. These, instead, display elements of 'Negative Romanticism'; the poet Byron, who:

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96 Lovejoy, A.O., 'The Meaning of Romanticism for the History of Ideas', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, no.II, 1941, pp.237-78.
97 Peckham, M., 'Towards a Theory of Romanticism', first pub. 1951, Kumar, S.K. (ed.), *British Romantic Poets: Recent Evaluations*, London, 1968, pp.1-21.
98 Lovejoy, A.O., *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of Ideas*, Cambridge, Mass., 1936.
99 Peckham, M., op cit, p.9.

> ... has left static mechanism but has not yet arrived at a reintegration of his thought and art in terms of dynamic organism, (100)

is a case cited. By this devise Peckham seeks to explain exceptions to the rule, but in doing so he undermines his own analysis, this being further aided by his assertion that the history of culture, since the turn of the eighteenth century, can be seen as a struggle between positive and negative Romanticism, complicated by the presence of static mechanistic thought, turning cultural history into a three-cornered contest. If this were so, the shift in thought would not be so radical as he, following Lovejoy, suggests, and certainly not as all-encompassing as Foucault's archaeology seems to reveal.

Clearly, the key to an understanding of Romanticism lies in an analysis of the transformation taking place in European thought. Only after such consideration is it possible to turn to the particulars of Romantic style and an understanding of the changing role of art and artist in society. The background that has been presented in this chapter has to some extent achieved this, but now it is time to present a model that demonstrates the changed intellectual order, specifically as it relates to the structure of aesthetic theorisation in the Modern period, a model that shall be developed further in the following chapter.

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100 ibid, p.12.

TOWARDS THE STRUCTURE OF MODERN AESTHETIC THEORY

The transformations taking place in European thought and society during the period of Enlightenment had a profound effect on aesthetic theory and artistic practice. The transcendental and empirical ideals, established as the possible objects of artistic endeavour during the Renaissance, were gradually transmuted until they were ready to make their final leap and metamorphose as components in the Modern structure of aesthetics. The erosion of belief in a timeless and universal order underpinning the apparent flux of everyday experience, or at the least the impossibility of knowing other than a contingent reality, showed itself in the adoption of a critical historicism that brought epistemological concerns to the fore in all areas of human enquiry, transforming the possibilities open to artistic theory and practice. Art shed its mimetic function and took upon itself a more critical and creative role, capable of transforming individual and society, playing an active part in bringing about a new order. Creativity came to mean creation in the Judeao-Christian sense, rather than the classically inspired notion of a recombining of existing elements into a new form. To be 'expressive' took on a new meaning also. In Classical art theory expression was a component in the work of art, a means to the portrayal of the ideal, whether expression was kept to a minimum, as in early Renaissance works, or heightened, in the manner of the Baroque. The Modern aesthetic saw expression in terms of 'being expressive', the work of art now being 'expressive of' something, and as part of the thing expressed. The act of production itself takes on an expressive role - aesthetic object, artist and the art object are united in the expressive act. This was the break with tradition forced by the Romantics and forming a major component of Modern aesthetics.

We shall return to the concepts of creativity and expression in detail in the following chapter. Here I wish to concentrate on the nature and formation of the Modern structure of aesthetics, a structure that gives meaning to these and other key concepts. Through discussion of the aesthetic theories of Kant and Hegel, I shall attempt to show how the new aesthetic is both a development of, and a radical departure from, the Classical tradition, and how indebted the Modern era is to Enlightenment belief in the essential freedom of the individual human will.

The major change that separates Classical aesthetics from Modern aesthetics is the shift from a conception of the aesthetic object as timeless and universal, to its conception as processual and particular. The 'profound historicity' that Foucault identifies as penetrating all areas of Modern life is nowhere more radically apparent than in the sphere of fine art practice. Hauser has used the phrase:

> ... the hermeneutic art of Romanticism. (101)

Karl Kroeber is getting at the heart of the matter when he writes of Romanticism:

> ... the primary thrust of Romantic art was towards neither apocalypse nor transcendence but towards the representation of reality as historical process. (102)

It was a basic assumption of Enlightenment that a universal order existed, capable of disclosure. The critical stance taken by Enlightenment theorists towards dogma and repressive forms of government was to enable removal of the obstacles in the way of Enlightenment. In Kant's words:

> ... Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. (103)

This 'emergence', however, led to uncertainty, to a recognition that reality, as far as Man could know it, was contingent and a product of an active mind. Man in his maturity was not to inherit the pure light of reason, but to confront the abyss of nihilism. Reality, in the Modern period, is always in the process of becoming; Neoclassicism and Romanticism jointly provided the foundation for the acceptance of an aesthetics of process in the Modern era.

Just as the Classical tradition of art had two conceptions of the ideal, so the Modern period has its two forms of the aesthetic of process. Process, reality becoming, can be conceived of in two ways: either reality is the interplay of surface phenomena, a constant flux of events, perceptions, cognitions, what I shall term 'experientalist'; or reality is

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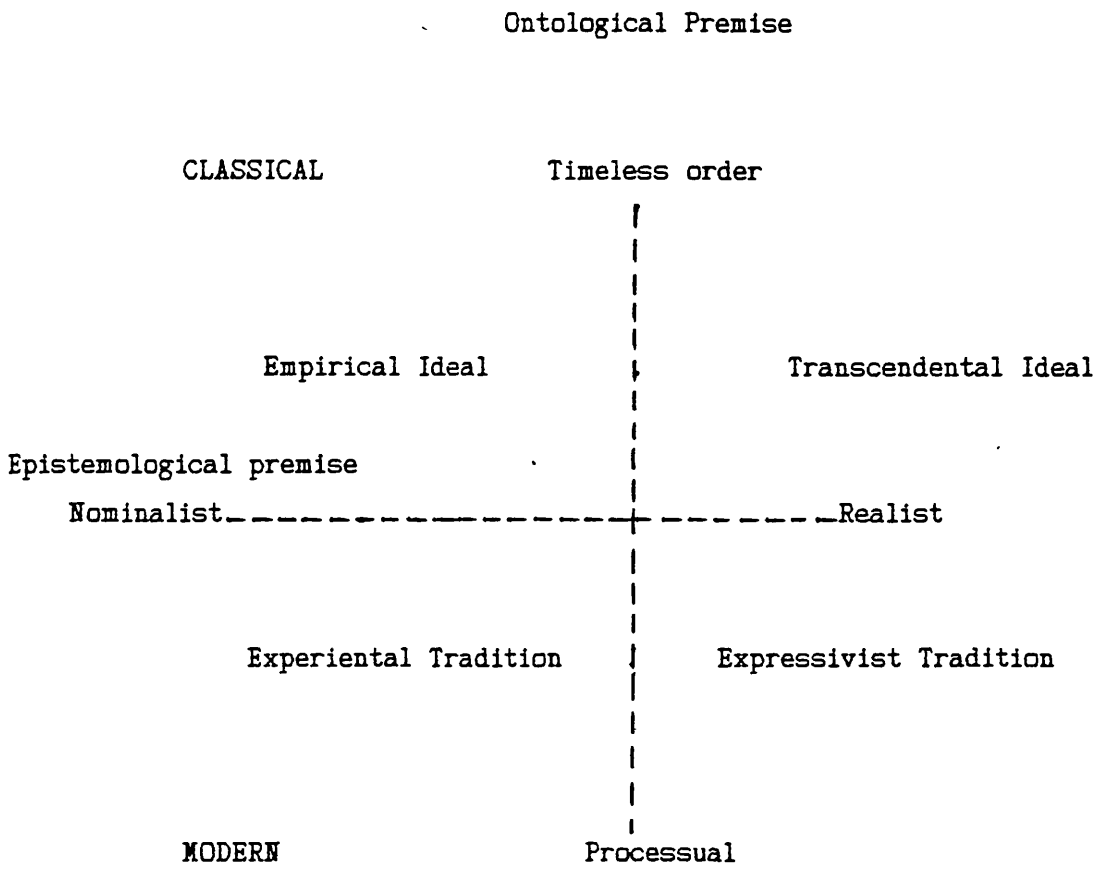
101 Hauser, A., op cit, vol.II, p.659.
102 Kroeber, K., 'Romantic Historicism: The Temporal Sublime', Kroeber, K. and Walling, W. (eds.), *Images of Romanticism*, New Haven, 1978, p.149.
103 Kant, I., 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?', first pub. 1784, Reiss, H. (ed.), *Kant's Political Writings*, Cambridge, 1977, p.54.

the expression of an organic subjectivity in phenomenal form, what I shall term the 'expressivist' aesthetic. Diagrammatically, the structural basis of aesthetic theory and artistic practice since the Renaissance, and thus of the history of the fine art tradition, looks like this:



An unravelling of the experiental and expressivist traditions in Modern art will be the task of the next chapter. What follows is an analysis of the transition to the Modern period in the aesthetic theories of Kant and Hegel.

Kant, like earlier Enlightenment theorists, sought to establish a metaphysical system that recognised Man's essential freedom, whilst proclaiming the presence of objective laws of nature. He constituted Man and the object of the natural world as inhabiting two realms: the neumenal and the phenomenal. The objects of the phenomenal realm are the product of Man's consciousness as it experiences the world, a consciousness largely formed in conformity to *a priori* categories that

are the condition of knowledge (in Kant's terms transcendental), and constitutive of reality at one and the same time. We think 'things' into existence even in the act of experiencing. What we possess *a priori* is the capacity to do this, and to do it in more or less defined ways. What Man finds in nature is:

> [an] endless multiplicity of empirical laws which are contingent as far as our insight goes, (104)

but we have to assume the existence of universal laws of nature. Kant struggles with the relationship between Man's conscious being and the objective world of nature, of which Man is also a part. There is a reality that is constant, not subject to the flux of time and space, but it can only be approached through such categories as time and space, by means of which consciousness locates things in the phenomenal realm. Things have both an objective and a subjective existence, although consciousness cannot grasp a thing objectively; by definition any object of consciousness is subjectively present, only made into an objectivity by setting up a concept of the thing encountered. Kant here provides a modern phenomenological critique of the possibility of objective knowledge, though he does not find intersubjectivity an issue (105), maintaining that the categories of conscious experience are transcendental (necessary and universal). Nonetheless, with Kant, reality becomes defined as process, as interactive, as far as the experiencing subject is and can be concerned.

Awareness of the world, which is necessarily constitutive awareness, comes from the formation and application of concepts, but also from intuition. We can gain an 'idea' of the things in nature through the application of concepts formed by reason - rational ideas. We can also gain insight into things by intuition, giving an important role to the imagination - aesthetic ideas.

> In a word, the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination, annexed to a given concept, with which, in the free employment of imagination, such a multiplicity of partial representations are bound up, that no expression indicating a definite concept can be found for it - one which on that account

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104 Kant, I., 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgement', Kant, I., *The Critique of Judgement*, first pub. 1790, trans. Meredith, J.C., Oxford, 1978, p.23.
105 ibid, p.50.

> allows a concept to be supplemented in thought by much that is undefineable in words, and the feeling of which quickens the cognitive faculties, and with language, as a mere thing of the letter, binds up the spirit (soul) also. (106)

The limits of reason and conceptual cognition are here acknowledged, the notion of a pure intuitive experience and its validity as a form of awareness recognised. Aesthetic experience is no longer subject to reason, but now becomes a partner, establishing the arts/science divide of the Modern period.

In our relation to the thing that is the object of our consciousness, we become aware of an aesthetic experience through our feelings of pleasure or displeasure, on which we base our aesthetic judgement of the thing. This contrasts with teleological judgement based on understanding and reason (107). Aesthetic experience is essentially subjective, although not personal, while teleological judgement approaches objective statement. For an aesthetic judgement to be valid it has to be a 'disinterested' judgement - pleasure in a beautiful scene or painting has to arise from the interaction, not as a result of applying a rule. Although the rule is nonetheless present intuitively, it could never be encompassed by concepts and therefore must arise anew on each occasion of beauty. In the notion of disinterestedness, is the basis of *l'art pour l'art*, when the aesthetic is firmly located in the field of artistic practice; but this is with art stripped of its moral and instructional function, a state that would be alien to Kant, whose views on art indicate a Neoclassical preference. All things in nature are experienced aesthetically and teleologically, including art, and are judged on both criteria. What Kant insists on is their separation to avoid confusion.

> [A] pure disinterested delight, (108)

alone should be determinant of our judgement of taste.

On the notion of an 'Ideal Beauty', so central to Classical theory, Kant states that:

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106 ibid, p.179.
107 ibid, p.34.
108 ibid, pp.43-4.

> ... there can be no objective rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be defined by means of concept. For every judgement from the source is aesthetic, i.e. its determining ground is the feeling of the subject, and not any concept of an Object. It is only throwing away labour to look for a principle of taste that affords a universal criterion of the beautiful by definite concepts; because what is sought is a thing impossible and inherently contradictory. (109)

If there is to be an ideal it cannot rest on concepts but must be found only in 'presentation', in the imagination. The true archetype of the beautiful exists as an idea that each individual must form in his own imagination. The ideal for which we search remains for Kant the Classical anthropomorphic measure of all things, Man as a moral being.

It has been objected that Kant's theory:

> ... intellectualises aesthetic feeling far too much, [that] aesthetic appreciation is not a sort of failed cognition, nor is the enjoyment of beauty a side-effect in the process of finding things out. (110)

This objection, however, is not valid, failing to take account of Kant's acknowledgement of the importance of intuition and the independent status given to aesthetic judgement. Aesthetic judgement is not failed cognition in Kant's theory, but involves the formation of an 'idea' that is set between objective reality and subjective experience; it is a meeting of subject and object at the phenomenal level in its own right, with, by definition, no possibility of being encapsulated by a concept. In certain situations, aesthetic judgement is not simply possible, it is necessary to our relationship with the world, providing an indication of the presence of the neumenal object.

The aesthetic experience of beauty, based on pleasure in correspondence between a non-conceptualised rule and the form of the object intuitively experienced, is only one part of the aesthetic domain. Kant views the sublime (111) as a further source of aesthetic pleasure.

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109 ibid, p.75.
110 Walker, R.C.S., *Kant*, London, 1978, p.146.
111 The sublime had much greater significance in Romantic thought. It opened up endless possibilities; it was a revolutionary experience, yet ultimately devoid of its religious significance, it leads to nihilism - what Schenk has termed, 'the lure of Nothingness': Schenk, H.G., *The Mind of the European Romantics*, Oxford, 1979, pp.58-65. In 1757, Burke had written of the sublime in empirical terms, as an experience of infinity, aroused by the vastness of the object presented to the senses, giving rise to awe, 'delightful horror': Burke, E., *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Boulton, J.T. (ed.), London, 1958. Although Burke cannot be described as a Romantic, there is a clear association with more [contd.]

> The beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of limitlessness, yet with a super-added thought of its totality. (112)

The sublime is not viewed as of very positive value, showing our limitations rather than the possibilities for understanding that are open at the recognition of beauty (113), a view conflicting with Romantic theory. It follows that Beauty, not the Sublime, is the subject of art. The Sublime shows us:

> ... what is absolutely great, (114)

but, like Beauty, it resides in our own minds as subjective experience; it is not a quality of any object. It is not the recognition given to the Sublime that makes Kant's theory here Modern, but the way that both the experience of Beauty and the Sublime are located in the subjectivity of the individual - to be more precise, in the act of awareness itself. This opens the way for experientialist art theories that come to concentrate attention on the moment of experience, in the interplay between the phenomenal object and the artist. In the Modern period, art comes to focus on ways of experiencing the world. The moment of experience for Kant is essentially cognitive and conscious, but not without feeling, a position that informs many of the art movements of the next century and a half, and a view of art that conflicts with expressivist theories.

As with Kant's philosophy and in the tradition of Enlightenment thought, Hegel's primary concern is with the rationalisation of human freedom. For Hegel, Man is essentially free, but his condition in the world does not conform to his essence. Man is alienated from his own nature. Hegel's contribution is to link freedom to the course of history, viewing the historical process as an unfolding of human and universal potentiality - consciousness and freedom. Art, like religion, politics, science, above all philosophy, had its part to play in this unfolding. Artistic and religious experience contribute to scientific activity a

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idealised versions of the sublime. Hogarth, writing at the same time, made no distinction between the sublime and beauty; Hogarth, W., *The Analysis of Beauty*, first pub. 1753, Menston, Yorks, 1971.
112 Kant, I., op cit, 1978, p.90.
113 ibid, p.92.
114 ibid, p.248.

totalising conception of nature, compensating for the objectification of nature involved in scientific activity; art and religion grasp form as well as content, the universal as well as the particular. Without this recognition of the subjectivity of nature, freedom is an impossible goal; but for freedom to be completely actualised, it must be gained through reason. So, in the hierarchy of experience, philosophy takes pride of place.

For Hegel, reality is constantly in process of becoming. Unlike Kant's conception, where process is initiated in the act of interpretation, a reality always open to reinterpretation and never actually knowable in its neumenal form, Hegel posits a historical process that is expressive of a constantly changing universal organic conception of process, where reality makes itself known to and in the subjectivity of the individual. Where Kant's philosophy goes through into the Modern period as the basis of phenomenological and interactionist thought, Hegel's philosophy underpins expressivist and realist conceptions of reality. Hegel's philosophy is much closer to the ideas of the Romantics than Kant's, although he would not grant to them the priestly role they sought, reserving this place for philosophers.

Taking art historically, it can be seen as itself a product of an unfolding subjectivity. The 'idea' is itself evolving into the particularised form of a concept. Art is organically transformed through three stages: Symbolic, Classic and Romantic (Romantic being for Hegel all Christian art) (115). Through art, the ideal is conveyed in sensuous form, and, at its most effective, balances the sensuous and particular with the ideal and universal. The necessity of art, like all areas of knowledge:

> ... has its origins in the fact that man is a *thinking* consciousness, i.e. that man draws out of himself and puts *before himself* what he is and what ever else is. Things in nature are only *immediate* and *single* while man as spirit *duplicates* himself, in that (i) he *is* as things in nature are, but (ii) he is

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115 Hegel discusses the stages of evaluation of art forms in his 'Aesthetics'. C.f. Hegel, G.W.F., *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. Knox, T.M., Oxford, 1975, Ch.3. For discussion of the way Hegel links art forms to historical and social conditions, and the possibilities open to the Romantic form, c.f. Rose, G., *Hegel Contra Sociology*, London, 1981, pp.121-48.

> just as much *for* himself; he sees himself, represents himself to himself, thinks, and only on the strength of this active placing himself before himself is he spirit. (116)

Consciousness of self is gained through theoretical thought, an act of inward consciousness, and through practical activity, as presentation in the world. Art is the highest form of this external realisation of self. Art has a special ability:

> ... the power to call forth from all the depths of consciousness a sound and an echo in the spirit. In this way the sensuous aspect of art is *spiritualised*, since the spirit appears in art as made *sensuous*. (117)

Art, unlike science, does not produce abstractions from the sensuously concrete, but retains the sensuously present with its bias towards the particular. There is close similarity with Kant's theory here, where the spirit or neumenal is glimpsed in a non-conceptual form. The difference is in Hegel's view of spirit as itself expressive; in a sense spirit announces its own presence independent of the individual will.

Art can be said to seek an 'ideal', but at the same time this ideal seeks its own expression. This ideal combines the concrete idea as external and the abstract idea as thought in the art object. It is both particular and universal at one and the same time. It is this that underpins its historical dimension:

> ... because the Idea is in this way a concrete unity, this unity can enter the art-consciousness only through the unfolding and then the reconciliation of the particularization of the Idea, and, through this development, artistic beauty acquires a *totality of particular stages and forms*. (118)

The forms of art, then, unfold historically to give different, qualitatively and quantitively, expressions of the ideal - Style.

Hegel identified three stages in this historical process having their origins in different ways of:

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116 ibid, p.31.
117 ibid, p.39.
118 ibid, p.75.

> ... grasping the Idea as content, whereby a difference in the configuration in which the Idea appears is conditioned. (119)

Whereas, the Symbolic form is:

> ... a mere search for portrayal, (120)

the Classical affords:

> ... the production and vision of the completed Ideal and to present it as actualised in fact. (121)

The Ideal in the Classical phase is actualised in human form and lacks the full spirituality that it can only find in abstraction. Romantic art recognises this need for abstraction and the consequent dis-unity of the sensuous and spiritual. During this phase spirit represents itself as:

> ... infinite subjectivity [and cannot adequately be] moulded into a bodily existence. (122)

But, just because Romantic art cannot achieve the unity expressed in Classical art, this does not detract from the importance of its function.

> It has won a content which goes beyond and above the Classical form of art and its mode of expression. (123)

Art's role changes with the development of spirit, its modes of expression vary, and the form of art best suited to the purpose changes. Thus, with Romantic art, painting, music and poetry come into their own.

In the process of unfolding, art is the vehicle of spirit, a means of expression of subjectivity, and it is also a way of knowing, for absolute spirit and for individual consciousness. Expression, in its fullest sense, is not simply an out-pouring; it is a process of creation and discovery.

> ... what the particular arts realise in individual works of art is, according to

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119 ibid, p.75.
120 ibid, p.76.
121 ibid, p.77.
122 ibid, p.79.
123 ibid, p.79. As Charles Taylor points out, art's gains, its ability to portray the contingent, are countered by its ultimate subservience to philosophical knowledge; it seems doomed to lose all ground to reason. Yet Hegel does not voice this pessimism in his *Aesthetics*. C.f. Taylor, C., *Hegel*, Cambridge, 1977, p.479.

> the Concept of art, only the universal forms of the self-unfolding Idea of beauty. It is as the external actualization of this Idea that the wide Pantheon of art is rising. (124)

To this extent it is a process outside of Man's control, yet it is dependent upon Man as a carrier and interpreter, indeed, as an individual creative subjectivity in his own right. The ability to create art is dependent upon 'an inborn, higher talent', which is 'indispensable', a 'natural gift' that few men possess. This Hegel contrasts with the universal capacity to be scientific - art requires genius (125). Because, for Hegel, the spirit is ultimately rational, so the artist starts from the rational and:

> ... works it out, as his very own creation, by giving it an external form. (126)

This is genius at work, and it is a genius that is, in part, 'inborn' (127).

In Kant's aesthetic theory the experiental strand of Modernist aesthetics finds its partial expression, while in Hegel's aesthetic we find the seeds of expressivist theory; both aesthetic theories remain grounded in philosophical rational systems. Each sought to give to reason a privileged status in the acquisition of knowledge. In both philosophical systems, consciousness of reality had come to be associated with process, had been found to be subject to historical movement and flux. For Kant, reality was constituted in the act of knowing, the application of reason could only produce an interpretation or semblance of neumenal reality, a phenomenal object. While for Hegel, reality was an expression of an unconscious will upon which consciousness and reason itself must be seen to depend. Modern aesthetics and art practice have been grappling with the problem of theorising and depicting process in both these inherited forms. In the aesthetics of these two philosophers there is the possibility of art's autonomy; freed from reason, artistic practice claims access to a form of knowledge and a reality that is its own province. In this, the arts/science divide is constituted. Add to this the link that

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124 ibid, p.90.
125 ibid, pp.281-288. Hegel argues that 'creative activity' involves the gift and the sense for grasping reality and its configurations.
126 ibid, p.283.
127 ibid, p.284.

Neoclassicism had forged between artistic practice and freedom, and the Romantic notion of artistic sensibility and gemnius, and we begin to see the horizon opening for art in the Modern age.

CHAPTER VI

MODERNITY

REALITY AS PROCESS

In the Classical tradition the objective presence of an absolute reality was taken for granted, grounded in a conception of a timeless order, ideal and/or material in form. The objects of sense experience, like the organs of sense perception themselves, passed into and out of existence independent of the individual will. The conceptual universe was anthropocentric in its microcosmic-macrocosmic similitude, and in this lay the possibility of knowledge. Man could know the world because he was of the world, yet this knowledge was only of ephemeral things. The shifting Classical-Christian synthesis, full of tensions, not the least of which was that between the power of reason and will, that prevailed throughout the period covered in the previous three chapters, enabled a view of the experiential world of nature as a distorted symbolic universe. The appearance of the natural world was one of constant flux, but symbolised by the passing and return of the seasons there was a rhythm and order to be found, and beyond this a meaningful totality, ultimate meaning imposing itself on and through nature. The experience of process, the condition of Man in the world of nature, was a real but transitory experience. Like the sand in an hour-glass time had its own duration. Time reaped a harvest of the ephemeral; transformation and decay were Man's condition on earth.

> Fly envious Time, till thou run out thy race,
> Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,
> Whose speed is but the heavy Plummets pace;
> And glut thy self with what thy womb devours,
> Which is no more than what is false and vain,
> And meerly mortal dross;
> So little is our loss,
> So little is thy gain. (1)

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1 Extract from John Milton's poem, 'On Time', first pub. 1645, reproduced in Gardner, H., (ed.), *The Metaphysical Poets*, Harmondsworth, 1957, pp.174-5.

Earth may be a battleground for the soul, for that which is beyond the confines of time, but ultimately it would transcend its condition:

> Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee O Time. (2)

When Descartes established the divide between subject and object he turned the path of philosophical speculation in the direction of epistemological enquiry; the very possibility of knowledge was brought into doubt by a conception of a subjectivity set apart from the world of nature. And yet Descartes, and the Enlightenment philosophers that followed him, did not doubt the presence of an objective timeless order, a neumenal reality sustaining the realm of phenomenal existence (to use Kant's terminology). When we apply the term 'Classical' to the art historical period stretching back from the last decades of the eighteenth century to the early Renaissance, and, beyond this, to its philosophical roots in the Classical Greek world, it is the pervasiveness of an ontological conception of a phenomenal world of experience, subject to change, informed by a timeless neumenal order, that provides the canopy for the Classical cultural formation. Modernity begins with the break from this primacy of structure over process, a transmutation that again would provide the grounds for the unity of subject and object, reconstituting the epistemological problem on a new level.

Shopenhauer clearly identified this central unifying characteristic in the tradition of European philosophy, seeing his own inversion of the relationship between structure and process as a turning point in this tradition. Of the philosophical systems of Plato and Kant, the former the father of the Classical tradition and the other considered by Shopenhauer to be the greatest of the 'Moderns', Shopenhauer writes:

> ... they are like two entirely different paths leading to one goal. (3)

And he continues:

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2 ibid.
3 Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Idea*, vol.I, trans, Haldaine, R.B. and Kemp, J., London, 1909, vol.I, p.170.

> This can be made clear in a few words. What Kant says is in essence as follows: 'Time space and causality are not determinations of the thing-in-itself, but belong only to its phenomenon, since they are nothing but forms of our knowledge. Now as all plurality and all arising and passing away are possible only through space, time and causality, it follows that they too adhere only to the phenomenon, and by no means to the thing-in-itself. But since our knowledge is conditioned by these forms, the whole of experience is only knowledge of the phenomenon, not of the thing-in-itself; hence also its laws cannot be made valid for the thing-in-itself. What has been said extends even to our own ego, and we know it only as phenomenon, not according to what it may be in itself.' This is the meaning and content of Kant's teaching in the important respect that we have considered. Now Plato says: 'The things of this world, perceived by our senses, have no true being at all; they are always becoming, but they never are. They have only a relative being; they are together only in and through their relation to one another; hence their whole existence can just as well be called a non-being. Consequently, they are likewise not objects of a real knowledge, for there can be such a knowledge only of what exists in and for itself, and always in the same way. On the contrary, they are only the object of an opinion or way of thinking, brought about by sensation. As long as we are confined to their perception, we are like persons sitting in a dark cave, and bound so fast that they cannot even turn their heads. They see nothing but the shadowy outlines of actual things that are led between them and a fire that burns behind them; and by the light of this fire these shadows appear on the wall in front of them. Even of themselves and of one another they see only the shadows on this wall. Their wisdom would consist in predicting the sequence of those shadows learned from experience. On the other hand, only the real archetypes of those shadowy outlines, the external Ideas, the original forms of all things, can be described as truly existing, since they always are but never become and never pass away. No plurality belongs to them; for each by its nature is only one, since it is the archetype itself, of which all the particular, transitory things of the same kind and name are copies or shadows. Also no coming into existence and no passing away belong to them, for they are truly being or existing , but are never becoming or vanishing like their fleeting copies....' This is Plato's teaching. It is obvious and needs no further demonstration, that the inner meaning of both doctrines is wholly the same; that both declare the visible world to be a phenomenon which in itself is void and empty, and which has meaning and borrowed reality only through the thing that expresses itself in it (the thing-in-itself in the one case and the Idea in the other). (4)

Counterposed to this conception of a phenomenal realm of experience infused with meaning in the manner of an icon signifying a static neumenal reality that it can only represent imperfectly and indirectly, where reality has to be sought beyond appearances, Shopenhauer offers a conception of experience as reality. He rejects the division between object and subject on the grounds that these are conceptual categories imposed on the world of experience as a means to an end, that of knowledge; the world is experience and our conceptualisation of it is reliant upon sense reception.

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4 ibid, vol.I, pp.171-2.

> ... we perceive things in the relation of externality, and yet in every respect immediately, but have not within us an idea of the things that lie outside us, different from these things. (5)

Because we can never conceptually grasp the particular, as far as our knowledge of the world is concerned, it is composed of our ideas of it.

> The world is my idea, (6)

my representation. It is not a shadow of some neumenal object, it is a construction of the experiencing self, and, at a universal level, the product of an unfolding subjectivity or will (to which we shall return). Even if we look towards our own bodies for that very self that experiences, we can only grasp self as experience. Any essential, neumenal self, escapes our attention; all we obtain is representation through experience, a conceptualisation of self based on reflection on representations of inner experience. The self cannot become an object to itself. Likewise, we cannot obtain knowledge of any neumenal object, for we are trapped in a world composed of our own representations. If there is a God, a reality of forms or material objects, we can never know it. It follows that our attention has to focus on experience, for this is the only reality we can know - experience being primarily sensual, giving rise to conceptualisation of outer and inner experience.

Shopenhauer argues that we have unmediated contact with our own bodies, we do not consciously have to interpret signals that are passed along nerve fibre to the brain to experience the activity of the body. We respond 'unconsciously' to these messages.

> For consciousness is conditioned by the intellect, and the intellect is a mere accident of being. (7)

The body that we identify as our own is known through external sense perception and through inner feeling. What we know through inner experience is that in the activity that our body enters into there is evidence of 'will'. Shopenhauer does not intend by will that we understand all activity as intentional. To give to an activity intention,

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5 ibid, vol.II, p.188.
6 ibid, vol.I, p.3.
7 ibid, vol.II, p.411.

is to say that 'A' is the cause of 'B' (where A is the intention and B the activity), which is to subject it to our understanding, as we locate it by the categories of cause, time and space.

> ... between the act of will and the bodily action there is no causal connection whatever; on the contrary, the two are directly one and the same thing perceived in a double way, namely in self-consciousness or the inner sense as an act of will, and simultaneously in external-brain perception as bodily action. (8)

From this inner sense of will, Schopenhauer argues, other bodies, and other objects in the world, for our bodies are objects of experience like all phenomena, possess will. It can be said, then, that not only is the world my idea, but also:

> ... the world is my will. (9)

The concept of will that is being introduced here is obviously very different from any in common usage. Magee offers a term that may take us close to Shopenhauer's meaning, without the confusion that surrounds the concept will, that of 'energy' (10). That which I identify as the activity of will in my own body is also present in all phenomena and can be seen as the phenomenal form of the neumenal - we get closer to the neumenum in the experience of will, but we can still never know it, for will cannot be adequately presented conceptually.

Magee's summary of Schopenhauer's conception of the will is worth quoting at length here.

> What Shopenhauer is saying is that this energy is itself what is ultimate in phenomena.....and furthermore, that what is indicated by our knowledge of the one material object in the universe that we know from the inside is that all material objects, in their inner nature, are primitive, blind, unconscious force inaccessible to knowledge. Everything that appears to our organs of sense and intellect as matter in motion is, in its unknowable inner nature, this unconscious force - they and it are the same thing manifested in different ways, just as my physical movement and my act of will are the same thing manifested in different ways. The whole universe is the objectification of this force. It constitutes gravity, which is everywhere, and is everywhere the same; it forms the chicken in the egg, and the child in the womb; it pushes up the plants; it sweeps along the winds and the tides and the currents; it crashes through the cataracts; it is the go in the running animal, the pull of magnetism, the

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8 Schopenhauer, A., *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, trans. Payne, E.F.J., Illinois, 1974, pp.114-5.
9 Schopenhauer, A., op cit, 1909, vol.I, p.5.
10 Magee, B., *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, Oxford, 1983, pp.138-9.

> attraction of electricity, the energy of thought. All these are phenomenal manifestations of a single underlying drive which ultimately is undifferentiated. (11)

All that is active is the manifestation of the will (12).

If the will gives rise to all that is active, how then do we explain the presence of structure, shown by the existence of scientific laws of nature, the existence of species, as well as of individual human form? How do we explain this and what status have these structural elements? Shopenhauer adopts and modifies Plato's conception of the Idea, transforming it by locating ideas firmly in the phenomenal realm. Like Plato's Ideas, these give form to reality, but are themselves wholly phenomenal. They also are manifestations of the will in the phenomenal world. The will gives rise to form and motion, sustains and transforms being. The ultimate reality is will.

There is nothing contradictory in the notion of form being sustained by or derivative of energy, as modern science contests. Magee discerns that Schopenhauer's philosophy is 'modern' (13), it is compatible with the view of reality held by modern science (14),and it has had a direct impact on Modernist art and literature, as well as on the direction of philosophical speculation. I do not intend to follow through with a discussion of this line of influence here (15), but wish to contend that Shopenhauer is representative, in an exemplary manner, of the Modernist thematics. In Schopenhauer's philosophical system, reality is presented as process in as complete a way as would seem to be structurally possible. He adds to the Kantian conception of reality as a cognitive construct an expressive non-rational component, that, despite his rejection of Hegel, has much in common with Hegel's *Geist*, providing a synthesis containing experientialist and expressivist dimensions.

Schopenhauer's view of the fine arts is that, like philosophy, they:

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11 ibid, p.139.
12 Schopenhauer uses the term 'will' in at least three different ways, and this can, and has, led to confusion and misinterpretation. C.f. discussion in ibid, pp.141-5.
13 ibid, p.154.
14 Erwin Schrodinger, to whom is attributed to discovery of quantum theory, acknowledged a debt to Schopenhauer's philosophy.
15 C.f. Magee, op cit, pp.262-393.

> ...work at bottom towards the solution of the problem of existence. (16)

But art is 'childish' in that it speaks the language of perception, not that of reflection; as such it deals with reality in a pure, uncontaminated by individual conceptions, manner.

> Every work of art accordingly really aims at showing us life and things as they are in truth, but not as directly discerned by everyone through the mist of objective and subjective contingencies. (17)

Although dealing with perceptions, art is not simply reproducing nature as seen; it is not to do with naturalism in this simplistic sense of the term, but seeks a heightened awareness of nature's forms. Art's aim is:

> ... the facilitating of the knowledge of the Ideas of the world (in the Platonic sense, the only one which I recognise for the word Idea). The Ideas however are essentially something perceptible, which therefore in its fuller determination, is inexhaustible. (18)

Art has nothing to do with the conception of the Ideas, for these are then formulated as words. The artist then has to avoid introducing his conceptions into the work of art, apart from necessary technical considerations, although these too must be kept to a minimum sufficient for the production of the object. Preferably, the work should be completed 'at a stroke' as with a sketch:

> ... the work which is completed in the inspiration of its first conception, and as it were unconsciously dashed off [has] the advantage of being purely the work of the ecstasy of the moment, the inspiration, the free movement of genius, without any admixture of intention and reflection. (19)

The will is not the object of artistic attention in Shopenhauer's theory, nor could it be, for it cannot be known in its neumenal reality. The artist is seeking the objectified Ideas that are the purest form of the phenomenal expression of the will. To achieve this the artist must free himself from the direct control of the will, i.e., from all consciousness of his own subjectivity as manifest in the intellect and through the emotions; this in Shopenhauer's aesthetic is the act of liberation, a

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16 Schopenhauer, A., op cit, 1909, vol.III, p.176.
17 ibid, p.177.
18 ibid, p.179.
19 ibid, p.181.

notion so central to Modernism. To approach the reality of Ideas, Shopenhauer advises that we enjoy a night of quiet sleep, rise and take a cold bath, aim at the increase of attention and susceptibility, but avoid the use of alcohol or opium, which can only be detrimental to our purpose. It is the sign of 'genius' that a man can perfect and bring to a pitch the energy of perception. The artist of genius does not tap the energy of the will directly but, rather, frees himself from its dictates, a notion that could perhaps best be expressed in the term sublimation as used by Freud (20). The normal man, asserts Schopenhauer, is dominated by will, the genius by intellect, but this does not effect the fact that the will is the source of the intellect (21). Again there is a direct parallel with Freud's conception of the ego as drawing its energy from the id.

As we have previously noted, and as the above clearly demonstrates, Shopenhauer's aesthetic contains elements of both experientialist and expressivist theory. But because he takes the position that the will can only be perceived indirectly through its manifestation as Ideas, he advocates an experientialist art, purified of the will in order to produce as objective a perception of nature's forms as is humanly possible. One can see that he would have approved of Cézanne's approach to nature whilst being critical of Van Gogh and Gauguin (22), all often acknowledged as founders of the Modern movement, even though they were working out their artistic response within an already established Moderist conopy. Schopenhauer advocates an 'aesthetic attitude' theory, with the artist standing outside of the intentional reality of the will, while:

> ... the normal man is sunk in the whirl and tumult of life. (23)

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20 Sublimation, for Freud, involved the substitution of a frustrated desire for a higher cultural goal, where energy is deflected into cultural and artistic pursuits, but the energy source remains unchanged. C.f. discussion in Hall, C.S., *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*, New York, 1979, pp.80-4. For the artist, sublimation involves fantasy construction, the shaping of the image in material form for others' pleasure, releasing his own and others' repressions and, thus, achieving a route back to reality. C.f. Freud, S., 'The Path to the Formation of Symptoms', Lecture XXIII, 'Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis', *The Complete Psychoanalytic Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol.VXVI, London, 1963.

21 Schopenhauer, A., op cit, 1909, vol.III, pp.138-66.

22 Cézanne sought to penetrate the appearance of nature, to part its formal components - the geometry of nature. There is an equivalence here with Schopenhauer's 'ideas', which could become the object of intentionality. Van Gogh and Gauguin took a more expressivist road, translating their subjectivity into the painting, but for Schopenhauer you cannot depict the 'will', you can only remain a slave to its dictates.

23 Schopenhauer, A., op cit, 1909, vol.III, p.163.

The aesthetic attitude theory is entirely compatible with experientialist aesthetics, indeed it is indispensable to it. It gives rise to a conception of the detached artist or artist as 'outsider', quite distinct from its counterpart in expressivist aesthetics where one withdraws from the world of phenomenal experience in order to search the depths of the force(s) that sustain it. In experientialist art the outsider is precisely this because he takes a dis-interested stance, even when in the midst of crowd (24), allowing a higher degree of objectivity in his work. Dylan Thomas, whose poem 'The Force that through the Green Fuse drives the Flower' (25) embodies the Schopenhaurian theory of the will, in his approach to art was anything but Schopenhaurian, attempting to allow the will to speak directly through his life and work. His aesthetic can only be described as expressivist (26). Dylan Thomas was an outsider in the sense that he sought withdrawal into his own, and through this universal, subjectivity.

It is not that Shopenhauer denies the importance of the will - how could he? - but art has to escape its control through sublimation. An intense awareness of the effects of the will as a disruptive force in the artist's personal life can be the source of that effort that is required in order to turn away from its dictates. The often quoted view of the artist as a melancholic personality, according to Shopenhauer, has some credence, precisely because adverse life situations, which may be the cause of melancholia, induce the artist to turn away from close involvement and to take a more objective stance. This objective stance allows the artist as genius to displace his intellectual energy onto the wider context of the world at large. This withdrawal from the milieau that is the activity of the will sharpens the artist's perception and leads to insights into the

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24 C.f. later discussion of Baudelaire's 'painter of modern life'. Baudelaire gives exceptional praise to Constantine Guys (1802-92), though he does not name him, as a 'man of the world', 'the man of the crowd', in whom 'curiosity has become a fatal irresistible passion': Baudelaire, C., 'The Painter of Modern Life', *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Mayne, J., New York, 1964, pp.6-7.

25 Thomas, D., 'The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower', in Thomas, D., *Miscellany One*, London, 1963, p.7.

26 Dylan Thomas writes: 'In my craft and sullen art / Exercised in the still night / When only the moon rages,' giving rise to an image of evocation, of spiritual union, a union that allows him to claim that he writes: 'For the lovers, their arms / Round the griefs of the ages,' 'In My Craft or Sullen Art', *Miscellany Two*, London, 1971, p.15. Thomas said of the poetical 'impulse' that it was, for him, 'the sudden and generally physical coming of energy to the constructional craftsman's ability', as part of answer to questions, published in *New Verse*, Oct. 1934, reproduced in Fitzgibbon, C., *The Life of Dylan Thomas*, London, 1965, p.162.

working of the will that are not possible whilst blindly acting out its dictates.

> The intellect of the normal man, strictly bound to the service of the Will, and therefore really occupied with the apprehension of motives, may be regarded as a complex system of wires, by means of which each of these puppets is set in motion in the theatre of the world. (27)

This image of 'normal man' may be distasteful; it is a variant of Rousseau's man in 'chains', Weber's 'Iron cage', Marx's 'alienated man', Marcuse's 'one-dimensional man'; it is man depicted in Chaplin's *Modern Times*, an image that recurs again and again in Modernist culture (28).

Modernist art has to be seen against this thematic of Man subjugated and art as liberatory potential. This potential was theorised by Friedrich Schiller in his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 1793-95 (29), where fine art is conceived as the indispensable instrument of freedom, a freedom gained by balancing the oppositional forces of sensation and reason, removing the one-sided determination of existence. Schiller recoils against what he sees as the effects of attempting to institute a universal order on moral principles gained from reason alone. Reason's dictates, when implimented, follow a logic of their own, heedless of the individual.

> Little by little the concrete life of the individual is destroyed in order that the abstract idea of the Whole may drag out its sorry existence, and the State remains a stranger to its citizens since at no point does it make contact with their feeling. (30)

It is Schiller's argument that the individual must be liberated as a precondition to the implementation of a universal moral order. This is art's function, and it is a liberation that can take place even whilst the individual is constrained by a repressive state (31). Liberation involves

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27 Schopenhauer, A., op cit, 1909, vol.III, pp.151-2.

28 This view of the world as deeply distorting of human potential is essentially Romantic. The image of alienated being has its origin in the 'Romantic agony', a psychological state that has its counterpart in social isolation and the impersonality of modern life, the apparent impossibility of being 'authentic'. On the Romantic agony, and its Modernist equivalent, c.f. Alvarez, A., *The Savage God; A Study of Suicide*, Harmondsworth, 1983, esp. pp.223-83.

29 Schiller, F., *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. and ed. Wilkinson, E.M. and Willoughby, L.A., Oxford, 1982.

30 ibid, p.37.

31 Art's function, for Schiller, is to liberate Man, a possibility even whilst the individual is constrained within a repressive state. This almost reverses Winckelmann's notion that art requires a free society for it to flourish; c.f. discussion in Ch.V. This idea of liberation is closer to that of Marcuse, where 'art represents the ultimate goal of all revolutions; the [contd.]

the balancing of the forces of sensation and reason in order to comprehend the totality through aesthetic contemplation. The artist is to be the teacher, to show, through his art, the way forward. Here is the notion of the avant-garde, where the aesthetic ideal leads to political change, not as it is to function later, for some artists, as a political ideal determining the aesthetic.

Only a sense of subjugation can lead to a premium being placed on freedom. We must note here that freedom in the modern sense is different from any previous use of the term. Freedom within the Classical tradition was freedom to live according to the laws of nature. This is why philosophers, from Classical Greece to the close of the Enlightenment, sought laws as guidelines to behaviour; as such there was no contradiction between the demand for freedom and conformity to social laws, so long as they could be demonstrated to be universal. The idea of individual freedom is distinctly Modern. The demands for the right of self expression, freedom to do as one likes, freedom to be different, these and all freedoms of the Modern epoch are based on a processual sense of reality: a reality in which expression is of the essence and all structures are continually faced with dissolution. The irreducible particularity of each individual is asserted against the conceptual and social tendency to structure reality. In such a climate art, rather than symbolising a collective identity through the structuring of reality in the work of art, expresses the uniqueness of things and events in the world. In Shopenhauer's terms, the 'Idea' that it seeks is that of particularised nature. In this search for freedom, Schopenhaur agrees with Schiller: art has a primary role to play, the artist through his work gives direction;

> ... flings his works of art far out on to the way in front (32)

of the culture that contains it. This raises the Modernist conception of the artist as member of the avant-garde, as embodying the essence of the 'new'; not that the new can ever retain its place, but rather must be constantly replaced by a another new as it itself is taken into the mainstream of culture.

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freedom and happiness of the individual', and it does so within a state of repression; Marcuse, H., *The Aesthetic Dimension*, London, 1979, p.69.

32 Schopenhauer, A., op cit, 1909, vol.III, p.152.

MODERN ART: EXPRESSIVIST AND EXPERIENTIALIST FORMS

In the previous chapter I said that we would return to Romanticism. It is now time to take a closer look at the works of art produced in this art historical period that has been constituted as the Romantic era, and to place them in the context of the Modernist aesthetic. It is my contention that the diversity of forms that have been grouped under this heading, mainly because they do not conform to the more easily designated Classical style of the consciously Neoclassical artists which was based on clear aesthetic premises, the 'style' often being viewed as in essence irrational, do indeed possess a unity. This unity stems from the Modernist aesthetic of process already outlined. It is a structural unity shared with all art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is not to deny that developments within this dominant aesthetic of Modernism have taken place, that artistic practice has displayed considerable scope for diversity and innovation, and, as I have tried to demonstrate in Chapter I, for fragmentation. The possibility of such diversity is built into this aesthetic which will not allow form to impose itself on content, nor content to present itself as form. The stylistic transformations that can be traced through the past two centuries of artististic production already proclaim their possibility in the art of the Romantic era. The direction taken by the transformations in style, although contained by the aesthetic of Modernism, has been subject to the dialectical interplay of social and psychological forces, giving rise to particular manifestations of the aesthetic in the concrete work of art (33). What I wish to explore here is the relationship between Romantic art and Modernist art in general, through the structural categories of expressivism and experientialism.

It is an emphasis on feeling, on sensibility, more than any other charateristic that is normally associated with the term Romantic, and this may lead us to think of Romantic art as essentially 'expressive'.

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33 The limits of artistic experience are determined by the aesthetic of Modernism, but this does not mean that a particular style, such as Cubism, can be understood purely in structural terms. It would be necessary to have recourse to all those levels of meaning indicated by Mannheim: c.f. Ch.II.

However, it is one thing to say that the artist or audience need to apply their sensibility to the perception of nature and the work of art; it is quite another thing to say that nature or the work of art is expressive. Nor is Romantic art necessarily irrational; sensibility and reason are not incompatible with each other. For Goethe (1749-1832) there was no contradiction between the two, the artist had to:

> ... penetrate into the depths of things as well as into the depths of his own soul.... to produce something spiritually organic, (34)

but, he also must,

> ... acquaint himself theoretically with inorganic bodies and with the general operations of Nature, particularly if, as in the case of sound and color, they are adaptable to the purposes of art... (35)

To rely solely on reason or on sensibility would be equally in error. This is also Schiller's contention. Goethe's first novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), clearly demonstrates what can happen when someone with the gift of sensibility is overtaken by feeling to the exclusion of reason (36). Werther suffered the fate that would be that of Rousseau's noble savage in a society where sensibility is subjugated under the rule of taste. It is not reason that is in error, it is the culture that advocates a rule governed universe to the exclusion of sensibility, that makes it almost impossible for man to communicate authentically with man. Werther could not live in a world that did not harmonise with the depths of his own spiritual being (37). Goethe was not adverse to rules if they helped to achieve the end in mind, and in all his writing tended to apply formulae that were seen to work, as in his novel *Elective Affinities* (1809), which is composed in the traditional German form of the 'Novelle' (38). In Goethe's oeuvre we see the impossibility of any clear-cut separation as the basis of style between reason and sensibility, or even between Neoclassic and Romantic.

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34 Goethe, J.W. von, *Introduction to the Propylaen*, first pub. 1798, orig. trans. Anon, Eliot, C.W. (ed.), *Prefaces and Prologues*, New York, 1910, reproduced in Eitner, L. (ed.), *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750-1850: Sources and Documents*, vol.II, p.41.
35 ibid, p.41.
36 C.f. Goethe, J.W. von, *The Sorrows of Young Werther and Selected Writings*, New York, 1962.
37 C.f. ibid, pp.131-53. Partly autobiographical, the novel represents Goethe's own experiences, but a fate that he himself avoided.
38 The 'novelle' has a strict economy of style, with the characters present purely as a function of the plot, hence, they are only given forenames or titles. The story is narrated by a character who is an invention, but does not appear. The settings for the various scenes have a symbolic function in relation to the plot. *Elective Affinities* differed only in being much longer than a traditional novelle.

Romanticism in its expressivist form is an attempt to portray a reality that embodies meaning - what I have termed in Chapter I 'absolute' meaning - as a dynamic organic whole, of which Man is both in and outside of nature. This is at root the dilemma confronted by what has come to be called 'nature-philosophy'. In painting this is clearly presented in the work of the German painter Casper David Friedrich (1774-1840). Friedrich's land and seascapes show nature pervasive with spiritual depth, creating an atmosphere of contemplative stillness, the eye always drawn into the distance, the infinite horizon. Man and his creations are always placed in the foreground, sharply delineated in contrast to the chiaroscuro treatment of the sovereign scene, set apart from nature, or miniaturised in significance compared with the towering forms of the natural order, forms that spire skyward in an act of devotion. But though Man may be objectively apart from nature, subjectively he is capable of being at one with the universe. Hence the contemplative mood of the figures in the pictures, usually looking into the scene and away from the observer outside the picture frame, inviting him also to gaze beyond his immediate reality, constructing an atmosphere and symbolism that pulls the spectator towards a comtemplative state as in *Monk by the Sea*, (1809) or *Mountain Landscape with Rainbow*, (1810). Perhaps the work that represents this nature philosophy most tellingly is not a painting of the expansiveness of nature but of a woman standing at a window (*Woman at a Window*, 1822). What we can see of the room is without decoration or furnishings of any kind, apart from two bottles and a glass set on a small tray on the window sill. A plainly dressed woman stands in the centre of the picture, leaning forward to gaze out of the window and away from the observer. The view is one of open sky, with tall trees across a river and a ship's mast dominating the foreground reaching into the blue expanse of sky. The top of the window is cut by thin horizontal and vertical frame lines, unmistakeably the symbol of the cross. The gulf between Man and nature is intensified. The empty room, like the human frame, holds the soul that seeks its union with the universal soul of nature, a presence that it can only glimpse through the open window and upon which contemplative attention is to be directed. The room is bare, as a symbol of the ephemeral nature of possessions, and perhaps the bottles and glass on the window sill are medicinal, a reminder of the frailty of our own body. This is Friedrich's own studio as shown in G. F. Kirsting's *Casper David Friedrich in his Studio* (1819),

where he sought that insight that would turn a sketch into a work of art (39).

Friedrich's is a religious art, but his God is a God of action. Like Faust, in Goethe's poem by that name, he sees creation as stemming not from the 'word' of God but from the 'deed':

> In the beginning was the deed (40)

He is a God in nature, active in the play of natural forces in the 'sublime' scenes that unfold before us. Many of Friedrich's paintings are of the sublime, represented by the expanse of land, sea and air, by the destructive power of nature shown in the wreck of a ship or by the ruins of buildings. Nature is shown as a vital force, that expresses itself in the phenomenal world and through the soul of man. Although the influence is obvious, this is where Friedrich's art differs from earlier Dutch landscapes and seascapes. Both are the product of a Protestant bourgeois background, but in Friedrich's art there is a sense of closeness to God missing from the 'this-worldly' landscapes produced by artists like Aelbert Cuyp (1620-91), Meyndart Hobbema (1638-1709), Philips Koninck (1619-88); and compare the room interiors of Jan Steen (1625/6-79) in which religious allegory is created by taking the subject matter from life in all its empirical richness (41). Dutch art is full of symbolism, despite its appearance of a pure naturalism, but there is no intention to express a totality of being; you are invited to enjoy the pictures and to read their symbolism, so that meaning is primarily communicated by rational means not by feeling. It has to be admitted that Friedrich's art found only limited favour during his life, but it was supported by those who shared his beliefs and those beliefs sustained him in his art practice, this itself being a sign that the artistic intention was Modern. (42)

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39 Of Friedrich, Carl Gustav Carus wrote: 'His life was the same order as his art; characterized by strict integrity, uprightness and seclusion.... Twilight was his element, he would take a solitary walk at early dawn.... otherwise he brooded almost continuously in a dark room over his work.' Quoted in Finke, U. *German Painting: From Romanticism to Expressionism*, London, 1974, p.22.

40 Goethe, J.W. von, *Faust: Part One*, trans. Wayne, P., Harmondsworth, 1949, p.71. For discussion of *Faust* and its Modernist context, c.f. Berman, M., *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, London, 1983, pp.37-86.

41 This is shown clearly in Jan Steen's *The Dissolute Household*, in the Wellington Museum, London.

42 For an account of Friedrich's life and work, c.f. Jansen, J.C., *Casper David Friedrich*, trans. Neugroschel, J., New York, 1977.

In *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition* (43), Robert Rosenblum draws attention to the similarity between Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* (1809) and Mark Rothko's *Green on Blue* (1956), and suggests that this similarity between these two paintings is the result of shared feelings and intentions. These feelings and intentions, Rosenblum sets out to demonstrate, are shared by a whole tradition of Modern painting, lying outside the Parisian (French) tradition that has been taken to provide the main line of influence in Western art. In the work of Abstract Expressionists, like Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Clyfford Still, can be found a shared concern with such Northern Romantics as Friedrich and J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851). But this shared concern does not extend to such artists as the French Romantic painter, Géricault (1791-1824), whose *Raft of the Medusa* is usually taken as archetypically Romantic. While the human form in the 'Northern Romantic' tradition is usually portrayed as overpowered by the natural forces that are present in nature, in the French tradition Man dominates.

> ... however malevolent or overwhelming the forces of nature, it is still man who dominates the scene, expressing emotion through the traditional metaphor of the human body, now reduced to those extremities of corporeal suffering common to French Romantic art. (44)

It is a feature of the Northern Romantic tradition that it attributes human feelings and emotions to objects in the natural world, a tendency to which, following Ruskin (45), Rosenblum gives the name 'pathetic fallacy'.

The tree Rosenblum sees as a particular and important motif here, recurring in the work of artists in this tradition well into the twentieth century, as a symbol of human form and expression (46). In keeping with his general distinction between the Northern Romantic and the French traditions, he attempts to demonstrate the application of the tree motif in German, English and American art, and most of his argument here is sound. However, when he introduces the work of Constable (1776-1837) into this tradition, in the form of his *Elm Tree* (1821), he is

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43 Rosenblum, R., *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition*, London, 1975.
44 ibid, p.35.
45 C.f. Ruskin, J., 'Modern Painters III', Cook, E.T. and Wedderburn, A. (ed.), *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol.V, London, 1904, pp.201-20.
46 Rosenblum, R., op cit, pp.36-40.

distorting the motif to incorporate a painter whose work does not in fact conform to the stylistic intentions that are at the heart of the tradition under scrutiny. Constable's concern with nature is fundamentally different from Friedrich's. There are two ways of looking at nature in human terms, both of which may apply descriptive metaphor taken from human form and experience. One way sees in nature those very forces that underly human motivation and experience, making no distinction, in essence, between them. The alternative view is to see the relationship between nature and the observer as interactive, giving rise to particular sensible experiences that are describable in human terms. In this latter conception, a tree has a beauty or awe-inspiring form, made manifest in that very interactive situation that requires the observer's presence in nature. Constable is painting his response to nature, the sensible experience of its presence, not as Friedrich did, God's power acting in nature. The observer of Constable's paintings is invited to interact sensibly with the scene portrayed, while in Friedrich's he is pulled through the scene into a contemplation of the force behind it, a force that ultimately is one with his own inner experience. Here we see the distinction between the expressivist aesthetic of Friedrich and the experientialist aesthetic of Constable.

As Hugh Honour remarks on Constable's *Elm Tree*:

> ... [it] is painted with such close up naturalism that one seems to embrace it visually. (47)

Constable's art is essentially empiricist in intention. He selected aspects of nature recognising that, in portraying them, he must do so in a manner that captured the experience of nature. His landscapes were not mere topography, they depicted atmosphere and presence. Hence:

> My limited and abstracted art is to be found under every hedge and in every lane. (48)

Nor is Constable's art 'picturesque', which implies dominance of composition and location in the Classical landscape tradition, a placing of content to create form rarely found in nature. The picturesque

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47 Honour, H., *Romanticism*, Harmondsworth, 1981, p.66.
48 Beckett, R.B. (ed.), *John Constable's Correspondence*, six vols, Ipswich, 1962-70, vol.III, p.59.

landscape was thought to ennoble nature (49). Constable wanted to capture nature as it was in all its particularity.

> The world is wide; no two days are alike, nor even two hours; neither were there ever two leaves of a tree alike since the creation of the world; and the genuine production of art, like those of nature, are all distinct from each other.
>
> In such an age as this, painting should be understood, not looked on with blind wonder, nor considered only as a poetic aspiration, but as a pursuit, legitimate, scientific, and mechanical. (50)

The concern with the particular, the recognition that particularity is a processual experience, and the intention to record the essence of each moment as it is given empirically in all its particularity, along with the acknowledgement that a genuine work of art is a unique product, sounds very Modern, as indeed it is. But it is clearly a different Modernist perspective from that of Friedrich, and from expressivists in general. The forces of nature are to be experienced directly and empirically, they do not need revealing as the expressivist neumenal reality does, to be experienced inwardly and mystically. For Constable, reality is in the impression that we receive of it, necessarily an interactive manifestation, and this is where the aesthetic object is sought.

Naturalism shades into Realism. The division between a naturalistic and a realistic art is hard to maintain, though art historically it is asserted. In fact, all art can be considered realist, in that it seeks to portray a reality that is in some sense differentiated from appearance. If this were not the case there would be simply duplication, art would add nothing to warrant its existence, or decoration. I hope I have shown in the preceding pages that art does, indeed, by definition, have an aesthetic object, and this object may be termed 'real'. Linda Nochlin locates Realism historically between 1840 and 1870-80, a style preceded by Romanticism and followed by Symbolism (51). She defines its aim as:

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49 The picturesque landscape was popular in the second half of the eighteenth century. Essentially the picturesque referred to a landscape of Classical beauty, taking its example from Gaspard Poussin and Claude Lorraine. It was a composition, though the term later became applied to more naturally 'romantic' scenery. It was fashionable in the eighteenth century to carry a 'Claude Glass', which brought out the tonal effects of the landscape by subduing the colours, imposing a picturesqueness on nature.

50 Constable's letter, undated, first pub., Leslie, C.R., *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, Esq., R.A.*, London, 1843, excerpt taken from the second edition, 1845, reproduced in Eitner, L., op cit, vol.II, p.65.

51 Nochlin, L., *Realism*, Harmondsworth, 1971.

> ... to give a truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of comtemporary life. (52)

The term 'impartial' would seem to indicate that the relationship between objective reality and observer is clearly separated into the objective and subjective realms of a scientific empiricism. Such empiricism so practised is, however, naive. There is no ground for the assumption that reality is not being selectively sought in Realist art. In that Realism seeks particularity rather than the general it does not differ from Naturalism. As Nochlin notes, Constable's work can be seen as closely related to that of later Realists (53).

Courbet, who is usually seen as the most representative of Realist painters: -

> Courbet and Realism are two concepts that will probably be considered synonymous for all time. (54)

- had a historicist perspective of the artist's objective:

> In particular, the art of painting can consist only in the representation of objects visible and tangible to the painter. An epoch can be reproduced only by its own artists. I mean by the artists who have lived in it. I hold that the artists of one century are fundamentally incompetent to represent the things of a past or future century - in other words, to paint the past or the future.
>
> It is in this sense that I deny the existence of an historical art applied to the past. Historical art is by its very nature contemporary. (55)

This advice to prospective students demonstrates Courbet's conception of Realism. To understand, to 'see' reality in a particular historical period, you must belong to that historical moment, that reality. But Courbet takes his relativism further still, for he argues for the essential individuality of experience when he says:

> ... there can be no schools; there are only painters. (56)

The real has to be conceived as that reality that is perceived only in its passing. The artist must paint the contemporary scene and he must

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52 ibid, p.13.
53 C.f. pp.18-20.
54 Novotny, F., *Painting and Sculpture in Europe, 1780-1880*, Harmondsworth, 1970, p.141.
55 From an open letter to a group of students, 1861, reproduced in Goldwater, R. and Treves, M. (eds.), *Artists on Art: From the 14th to the 20th Century*, London, 1976, p.296.
56 ibid, p.269.

be part of that reality, responding to it individually though objectively. This can lead to the notion that the artist must depict reality from a committed ideological or professed non-ideological position as with Social Realism, or that he must portray the most modern and dynamic forces of his time as with Futurism or Pop Art. It also leads naturally into Impressionism and the analysis of perceptual experience itself. All these are variants on the experientialist aesthetic.

Although Rosenblum identified an important division in Modernist art he did not get to the foundations of that duality. Rosenblum finds the Northern Romantic tradition's unity in the search for the sacred in an otherwise secular world (57), and indeed it is possible to trace manifestations of this religious impulse throughout the Modernist era; but there are many expressivists who would not equate their work with such a religious quest, unless one is to see this in the depiction of any elemental force that shapes our phenomenal existence. Can we admit a religion of the unconscious mind, or does the unconscious itself have to be grounded in not just a collective undercurrent but a universal absolute? And does this absolute have to be a moral entity to be the focus of religiosity? Rosenblum recognises the parallels between the paintings of Friedrich and those of Edvard Munch (1863-1944). They are both expressivist painters who seek a reality behind the appearance, but Munch explored the unconscious mind as the depository of a fearful reality, and although he saw an ultimate unity of natural and human forces, he sought the universal in abstract human expressive form and not in nature. Munch's *The Scream* (1893) is the echo of a universal terror that is humanity confronting its condition: souls in torment. There is an absence of hope when the forces at play beneath the human condition are directed by blind impulse. It is an art crying out for a religious centre but able to find only a worm-ridden core. This is an aspect of the will that Shopenhauer feared but left for later generations to explore.

Less akin to Friedrich's spiritual yearning is the expressivism of the Surrealists, who base reality in the unconscious depths of the human

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57 Rosenblum, R., op cit, p.252.

mind. Surrealism is an exploration of these depths without any professed religious intention. The unconscious words and images that are to be brought into the world of everyday existence have their source in the irrational realm of the Freudian id and super ego (58). They have a collective existence at the symbolic level but cannot be seen as connected to any notion of a universal soul. What is expressed is individual content, or possibly collective unconscious social existence. Surrealism is far from mysticism; it seeks rather to demystify reality by bringing the two aspects of our existence together on a single plain of being. André Breton, relates a dreamlike experience that occured to him in 1919, whilst on the point of sleep:

> ... I became aware of a sentence articulated clearly to a point excluding all possibility of alteration and stripped of all quality of vocal sound; a curious sort of sentence which came to me bearing - in sober truth - not a trace of any relation whatever to any incidents I may at that time have been involved in; an insistent sentence, it seemed to me, a sentence I might say, that knocked at the window. I was prepared to pay no further attention to it when the organic character of the sentence detained me. I was really bewildered. Unfortunately, I am unable to remember the exact sentence at this distance, but it ran approximately like this: A man is cut in half by the window.' What made it plainer was the fact that it was accompanied by a feeble visual representation of a man in the process of walking, but cloven, at half his height, by a window perpendicular to the axis of his body. Definitely, there was the form, re-erected against space, of a man leaning out of a window. But the window following the man's locomotion, I understood that I was dealing with an image of great rarity. (59)

This raises the motif of the window again, but this time the meaning has changed. The window is through the man; it separates his own living being; it no longer provides a view of the reality out there beyond bodily experience, a hole through which to peer and the frame an obstacle to union. What Surrealists sought to achieve was a union of the conscious and the unconscious realms of cognition, a breaking of the

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58 René Magritte (1898-1967) more than any other Surrealist confronts our sense of reality. In *Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe* (also known as *The Use of Words I*, 1929), there is the obvious statement that the image is not the object, yet it still manages to shake our sense of reality. More disturbing is *The Human Condition* (1933), in which a canvas in front of a window blends into the landscape, so that initially it appears as if we see through it, as if it is not there, yet one edge of the canvas is visible and it slightly overlaps the curtain at the other edge, and the top and legs of the easel are visible. Magritte's work is so disturbing because it deals with the 'normal' in an illusionistic manner; whereas Dali, for example, takes the viewer straight into a dreamscape, Magritte leaves him caught between two realities, impression and illusion, not knowing which is which. As Max Ernst writes, the Surrealist artist moves 'freely, bravely and self-confidently,..., in the borderland between internal and external worlds which are still unfamiliar though physically and psychologically quite real': Ernst, M., 'What is Surrealism?', trans. Bennett, G., Lippard, L.R. (ed.), *Surrealists on Art*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970.

59 Breton, A., 'What is Surrealism?', first pub. 1934, Chipp, H.B. (ed.), *Theories of Modern Art; A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, Berkley, 1975, pp.410-11. C.f. full text and other writings in Rosemont, F., (ed.), *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings of André Breton*, London, 1978.

glass that holds back the liberation of consciousness. This is the image that René Magritte gives us in *La Cle des Champs* (1933), broken glass falling from a shattered window-pane. This act of liberation of unconscious forces, their release into the world of everyday reality, could easily be seen as making a political statement about repression in society, and hence Surrealism in some of its forms was openly anti-bourgeois, anti-Fascist. (60)

Rosenblum is correct to identify the French tradition as distinct from the Northern Romantic tradition. French art developed its own form of Romanticism, evolving out of the revolutionary Neoclassicism (61) associated with David. Already in David's work there are recognisable Romantic elements, but it is from the work of his pupil Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1833) that:

> ... [the] 'Romantiques' took their lead. (62)

His *Napoleon on the Battlefield of Eylau* (1808), a scene showing Napoleon visiting his troops on the day after the defeat of the Russians, Friedland, 8th February 1807, provided a focus for later Romantics. In particular, it is the heaped bodies in the foreground, a grotesque portrayal of the result of war, that drew the attention of contemporaries. It departs from the typically classical glorification of heroic deeds, achieving this by presenting Napoleon in a beneficient paternalistic role, and manages to portray something of the horror of war. Théodore Géricault's (1791-1824) *The Raft of The Medusa* (1819) explores the potential for human suffering at depth. This becomes the sole theme of the work. It presents ordinary people, set adrift on a raft after a shipwreck, at the point of deepest despair, having raised their hopes by the sighting of a ship. Géricault depicts the point of realisation that the ship has turned away. These men are left confronting their situation, at the mercy of the sea, suffering physically and psychologically. The whole scene is designed to convey the tension of the moment. Géricault carried Neoclassicism over into the Modern era, by taking the Neoclassic theme of history in the making, which had previously stressed universal

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60 C.f. Breton, A., ibid.
61 On Neoclassicism as the spokesman of the revolution, c.f. Hauser, A., *The Social History of Art*, London, 1951, vol.II, p.628.
62 Honour, H., op cit, p.38.

concepts, and particularising it. It is not that the universal is of no concern, but it is now only to be found in the interactive moment; the condition of man is to be sought in the fullness of his being. This is where French Romanticism differs from its German counterpart, in seeking reality in the forces that constitute the experiential realm rather than looking behind this to a source whose manifestation in the phenomenal world is no more than an expressive instance.

The main thrust of French art through the nineteenth century was the unfolding of the potential contained by the experientialist aesthetic. We have already discussed Realism in this context, its development into Impressionism through the work of Manet and Degas, to the search for a pure art of sense impressions that was the project of Monet. Between Géricault and Monet there may seem to be a stylistic chasm, but the gulf is not so wide. It is when we think of Géricault's painting as expressive that the apparent gulf appears, but expressive is an incorrect epithet. To be expressive, in the sense that I am using the term in relation to expressivist art, Géricault's work would have to seek to convey a neumenal essence - the forces that give rise to the human condition, not this condition as it manifestly is. That he seeks to portray the heightened emotionality of his subjects is in part a consequence of the rejection of rationality and a counterbalance to its neglect in Neoclassical art. Géricault's art is a form of realism that leads naturally to art historical Realism; he is struggling to free himself from the accepted conventions governing artistic practice in a context in which Neoclassicism is the official style (63).

It must be said here that the Romantic versus Classic debate, that finds its sharpest confrontation in French cultural life, was highly politically charged, with the term 'Romantic' being used as a term of abuse to blacken the work of any artist who was considered a political radical. For the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Romantic was almost synonymous with degenerate by official definition, and widely associated

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63 On Géricault, c.f. discussion in Gogniat, R., *Romanticism*, London, 1968, pp.41-67. He sees *The Raft of the Medusa* as a turning point, the depiction of the moment in realistic terms. This painting was first exhibited in 1819 Salon.

with foreign, German and English, influence and viewed as a threat to France (64); whilst for the self-professed Romantics it was a revolutionary force continuing in the wake of the Revolution. Although there was an official style that closely resembled the Neoclassic, it is much more difficult to identify a Romantic style, precisely because it could be anything that the official style was not. And it did not stop at artistic style, but extended into the arena of life-style. Art and life were not divorced in nineteenth century France, a point that explains the hostile reception given to innovative art by critics who were placing themselves as arbiters of taste for a growing art public, a bourgeois public desireous of the cultural credentials that were a legacy of the aristocracy and, upon seeing these challenged, feeling a threat to their economic and political power. The boundaries between Romantic and Classic art were never as clearly defined as the political parties that espoused their cause.

The absolute divide between Ingres' Classicism and Delacroix's Romanticism is a myth; Ingres was known by his contemporaries as a Gothic painter until the 1820's (65). Although Ingres was consciously anti-Delacroix, this does not make him a Classicist in the true sense of the term. Neoclassicism by this time had itself entered the arena of Modern art and was fighting a battle with the style that was to supersede it. In doing so it was becoming entrenched. Ingres writes:

> Let me hear no more of that absurd maxim: 'We need the new, we need to follow our century, everything changes, everything is changed.' Sophistry - all of that! Does nature change, do the light and air change, have the passions of the human heart changed since the time of Homer? (66)

But interpretation of the meaning and experience of Antiquity does change. Although the tradition of Classical history painting was still flourishing, the perspective on the antiquity had been transformed. As Hugh Honour notes, the rational component of the Antique was no longer of primary significance, it was:

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64 C.f. Furst, L., *Romanticism*, London, 1979, pp.49-52.
65 Rosen, C. and Zerner, H., 'Romanticism: The Permanent Revolution', Rosen, C. and Zerner, H., *Romanticism and Realism*, London, 1984, p.32.
66 Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, from his notes and letters on art, first collected and pub. Delaborde, V.H., 1870, unfortunately without dates; reproduced in Goldwater, R. and Treves, M. (eds.), op cit, p.218.

> ... its mystery, its vitality and sensuality, (67)

that was now found to be of modern significance, not dissimilar motivation for the contemporaneous medievalism. Delacroix also looks for inspiration to Antiquity. His comments on architecture are informative:

> Modern monuments are always executed by rule and compass, in the strictist manner and down to the last corner; those of antiquity are made by feeling, at any rate so far as details are concerned. (68)

Here Antiquity is held up as possessing those vital qualities that are seen as surpressed in the art of Ingres and his followers. Not surprisingly, the Romantic attitude to art had become respectable by mid-century:

> ... [the] superiority of inspiration, emotion and subjective judgement over tradition, rules and skill was now official. (69)

This did not stop the politicisation of art, the focus now being on the afront offered by Realism and later Impressionism. While it is easy to understand the hostility to certain Realist works, especially of a professed socialist like Courbet, the reception that awaited the first Impressionist exhibition can only be understood in the context of a society where art and socio-political life were closely interwoven (70).

In Spain, Goya (1746-1828) provides an example of the development of expressivist art outside of the main concern with nature-philosophy of the Northern Romantic tradition. Goya had earlier broken the mould of Classicist thought, not through complete rejection of Enlightenment rationalism, but rather through the confrontation with the irrational in life. It is true to say of Goya:

> It is obvious that he shared the basic humanistic ideas and valuations of the period of enlightenment. But he perceived the demonic forces underlying them with unusual clarity and reproduced them in his pictures without disguise and without embellishment. (71)

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67 Honour, H., op cit, p.212.
68 From Delacroix, E., *Selected Letters*, trans. and ed. Stewart, J., London, 1971, pp.236-7; also reproduced in Honour, H., op cit, p.212.
69 Rosen, C. and Zerner, H., op cit, p.10.
70 C.f. Dunlop, I., *The Shock of the New*, London, 1972, for discussion of the background to the 'Salon des Refuses' (1863) and the 'Impressionist Exhibition' (1874).
71 Novotny, F., op cit, p.79.

Goya's is an art that raises questions, that confronts the dilemma that opens as an abyss for the Modernist mentality. In his work it is possible to see the faint light of reason opposed to irrational forces, a battle taking place in a world where man struggles to locate his spiritual being in the presence of an absolute. Political concerns are intertwined with spiritual yearning, as, in the twentieth century, they were combined in Surrealism and Expressionism with the release of unconscious forces from suppression.

The Third of May, 1808, a painting undertaken in 1814 to commemorate the opening of the Spanish War of Liberation, shows French soldiers shooting Spanish prisoners. The theme of senseless slaughter - these are not soldiers confronting a heroic death - of man's inhumanity to man, is conveyed in the gesturing, the futile praying and pleading, the anguish of twisted limbs. The French soldiers are shown from behind, a faceless line, clearly indicating that the evil that perpetrates such a deed lies not in the individual. This theme is repeated in an etching of 1820 *Desastres, 26*, where the human source of such suffering is removed from the scene and there remains only the tips of bayonets, emphasising a non-human force at play. In the *Third of May, 1808*, the only source of light that penetrates the darkness and illuminates the scene is from a large lantern being used by the soldiers to ensure they find their targets. The light opens up a reality that is desolate of meaning; if it is the light of reason, it confronts us only with despair; if it is the spiritual presence of a God, it can do little against the forces of pervasive darkness that surround it. It has been suggested that Goya intended this painting to convey a message of hope, that the death of these people was not in vain (72), but it is difficult to see how this interpretation can be upheld. The lantern fails as a symbol of hope, unlike the lamp thrust into the scene of carnage in Pablo Piccasso's *Geurnica* (1937) - a painting in the same Spanish tradition, it is itself an instrument used to perpetrate the inhuman act. The lantern may hold a question mark up to reality, but it does not convey hope. How can one nation, supposedly acting in accord with reason and for universalistic aims, bring down such suffering on another nation? How can this barbarism be conducted in the presence of a benevolent God? Goya's art

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72 Honour, H., op cit, p.44.

does not represent a rebellion against reason, any more than it portrays a godless world. What it does is to focus on subjects that challenge faith and also expose the limitations of reason. This can be seen in the *Desastres* series of prints, which present scene after scene of inhumane acts. All Goya's faith in humanity has been shaken, particularly his hopes for a new age of democratic universal enlightenment, by its disastrous failure to materialise in Spain and the consequences of its supposed success in France.

Gwyn Williams (73) argues convincingly that Goya's subjects are the people of the 'pueblo', that he, representative of his class, became frustrated by the failure of Spain to press forward into the modern democratic era along with France and England. The 'bourgeois revolution' did not take place. In this, Williams sees similarities with Germany, and indeed a comparative experience to that of Marx, although Marx removed himself, intellectually, from the contradictions that Goya confronted as irrational. The historical meaning of Goya's art is summed up by Williams as:

> ... the iconography of a necessary but impossible revolution. (74)

This comparison between the Spain of Goya and Germany, which produced the mystical art of Friedrich, is of interest, and I shall return to it presently. My major concern here is to establish the presence of an expressivist aesthetic at play in Goya's work. Unlike Friedrich, who turned away from reason and the Classicist cosmology, and sought mystical forces in Nature, Goya brought himself to the point of nihilism but could not abandon the search for faith or reason. The forces lying behind the world of phenomenal reality are the traditional Christian ones of good and evil, but there is no certainty of good winning through or of God as a presence. In *Nada. Ellodira* (1820), one of the *Desastres* series, a corpse is depicted half risen from the grave, having written on a piece of paper the word 'Nada' (Nothing). It may appear to be a condemnation of faith, a statement that there is nothing after death, but the darkness around the grave reveals a figure with a set of scales and a host of tormented faces, a clear reference to judgement and Hell. The meaning

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73 Williams, G., *Goya and the Impossible Revolution*, Harmondsworth, 1984.
74 ibid, p.178.

becomes ambiguous; the observer is confronted with a question - he will look in vain for instruction. Taken as part of a series that depicts the abortive attempt at liberation, that is also a comment on futility and inhumanity, it clearly undermines the notion of a rule-governed universe, of Christian or Classical origin. The forces of good and evil express themselves in the historical situation and appear beyond rational control or understanding. Out of the same juxtaposition of faith and reason, good and evil, William Blake raised the power of the imagination as a dynamic creative force (75).

The main distinction between the expressivist and the experientialist aesthetic is that the latter art form involves itself in phenomenal reality, while the former withdraws from it or looks beneath it to a neumenal reality. Expressivist art abandons itself to forces outside its control and in so doing rises with all the power they possess into the phenomenal realm. Experientialist art places itself in interactive relationship to the phenomenal realm in order to experience reality as it is in action. In expressivist art, the artist experiences freedom only in the subjectivity of art's becoming, whilst in experientialist art the artist experiences freedom as activity in the world. It follows that creativity takes on two different forms. I will develop this more in the section on 'The Artist and Society'. From what has been said above, it is evident that expressivism predominates in German culture, certainly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that experientialism appears as the natural form of art in French culture. We can raise the question here, and return to it in the final chapter, as to the possible relationship between art and society as it relates to the two forms of the Modernist aesthetic outlined.

It would seem possible to present a case that argues that the German Romantic artists were acting in response to their social situation, reflecting the lack of freedom experienced in a repressive, in many ways feudal, social order, a sense of powerlessness that exhibits itself in a withdrawal from reality as appearance. In the art of Friedrich there is

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75 For Blake, the imagination was the sign of divinity in Man, the creative force of the universe.

an appeal to mysticism, a turning away from the sensual Rococo and the rational Neoclassic. In the art of the Nazarenes, artists such as Peter Cornelius, Franz Pforr and Friedrich Overbeck, the search is for a universal spirituality lost to the modern age. Coinciding, as this did, with the needs of a Prussian State seeking to unite its peoples, it is not surprising that this art should gain official recognition, being patronised by the monarchy in the eighteen-thirties and 'forties. No critical art form would have been tolerated under the existing sensorship laws (76). By reviving the art of the feudal epoch prior to the Reformation, the style and example of Durer and of Raphael, they sought to rekindle a universal spirituality, but also to place art at the vanguard of progress, as envisaged by Schiller and other German Romantics - they even dressed as monks and took the name of the 'Lukas Bruder'. They were a modern movement even though their art fulfilled a conservative purpose. It is possible that this expressivist art form could be related to Germany's 'backwardness', its failure to move towards democratic bourgeois government, as Williams suggests was the case with Goya and Spain, but this led to an attempt at spiritual awakening rather than a political art.

In France, the Revolution had been carried through, and even if the experience of freedom was itself shortlived, with strong central governmental bureaucratic control reimposing itself, the sense of freedom remained. French art continues in the Enlightenment tradition, possessed of a faith in the possibility of Man achieving ever higher levels of perfection. Whether this social and self perfectability is concentrated on the political arena or withdraws into the aesthetic of art-for-art's-sake, there is a persisting sense of involvement, of interactive creativity. The experientialist form of Modernism stresses the active role of the artist in creation, in bringing about an avant-garde art of the moment. In the experientialist aesthetic the artist does not submit to forces outside his control; he acts as a force within the reality of process.

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76 On the sociopolitical background to the art of the Nazarenes, c.f. Rose, M.A., *Marx Lost Aesthetic*, Cambridge, 1984.

But what of England in this model of the relationship between the form of the Modernist aesthetic and the socio-intellectual climate? After experiencing a civil war that brought an end to the absolutist hopes of monarchy, the transition to democratic bourgeois government was acomplished without further mass revolt, with aristocratic and bourgeois interests largely coinciding. Artists emerging into the Modern era did not feel the overbearing presence of the State as in Germany, or experience direct involvement in revolution as in France (77). There was in England the opportunity for a more individualistic response; we can contrast Constable's Naturalism and Turner's expressivist Romanticism. It has to be stressed that it is the feeling of constraint, the experience of powers outside of the individual's control, which may or may not be conceptualised, that informs the expressivist consciousness. Only thought of in this way, is it possible for the individual artist's development of an expressivist style in what appears objectively as a comparitively free society, to be understood

J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851) developed a personal expressivist vision that is unique in his generation. Inspired by the early Romantic poetry of James Thomson (1700-1748) (78), he turned from topographical studies to depiction of the sublime. His vision of nature as a dynamic force is characterised in a phrase that he often used, 'contending elements' (79). The metaphor of contending elements comes into sharp relief in his oil paintings, in works like *Sunrise , with a Boat between Headlands* (1840-45), which is a high point in his abstraction, with the play of yellow light vibrating over land, sea and air, dissolving the scene into the experience of atmospheric forces, a feeling evoked in the artist and the observer that dissolves objective reality into subjectivity of being. This expressivism appears in Turner's later work, already evidenced in

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77 On the comparison of the transition to the Modern world, as experienced by England, France and Germany, c.f. Moore, B, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, London, 1973. I shall return to this in Ch.VII.

78 The poetry of James Thomson (1700-48) is often described as pre-Romantic, because of its depiction of nature, a suggestion of a living entity that encloses and contains the observer: 'While night o'erwhelms the sea, and horror looks / More horrible. Can human force endure / The assembled mischiefs that besiege them round?-/ Heart-gnawing hunger, fainting weariness, / The roar of winds and waves, the crush of ice, / Now ceasing, now renewed with louder rage, / And in dire echoes bellowing round the main.' Thomson, J, 'Winter', *The Seasons*, 1730, Robertson, J.L. (ed.), *James Thomson: Poetical Works*, London, 1971, p.222.

79 C.f. Turner's poetic writings, Turner, J.M.W., *The Sunset Ship*, Lindsay, J. (ed.), London, 1966.

his *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire* (1817), and has been traced to its 'embryonic' form in the use of 'V' shaped planes of falling and reflected light in *Kilgarran Castle* (1799) (80). Why did Turner move in the direction of expressivism in a society where he was comparatively unrestrained? As Jack Lindsay shows (81), he was not greatly involved in the politics of his day, although showing some Republican sympathies, and was throughout his life a firm believer in the Academy and a comparatively successful artist. It is then perhaps to his private life that we must turn for an answer to his expressivist intention. Certainly this is where Jack Lindsay finds the source of his motivation, in Turner's perception of himself as small and ridiculous in stature, and in his home-life experiences with his mother suffering from bouts of insanity (82). His paintings were often received with reference to the 'madman' that could produce such things, an epithet that must have cut deeply. It seems certain that the repressive order that bore down on Turner had its source within his own psyche. His later paintings express a tension between the glory and the hopeless insignificance of existence; one has to read his poetry, *The Fallacies of Hope*, to find his pessimism. The following words from *Fallacies of Hope* were included in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition of *The Sun of Venice going to Sea*, 1843:

> Fair shines the morn, and soft the Zephyrs blow,
> Venezia's fisher spreads his painted sail so gay,
> Nor head the demon that in grim repose
> Expects his evening prey. (83)

The painting is about delusion of hope. How well this fits Turner's reported words on hearing that he was about to die:

> I am soon to be a nonentity. (84)

Possibly fear of this haunted Turner throughout his life, to make him seek union and identity in the forces of nature. That Turner could have followed his own inclinations has to do with the possibilities open to individualisation of style in the Modern period, possibilities present in

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80 Lindsay, J., *J.M.W. Turner: His Life and Work*, St. Albans, 1973, p.50. C.f. also Gage, J., *Colour in Turner: Poetry and Truth*, London, 1969, which discusses Turner's theory and use of colour. Colour is interactive and expressive, not simply objective presence to be imitated and manipulated for effect, though the latter is part of the painter's art; c.f. esp. pp.106-17.
81 Lindsay, J., op cit, 1973.
82 ibid, pp.24-5.
83 Turner, J.M.W., 'Fallacies of Hope', reproduced in Rothenstein, J. and Butlin, M., *Turner*, London, 1964, pp.15-16.
84 Lindsay, J., op cit, 1973, p.286.

a society that accepted eccentricity and was already seeking the new and unique in art. I shall broaden this analysis in the concluding chapter.

ARTIST AND SOCIETY

One of the main criticisms levelled against Carl André's 'Bricks' was the lack of artistic skill involved in its production. (85) The 'Tate Bricks' was erected by workmen, albeit to the artist's instructions. There was no working or shaping of the material involved; the sculpture was conceptual rather than sculptural in the traditional sense. (86). Bernard Levin, writing just after its first public showing, in an article entitled, 'Art May Come and Art May Go, but a Brick is a Brick Forever', (87), called into question the 'fallacy' that if an object is representative of the 'New', then it deserves a gallery space as document of its time, and in prospect of its future recognition as 'art' document. For Levin, the work was certainly not deserving of the epithet 'Art':

> ... because art is something that is fashioned from the mind and heart and experience and soul, and if necessary body, of the artist. (88)

To the extent that art has a public, it is surely this image of the creative rendering of a human experience in plastic form that holds it, that stops the art institution from folding in on itself. The art object is 'worked on'. Levin draws our attention to the artist 'tearing' the work from deep within, suffering in the act of creation. This creative act is viewed as union of the artist's, almost spiritual, creative power and his skills at rendering the artistic impulse in plastic form. The art public, in the most general sense of this term, expect to find evidence of artistic 'specialness' in the skills involved in transforming materials towards an artistic ideal.

In May, 1877, at the inaugural exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery, J.A.M. Whistler (1834-1903) exhibited, amongst others, a painting entitled *Nocturne in Blue and Gold; The Falling Rocket* (1874) (89). The story is

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85 C.f. discussion of André's 'Bricks' in Ch.I; also, Page, B., et al, 'The Art Game', *The Sunday Times*, Feb. 22nd, 1976, p.17; and Simpson, C., 'The Tate Drops a Costly Brick', *The Sunday Times*, Feb. 15th, 1976, p.53.
86 C.f. Ch.I for account of André's aesthetic.
87 Levin, B., 'Art May Come and Art May Go, but a Brick is a Brick Forever', *The Times*, Feb. 18th, 1976.
88 ibid.
89 C.f. McMullen, R., *The Victorian Outsider: A Biography of J.A.M. Whistler*, London, 1974.

well-known. Ruskin, present at the opening, was evidently highly offended by the treatment of the picture, as well as by the price of two hundred guineas asked for the work. In July of that year, Ruskin made his views public in the journal, *Fors Clavigera* (90). The work, he protested, should not have been admitted to the gallery. He spoke of the:

> ... ill-educated conceit of the artist, [accusing Whistler of] cockney impudence, [for asking two hundred guineas] for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face. (91)

The result was the now famous libel trial in which Whistler was awarded one farthing damages. A social rebuff. Ruskin objected to the work's unfinished appearance, although the style was not so different from that of the later Turner, whom Ruskin praised as the greatest of English painters. Ruskin was concerned that art should be answerable to its public, morally and socially. Whistler was an advocate of the autonomy of art, art for art's sake (92). They were both Modernist in their rejection of the academic Classical ideal; they shared the view that academicism stifled natural expression. In England, Ruskin was himself largely responsible for the growing centrality of the fine arts in the spiritual life of a middle class public that had developed in the nineteenth century into a mass audience for the arts. What he recognised in Whistler's aestheticism was abandonment of the moral imperative for a shallow egoism; an abandonment of art's commitment to its public.

For Ruskin, artistic appreciation did not simply consist of sensual pleasure (Aesthesis); it raised Man to a higher level of consciousness or contemplation (Theoria), where he exulted in the knowledge of a moral presence (God) (93). Whistler and the 'Aesthetic Movement' of the late nineteenth century advocated an art of pure sensual experience. Whistler was influenced by developments on the continent, with the aesthetic

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90 Ruskin, J., Letter in *Fors Clavigera*, July, 1877.
91 ibid.
92 Both Ruskin's and Whistler's views were part of the climate of aestheticism that had grown to be accepted by a wide public - the idea that art would be enjoyed for its own sake - but they represent two extremes, Ruskin arguing that art should be morally uplifting, Whistler that art should just be. Their opposition shows up the contradiction inherent in aestheticism, the problematic notion of 'value'. On Victorian aestheticism, c.f. Spencer, R., *The Aesthetic Movement: Theory and Practice*, London, 1972: Spencer argues that aestheticism was less a movement, more a 'climate' (pp.7-11), but there is a sense in which Whistler, and his contemporaries like Wilde, partook in a movement in avant-gardist terms, even though they did not produce a manifesto.
93 C.f. Ruskin, J., *Modern Painters*, London, 1906, vol.II, part III, section I, Ch.ii, pp.5-8.

theorisation of Baudelaire in particular, and the stylistic concerns of the Impressionists. Whistler differs from Turner - although outwardly the style may appear similar - whose Romantic vision was akin to Ruskin's own. Turner had sought to capture the experience of the sublime in nature, and transmit it to his public. What Whistler presented to his public was an aesthetic interpretation, an object in its own right, that he claimed was the result of a long process of aesthetic training in perceptual skills. This was the basis of his court defence, of why he charged so highly for his work. Ruskin favoured an expressivist aesthetic while Whistler advocated an experientialist ideal; so, not only artistic skill was at issue here, but the conflict between two Modernist perspectives. That Whistler rejected the association between art and socio-moral responsibility intensified the divide that separated him from Ruskin.

Ruskin as a leading theorist of the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century had helped to prepare the ground for the Aesthetic Movement's rejection of moral and social answerability. The artist was given a unique role, a special ability to create aesthetic form. Why should he remain answerable to, or give instruction to, the general populace? The artist's only commitment was to art itself. The concentration on Aesthesis to the exclusion of Theoria did not itself necessitate a loss of skill, but the abandonment of responsibility for its public's socio-moral education meant that there was no longer a requirement to render the media accessible to the public. In this way, the search for an authentic undistorted artistic form was carried over into abstraction, in both Impressionist and Expressionist Modernism. The notion of skill became much more personal; an ability to make judgements rather than an adequacy in rendering the work in line with natural objective forms. Skill, then, could not be measured by the lay public, or even the art critic, but became the province, along with art critical consciousness, of the artist. Ruskin's argument was that Whistler's work was not art because it showed little skill in application, while Whistler claimed that skill and art training lay behind the work. But, for Whistler, skill was taking on a new meaning: it referred to artistic judgement, the special province of the artist, rather than manual dexterity or technique.

It is usually assumed that the artist of the nineteenth century was rejected by his public, misunderstood, pushed into an existence as outsider in a hostile society, eventually reacting by counter-rejecting middle-class values and culture. Despite this mythology of the alienated artist, the nineteenth century was a time of increasing security. The prominent place given to art in Victorian England by the middle classes has been documented by Dianne Sachko Macleod (94). Growing middle-class affluence and the desire to emulate, even in a small way, the cultivated style of the aristocracy, led to increasing patronage of the arts. Macleod documents three phases of patronage based on the collector's conception of art's purpose. Early Victorian collectors, tending to take a view inherited from Neoclassical theory and in tune with Academic teaching, saw the artworks as:

> ... a sacred trust destined to be shared with their fellows. (95)

Art had an educative and civilising capacity. Mid-century saw the rise of a truly aesthetic attitude, stimulated by Ruskin's writings (96), and underpinned by a new spiritual awakening, associated with the Oxford Movement of the 1830's, that found its way into art through the 'Gothic Revival', and society with the advocacy of:

> ... [a] new and caring feudalism. (97)

Art collecting in mid-century became privatised, as art was seen to be for private appreciation of its beauty, a spiritual experience not of public concern. The art of the Pre-Raphaelites came into vogue. The final phase, beginning in the 1880's, can be described as:

> ... the worship of art, (98)

the worship of art for its own sake (99). This corresponds with

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94 Macleod, D.S., 'Art Collecting and the Victorian Middle Class', *Art History*, vol.10, no.3, Sept. 1987, pp.328-50.
95 ibid, p.331.
96 The first volume of *Modern Painters* appeared in 1843.
97 Yates, N., 'Pugin and the Medieval Dream', *History Today*, vol.37, 1987, p.39. Also on this theme, c.f. Stanton, P., *Pugin*, London, 1971; Clark, K., *The Gothic Revival*, London, 1962; Chandler, A., *A Dream of Order*, London, 1971.
98 Macleod, D.S., op cit, p.331.
99 Macleod, ibid, acknowledges that a strong economic motive for art collecting persisted throughout the century. This does not detract from the fact that criteria of aesthetic value were internal to art, art dealers would place an economic value on the works whatever the artistic form of valuation. This is not to say that there is no relationship; aestheticism helped to promote the collectability of art, especially contemporary art.

Aetheticism in the art of Whistler, and, Macleod argues, it continues today to be the dominant attitude towards art. We must admit some overlap between these phases and conflict, as is evident in the Ruskin-Whistler case, a conflict that was more rabied in France, than in England, but generally speaking there was no lack of a public for art (100).

In England, while the art public's attitude to art changed throughout the nineteenth century, developing towards acceptance of an art-for-art's-sake, and as this public grew in number, so the state's involvement in art increased. In Janet Minihan's view, the growth of a mass audience was a pre-requisite for state intervention in the arts, but this can hardly be seen as the case in France, where the Academy from its inception served a bureaucratic non-democratic function (101). Certainly a mass audience provided more scope for intervention. Increased state involvement went hand in hand with increasing artistic freedom; the two are not incompatible so long as aesthetic and stylistic control is left with the artist. In France, where a system of state patronage was well established, with a tradition of style determined by the Academy, artists had to assert their freedom to determine what is art in the face of an élitest, bureaucratically regulated system that largely controlled access to the art public, a public whose taste in art was subject to a critical barrage in the press (102). The foundations of the modern system of patronage were laid down in the nineteenth century. Although some artists were better positioned to obtain state patronage and access to the public, there were no absolute barriers erected, although there was a major obstacle for those whose work carried the status of craft rather than art (103). As Daniel M. Fox cogently argues, the myth of the two types of artist:

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100 For evidence of a growing art public, c.f. Clarke, M., *The Tempting Prospect: A Social History of English Watercolours*, London, 1981. There was a rapid growth in the collecting of watercolours among the middle classes. The increase in private patronage in France is discussed in Pelles, G., *Art, Artists and Society: Origins of a Modern Dilemma*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963, pp.23-48. The art market had expanded rapidly from the mid eighteenth century. C.f. Rouquet's account of the spread of auction rooms in London: Rouquet, A., *The Present State of the Arts in England*, first pub. 1775, extract reproduced in Denvir, B. (ed.),, *The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design and Society, 1689-1789*, London, 1983, pp.167-9.

101 Minihan, J., *The Naturalisation of Culture*, Glasgow, 1977, c.f. Introduction.

102 There were also critics willing to take the side of artists seeking an avant-gardist role. Romanticism was championed by the art critic, Theophile Gautier, between 1830 and 1872, and later a more thorough 'Modernism' was espoused by Baudelaire. C.f. Snell, R., *Theophile Gautier: A Romantic Critic of the Visual Arts*, Oxford, 1982. Baudelaire is to feature in the following pages of this chapter. C.f. also, Easton, M., *Artists and Writers in Paris: The Bohemian Idea, 1803-1867*, London, 1964, pp.57-72.

103 I have dealt with this issue in depth in Ch.III.

> ... an intolerant,jealous, businesslike academic aristocracy and a tumultuous artistic proletariat, (104)

one favoured by patronage and the other outsiders in society, has distorted our view of art historical developments through the century. In fact, most artists, Fox argues, compromised:

> ... artists became businesslike-idealists. (105)

There is much empirical evidence to support this view. Artists were attempting to gain a public and thereby patronage for their work. Even those exhibitions that were held by artists dissatisfied with the selection procedures for the Salon in France, that are heralded as avant-gardist attempts to break the hold of the Academy, were in essence seeking to promote the work of exhibitors, to gain recognition and sales - the Salon des Refuses, which was really an officially recognised exhibition of work rejected by the Salon judges, and the Impressionist exhibitions. Vincent Van Gogh came as near as any artist to complete neglect by a public in his lifetime, but his work was carried on in a state of faith in both his artistic ability and that he would find public acceptance. In the meantime, he found financial and moral support in his brother Theo (106). The Modern artist needs public recognition, but he is also able to accept rejection so long as he has faith in his own abilities; art is not a trade, it is a calling.

Compromise holds a contradiction that is never fully resolved in Modernist art, the artist seeking to shock the public - shock being evidence of the impact of something new as well as an invitation to rejection, and, at one and the same time, asking for appreciation and acknowledgement. To some extent an answer to this contradiction is to be found in disinterested patronage, but this involves a separation of enlightened patron from the target public, or a purely aesthetic approach to the work of art, or possibly overriding concern with non-artistic criteria such as economic value and associated prestige. Whichever of

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104 Fox, D.M., 'Artists in the Modern State: The Nineteenth Century Background', Albrecht, M.C., *The Sociology of Art and Literature*, London, 1970, p.370. Orig. pub. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol.XXII, no.2, 1963.
105 ibid, p.370.
106 C.f. van Gogh's letters to his brother, Theo, Roskill, M. (ed.), *The Letters of Van Gogh*, Glasgow, 1963.

these is behind any particular act of patronage - and I use patronage in the widest sense here - it nullifies the impact of artistic revolt. The state in the nineteenth century gradually took on the role of disinterested patron, extending this role into the training of artists as well as provision of commissions, but so too did there arise a disinterested patronage from within the middle classes, in the twentieth century, to foster the private gallery system. Both state and private patronage were influenced by economic considerations; it was such considerations that Ruskin urged in his lectures on 'The Political Economy of Art', 1857 (107), and the view that the undiscovered or even spurned artist of today will be recognised as the genius of tomorrow was widely accepted by the end of the century, by both artist and public, giving impetus to collection of work by contemporary artists.

That artists could expect to retain control over style and, at the same time, be supported by the public and state can only be explained in terms of the Neoclassical vision of art's utility in a democratic state. Fox sees David as the archetypical artist and political administrator, his speech before the Assembly in 1790, calling for a self-governing 'Commune of the Arts' to replace the Academy was:

> ... [the] first public statement by an artist of the political and social utility of the arts under a government based on consent, (108)

and was to have repercussions throughout the Modern era. The Commune of the Arts was established, and in 1791 the first Salon open to all prospective artists took place. Although short-lived, there is no doubt that it served as inspiration for the future, and Fox is probably correct to see its major gain as being the:

> ... possibilities of freedom (109)

that it opened up to artists by its example. This example, the linking of artistic freedom with revolutionary action for the good of the people, served in France to politicise art and colour the two factions of Romantics and Classicists. The idea of a proletarian art deeply affected

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107 Ruskin, J., 'The Political Economy of Art', first pub. 1857. C.f. discussion in Wilenski, R.H., *John Ruskin: An Introduction to Further Study of his Life and Work*, New York, 1967, pp.280-5.
108 Fox, D.M., op cit, p.375.
109 ibid, pp.376-7.

the work of many artists. When the opportunity arose, in 1848, and again as recently as 1968, the art institutions were declared open to all. After the 1830's there was increasing tendency in France for artists to refuse to exhibit at the Salon, both Classicists and Romantics (110). The notion of the social utility of art devolved into the more vague conception that society needs art, and gradually a spiritual significance became generally accepted. Failing to find an institutional basis for a people's art, nonetheless official channels were used or alternatives created in order to reach the public. The goal became the establishment of one's own show at a gallery, with the expectation of public acknowledgement, however detached the art work had become from the comprehension and life experience of that public. Artists declared open revolt against the institutional framework within which they worked and exibited, some against the social structure itself; but there continued the expectation of patronage, and the revolt was accommodated by the state and a public that acknowledged the one-sided nature of life without art, even though the art critic was increasingly called upon to give valuative judgement.

What is the place of the avant-garde in these developments (111)? The notion of the avant-garde is distinctly modern, as Renato Poggioli demonstrates:

> It is evident that such a concept (or its equivalent) is present in the Western historical consciousness only in our own epoch, with the most remote temporal limits being the various preludes to the romantic experience. (112)

The notion of the avant-garde artist has its structural origin in the aesthetics of process and its historical thematic in the Enlightenment project of achieving an undistorted universe of meaning. It is part of the dialectics of progress. As such, the avant-garde stands for both other-negation and self-negation. In its most abstract moment, it is no other than the embodiment of constant transformation, the processual imperative. The concrete realisation of this imperative emerges mediated by particular socio-psychological conditions. It is embodied in the

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110 Pelles, G., op cit, p.29, tells us that Ingres stopped exhibiting after 1837, and Delacroix after 1859.
111 C.f. discussion in Ch.I and Ch.VII.
112 Poggioli, R., *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Fitzgerald, G., Mass., 1968, p.15.

distinctly Modernist phenomenon of the 'movement'. Poggioli rightly contrasts the 'movement' with the 'school': the movement seeks to fulfill stated objectives, the manifesto or pamphlet, experimenting with the means available to it, while the school presupposes a method and upholds this with authority, tradition or a master. For Poggioli the movement, as a group phenomenon, is the basic unit of avant-gardism, the fate of which is determined by its own internal dynamics. The movement is constituted with a concrete end in sight, what Poggioli terms its 'activistic moment' (113). The movement is further constituted in order to oppose or agitate against something or someone, the 'Antagonistic moment' (114). These two moments represent the 'logic of movements', a further two moments represent the 'dialectic of movements'. Antagonism, having to seek out all barriers, internal as well as external, carries the movement towards its 'Nihilistic moment', towards the point of self destruction (115). The movement has to sacrifice itself, to make way for another evolving movement, this is the 'Agonistic moment'. Such is the logic and dialectic of the avant-garde movement, I would not dispute any of the above, as far as it relates to the movement. However, the movement is only one manifestation of the avant-garde consciousness, or what I would prefer to call the processual consciousness. The movement in is most typically avant-garde form is a French phenomenon, and this may be explained by the French artist's consciousness of himself as a member of a distinct social group, a consciousness developed out of the eighteenth century practice of intellectual salon meetings, which in the nineteenth century extended into the café where artists and intellectuals debated and made programmes (116).

Poggioli has been criticised for not being sufficiently historically specific in his definition of the avant-garde, the criteria that he uses being applicable to too great a historical period:

> ... that they cannot function as the basis for a theory of the avant-garde in the twentieth century. (117)

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113 ibid, p.25.
114 ibid, p.26.
115 ibid, p.26.
116 Pelles, G., op cit, pp.40-2; c.f. also Rogers, M., 'The Batignolles Group', Albrecht, M.C., op cit, pp.194-220, for the importance of the café setting in the formation of the Impressionist movement.
117 Schulte-Sasse, J., writing in the Foreword to Bürger, P., *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Manchester, 1984, p.x.

This seems to me to be unfair criticism, the theory being open to refinement so as to distinguish the particularity of historical forms. For an understanding of art historical developments in the twentieth century it is essential to place particularity in the overall context of a social and intellectual structure that persists from the close of the eighteenth century. Indeed, for a full explanation of the phenomenon of the avant-garde, its place has to be located in the Modernist aesthetic of process, the movement being inexplicable without so doing, and art historical consciousness being distorted, so that the history of art appears as a succession of movements deconstituting and reconstituting style. But style in the Modern era is not easily delimited; often it is the intention that is a vital factor in recognition of stylistic identity. There is great similarity between Naturalist, Realist and some Impressionist paintings, and the line between Abstract Expressionism and Formalism is blurred, as is that between Surrealism and Dada.

All Modernist artists have attempted to develop a personalised style, even when committed to the programme of a movement, in order to emphasise a unique vision. To seek codification of style, which is the purpose of a school, is anathema to the movement, whose aims are always dynamic, always open. The concept of the avant-garde may be most powerfully expressed as a group phenomenon, in the dynamics of the movement, but it is also carried in the individual consciousness of the artist. It is the search for a personal vision to assert against an existing cultural and social normative framework that places the artist in an oppositional and negational relationship. Such a vision has to be original, in that it stands as the representation of the passing moment, as a pointer to the future and a sign of the negation of all that has passed. As such, it is for the individual, as much as for the movement, an instant in the voyage of self-discovery: a self discovery that is perpetually renewed, or that founders in the 'agonistic moment' of self negation. If it is a search for the self, so too is it an assertion of self, albeit within the collective identity of the group. There are a number of notable artistic personalities who cannot be seen as part of a movement, in the sense that the term is used here. As an example of early individualism, Turner stands out from his contemporaries, an artist who followed his own vision, as do Blake and later van Gogh, Cézanne, and Picasso.

Just as structurally there are two variants of the Modernist aesthetic, correspondingly there are two types of artistic consciousness. The experientialist ideal, precisely because it locates the aesthetic of process in the interactive relationship, makes the artist conscious of his place in that process. The creative act involves working with the materials of existence at the phenomenal level, to produce an object that is witness to that interaction as a creative act. The creative act is defined in its uniqueness, its newness, its individuality and particularity. Each artist carries the consciousness of his own unique vision, not as a fixed ideal or archetype, but as a developing interactive self, confronting the constraints of his media, of the past as concretised in cultural and art convention, and within his own being. The avant-garde consciousness seeks to break through these barriers to art, to produce an art that is truly interactive and liberatory in its consequences. The Naturalist seeks a purified experience of nature, the Realist a reality stripped of all that is superfluous to the dynamics of existence, the Impressionist an art of the perceptual. All want an art of the here and now, of the passing moment.

In Baudelaire's conception of the artist's function, the focus becomes the most contemporaneous:

> The painter, the true painter for whom we are searching, will be the one who can seize the epic quality of contemporary life and make us see and understand, with brush or with pencil, how great and poetic we are in our cravats and patent-leather boots. - Let us hope that next year the true seekers may grant us the extraordinary joy of celebrating the advent of the new. (118)

This theme was taken up in his prose sketch of the painter Constantin Guys (1802-92), in an article entitled 'Peintre de la Vie Moderne' (119). Baudelaire provides a portrait of the artist as a man of genius, full of the child's intensity of feeling and joy of exploration, observing and mingling with the crowd in the street, searching for its historical essence, for its 'Modernity'. But for Baudelaire, Modernity was only half of the equation of the Modernist aesthetic, and this is often ignored by

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118 Baudelaire, C., 'Salon of 1845 (On the Heroism of Modern Life)', *The Mirror of Art*, trans. and ed. Mayne, J., London, 1955, p.37.
119 First pub., *Figaro*, Nov. 26th and 28th, and Dec. 3rd, 1863. The most recent English translation is Baudelaire, C., *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. and ed. Mayne, J., New York, 1986, pp.1-40.

commentators. The other half is the non-contingent universal: beauty, which the artist seeks, is composed of:

> ... an eternal, invariable element, [and] a relative, circumstantial element, (120)

an inseparable duality. So, although Baudelaire may urge the artist to seek to portray Modernity, this is nontheless only half of art.

> By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable. (121)

The artist has to be involved in modern life; artistic creativity is an interactive process; the universal can only be grasped as a historical moment of being; no timeless archetype can be found - only the dynamic of process as given in the historically contingent. The Modern artist seeks to be modern, and in mid-eighteenth century Modernity meant reflecting modern life, as earlier in the century it had meant rejecting the Classical ideal, and as on the eve of the twentieth century it was to mean the Futurist worship of the machine, in the nineteen-sixties to fuse with popular culture in Pop art. But in Futurism and in Pop Art the duality is all but lost, as the experience - Modernity - becomes an end in itself. The possibility of a pervasive relativism giving rise to the pluralism of the present exists thoughout the century, kept in check by the dynamics of the search for the new, and also by an art public that still holds to the traditional aesthetic of duality

Expressivist artistic consciousness differs from experientialist consciousness in seeking the forces of the processual aesthetic emanating from some neumenal or unconscious domain. Creativity is an act of outpouring, a transmission of vital forces and their constitution into a concrete object or act. We must be clear here, it is not Wordsworth's:

> ... spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, (122)

feelings which have their origin in the phenomenal domain, are

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120 ibid, p.3.
121 ibid, p.13.
122 C.f. his Preface to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Brett, R.L. and Jones, A.R. (eds.), *Lyrical Ballads: Wordsworth and Coleridge*, London, 1963, p.246.

empirically present, and can be recollected and reflected upon and transformed into a cognate image. Wordsworth differed from Coleridge and Blake, both firmly rooting the imagination in the forces that erupt into consciousness from neumenal depths within the individual and in nature (123). The expressivist artist in the creative act taps a force within himself:

> Presumptuous is the artist who does not follow his road through to the end. But chosen are those artists who penetrate to the region of that secret place where primeval power nurtures all evolution. There, where the power-house of all time and space - call it brain or heart of creation - activates every function; who is the artist who would not dwell there? (124)

For Klee (1879-1940) the creative act is the release of the primitive and infantile, the elemental forces in Man and in nature, and their embodiment in the work of art. He attempted to convey these forces at play in the creative act through a language of colour and abstract formalised content. It is the reaching within, expression as a form of out-pouring, that holds the image of the creative process, and it is an image that often involves the artist suffering for his art. Hermann Hesse's Veraguth is an artist of this type, producing his art out of:

> ... an abyse of inner loneliness and self-torment. (125)

It is the image conjured up by the title of Irvin Stone's novel of Michelangelo, *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (126). It is an image that we seek in the lives of artists as a sign of authenticity; in Van Gogh's madness lies proof of the suffering and of the art.

Expressivist avant-garde consciousness takes a more inward form, seeking to break down barriers to pure expression. The search for art is more solitary because of the nature of this aesthetic, but this does not stop groups of artists forming a movement. Klee became part of the Blue Rider group based in Munich, along with Franz Marc and Vassily Kandinsky, publishing a journal, *Almanach Der Blaue Reiter*, and exhibiting as a group

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123 An Impressionist consciousness is not generally recognised as part of the Romantic reaction, thus Wordsworth is often seen as less 'idealistic' than Coleridge or Blake. According to Rene Wellik, he 'holds a position in the history of criticism which must be called ambiguous or transitional': Wellik, R., 'Varieties of Imagination in Wordsworth', first pub. 1955, Hills, J.S. (ed.), *The Romantic Imagination*, London, 1977, p.163.
124 Klee, P., *Paul Klee on Modern Art*, first pub. 1924, London, 1974, p.49.
125 Hesse, H., *Rosshalde*, first pub. 1924, trans. Manheim, R., London, 1979, p.53.
126 Stone, I., *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, Glasgow, 1961.

(127). A looser grouping of Symbolist and Art Nouveau artists united to break the stranglehold of the Academy in Vienna, resigning from the Vienna Kunstlerhaus in 1897 and setting up a new society, the Vereinigung Bildender Kunstler Oesterreichs, or 'Vienna Secession' (128). Expressivist artists like Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele came to the fore in this group, exploiting the Freudian theory of the sexual drive to make strong statements concerning its power over the individual. The female form was portrayed as erotic and a source of aggressive sexual energy - for example in Klimt's *Danae* (1907-8) and Schiele's *Recumbent Woman* (1907). Their art did not attack society directly, but it opened up and made visible the gulf in Viennese life between appearance and reality, reflecting its repressed condition in a similar manner to Freud's psychoanalytical theory (129). It is Surrealism that is most notably a movement, at least at its inception (130). Later its purpose became more purely expressive, as with Salvador Dali, or continued in the Dada tradition.

The creative activity of the experientialist and of the expressivist has seemed less authentic in the second half of the twentieth century. It has become difficult to believe that an aesthetic interplay between artist, art object and an essential reality is taking place. This is the result of a combination of factors. Already mentioned is the disappearance of evidence of artistic skill. Additionally there is the increased drive towards presentation of something that is new and unique for its own sake; we expect this of the artist even if we no longer have expectations of art. Since the nineteen-fifties there has been a shift in artists' and the public's consciousness of what is entailed in the creative act. The dominant view of creativity counterposes the creative act to the rational act, as convergent versus divergent or lateral thinking, popularised in the writings of Edward de Bono (131). A

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127 The 'Almanach' was first published in December, 1912. For an account of the Blue Rider group, c.f. Vergo, P., *The Blue Rider*, Oxford, 1977; also Roethel, H.K., *The Blue Rider*, trans. Roethel, H.K. and Benjamin, J., New York, 1971.
128 C.f. Vergo, P., *Art in Vienna, 1898-1918*, London, 1975, for an account of the intellectual and artistic life at the time of the Secession.
129 C.f. Jung, C.G., 'Sigmund Freud in his Historical Setting', 'The Spirit of Man, Art, and Literature', *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, London, vol.15, part II.
130 For an account of the Surrealist programme, c.f. Breton, A., *What is Surrealism?*, London, 1978, particularly the article, 'What is Surrealism', first pub. 1934.
131 de Bono, E., *The Use of Lateral Thinking*, Harmondsworth, 1971.

definition of creativity suggested by Silvano Arieti makes the new concept clear:

> ... human creativity uses what is already present and available and changes it in unpredictable ways. (132)

This it seems to me has become the intention of many artists, especially in the past two decades. To be an artist one has to create, and this means presenting something new to the public - but to what end? In the Modern art era, the art object has not stood as an aesthetic object in its own right; it has always been an expression of the subjectivity of the artist as much as an object in the world. The public has always looked behind the work of art to the creator or genius who gave it form, whose subjective being is embodied in it. How can the notion of artistic specialness be sustained when the creative act has come to be viewed as essentially an objective transformation of reality? Artists are failing to convey this specialness to the public; their art is viewed as only narrowly creative, often the art of the slick idea. I am not suggesting that all artists are consciously deceptive, but most no longer know how to be authentic. This does not mean that there is not authentic art produced, but the public's and the critic's capacity for allocating value has largely ebbed away - a point to which I shall return in the final chapter. A third factor in the loss of authenticity has been dealt with in Chapter I, the disappearance of a centre on which to locate meaning, in both its communicative and its absolute sense.

Set against this, is the public's continued demand for art, as indicated in Chapter I, demonstrating that art is perceived to have an important role to play in modern life. It would be too simple here to say that art has replaced religion. For some people this may be the case, for others it is certainly not. What it has done is to take up a structural position in intellectual life in a dualistic relation with scientific knowledge and rational technological practice. In public consciousness, reality has itself become dualised into the spheres of fact and value, a dualism embodied in our institutional structures, producing C. P. Snow's concern about the polarisation of the 'two cultures' (133). Snow saw the dualism

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132 Arieti, S., *Creativity: the Magic Synthesis*, New York, 1976, p.4.
133 Snow, C.P., *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, Cambridge, 1959, first given as the Rede Lecture.

in terms of the progressive tendencies of scientific practice set against the 'natural Luddites' on the side of the arts (134), and he thought that it could be dismantled (135). The dualism is not, however, to be dismantled, precisely because it rests on the fact-value divide, and not simply sustained by academic institutional divisions. It is a duality that divides reality into the independent spheres of fact and value, and the human subject as knower of that reality into, on the one hand, a cognitive-experiental machine and, on the other, an emotional intuitive spirit. What is seen as the dehumanising tendency of the technico-scientific realm is countered by the 'spirituality' of the arts. I am aware that there is a contemporary revolt against this dualisation from within the philosophy of science (136), but this has not transformed the institutional structures or the modern consciousness that sustain the duality. Debate over fact and value issues, and therefore the consciousness of duality, enters the full spectrum of academic specialisms, but the polar limits of the duality reside in empirical science and expressive art. While science has sought a reality, no less processual than art, in objective rational experience, art has sought it in subjectively meaningful, non-rational experience.

The problem for Snow was that the practitioners in these two academic spheres, forced apart by the educational system where specialisation is encouraged, are unable to comprehend one another. They build up their own bodies of knowledge, their own discourses. For the practitioners, much of their lifeworld is framed within their respective discourse, and some step outside of this framework with differing degrees of penetration into the structural opposite. Of course, modern reality is more fragmented into spheres of discourse than the fact-value dualistic model would suggest. In the modern context, Schultz' analysis of the lifeworld as composed of 'multiple realities' is phenomenologically correct (137). We enter such realities whenever we step outside the paramount

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134 ibid, p.27. A slightly different perspective is given by Kristeller, P.O. in 'The Modern System of the Arts', *The Journal of History of Ideas*, vol.12, 1951, and vol.13, 1952, where he argues that the distinction between art and science is made on the basis of only science being capable of showing progress of the Moderns over the Greeks. Neither account allows for avant-gardism.

135 For a discussion of the literature that Snow's comments provoked, c.f. Davenport, W.H., *The One Culture*, New York, 1971.

136 For an account of these trends, c.f. Davies, P., *God and the New Physics*, Harmondsworth, 1984.

137 Schultz, A., *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, London, 1972.

reality of commonsense experience. The persistence of multiple realities and their structural interrelationship fix them firmly in social existence:

> ... in a state of mutual accommodation. (138)

Through a process of what Berger and Luckmann have termed 'habitualisation', repeated patterns of activity and discourse, institutional structures arise and enter the dialectics of social construction. One such institutional and conscious reality is the domain of art, and it is a reality that is turned to as a source of meaning by a large section of the population, mainly middle-class, but by no means an intellectual élite.

The world of art is predominantly marked out as a field of aesthetic value, we can even say of spiritual value. In this it serves a similar function to religious institutions and the experience of art can be justifiably compared with religious experience, as a quest for the transcendent (139). The aesthetics of Modernism define the structural limits of the quest for the transcendent in the dynamics of process, ensuring that artistic practice is conceptually located as an act of liberation. This liberatory function has been largely distorted this century, turned into the quest for the new, thus, it has been argued, serving the ends of scientific-technological practice in its capitalistic mode, and entering the field of popular culture (140). The distinction between high art and popular culture has become blurred, as a subjectively meaningful reality has become the quest of a mass audience accepting avant-gardism as a creed. The pop musician has risen to challenge or join the artist in the Modernist vanguard, and perhaps more importantly creativity has become democratised: we are now all creative individuals. So can we still see artists as special people and art as an essential experience?

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138 Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., *The Social Construction of Reality*, Harmondsworth, 1967, p.142.
139 Martin, F.D., *Art and the Religious Experience: The Language of the Sacred*, New Jersey, 1972.
140 C.f. Martin, B., *The Sociology of Contemporary Cultural Change*, Oxford, 1981, esp. pp.79-114.

With Modernism, art is raised to a spiritual status, as an autonomous form of experience that can reflect back into social life a meaningfulness denied by scientific-technological practice. A growing public, over the past two centuries, has sought to gain from the world of art an authentic experience, giving rise to sustained expectations of value, of meaningful communication of an aesthetic absolute. The artist has presented himself as a 'special' figure, as priest and prophet, and the public has sought out this specialness as evidence of the authenticity in the act of creation. The crisis affecting the institutional structure of the art-world will become a fatal crisis only if the value expectations of art's public are eroded by the prevailing pluralism, for this itself negates art, accepting the impossibility of providing a value judgement, of discerning good from bad art.

CHAPTER VII

ART AND SOCIETY

In the preceding chapters I have presented a structural model of the aesthetics underlying fine art practice, exploring the relatedness of conceptions of the aesthetic object to artistic style and the social organisation of art practice. Locating developments in aesthetic theory and style in their historical context, I have tried to indicate the intellectual and socio-historical conditions within which the fine arts emerged and were transformed. Before turning to the problem posed in the initial chapter, that of the 'Modernist' dilemma - the end of Modernism, and of art itself, - I shall propose a historical structural explanation of the social dynamics of stylistic transformations within the fine arts since the fourteenth century. Although it is not possible to present a detailed analysis of the varieties and mutations of style, for this would involve recourse to the particularities of the individual artist's flow of consciousness as it mediated the complex levels of structuration forming and reforming in the historical process, it is possible, I believe to demonstrate an association between the aesthetic formation of style and consciousness. There are indeed many dimensions to such a relationship, but it is with the dialectic of freedom and constraint, with what may be described as the consciousness of being active, self-directed, opposed to the consciousness of being acted upon, other-directed, that I shall be concerned here. It is this dimension of consciousness that, I shall argue, provides a major thematic within the dynamic of the history of style (1).

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1 It will become clear that I do not have in mind a relationship between style and consciousness similar to that of Worringer, whose approach is to identify a mentality of a culture or people. For me, consciousness is grounded in socio-psychological life experience. C.f. Worringer, W., *Abstraction and Empathy*, Cleveland, 1968. For a concise summary of Worringer's argument, c.f. Herbert Read's introduction to Worringer, W., *Form in Gothic*, New York, 1972.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND STYLE

The Classical Aesthetic

Returning to the Italian Renaissance (2), the developments taking place in artistic style during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the transition I have charted between the naturalising humanist style of the early Florentine period through to the figurative distortions of idealised forms of the Mannerists, begs explanation. Can this transition be explained in sociological terms? I have already demonstrated that underlying the change in style is the adoption of a new aesthetic ideal - the transcendental ideal replacing that of the empirical ideal - and that this took place in the context of a society where republican democratic institutions were being replaced by more autocratic forms of social control. It is at the historical moment when the façade of democratic government, maintained by the Medici rulers since taking power in 1434 up until the time of Lorenzo Medici (1469-92), falls away, and the reality of autocratic government breaks through (3), that a new aesthetic theory and accompanying artistic style are born. In the new climate of Lorenzo's rule, cultural life came under the influence of neo-Platonism, sponsored through the activity of the Florentine Academy. The empirical ideal, clearly inspirational in the paintings of Masaccio (1401-28), Mantegna (1431-1506) and Piero della Francesca (1461-92), is largely replaced by the transcendental ideal, seen in the work of Botticelli (1444-1510), and Michelangelo (1475-1564).

Dickens has commented on the cultural effect of the movement from democratic to autocratic rule, that it was natural that:

> ... the old republican emphasis upon the heroic and active political life should give way to a cult of the interior life. (4)

There are two readings of this statement that Dickens does not elucidate: firstly, that those who are no longer able to be involved actively in

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2 C.f. Chs. III and IV.
3 C.f. Dickens, A.G., *The Age of Humanism and Reformation*, London, 1972, p.8.
4 ibid, p.32.

their own political determination seek an inner meaning, an active spiritual life; secondly, that the autocrat seeks to foster a climate of spiritual searching, consciously or otherwise, through the establishment of institutions that direct the energies of the collective and place the autocrat in control of its spiritual life. Certainly the latter seems, to some extent, to have taken place under Lorenzo's rule (5). The former may have also made some inroad into the populace, for they were to respond enthusiastically to the preaching of Savonarola in the last decade of the century (6).

In the theory of the transcendental ideal, there was a basis for a style of humanist art that accommodated an inward seeking consciousness. Perfectability was to be achieved through the inner life, a positing and a bridging of the void between the world of experience and essence. This inner life could be externalised, in the work of the great artist, and through the political and spiritual example of the autocrat. The transcendental ideal lends itself to the development of the notion of artistic specialness, but also to the establishment of an élite with privileged access to knowledge and the life of the spirit. This contrasts directly with the dictates of democratic republicanism, requiring active and equal opportunity for involvement in public affairs. This latter requirement finds better expression through the empirical ideal, with its tendency towards naturalism and perfecting of the world of experience. This emphasis on empirical reality has the effect of levelling, the empirical ideal stressing the existence of a reality approachable by all who have the skills acquired in practice, a possibility open to all. Lorenzo, in asserting his political power, also established himself, through the act of patronage, a new type of patronage that was based on the sponsorship of the individual artist, the great masters (7).

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5 Vincent Cronin presents a portrait of Lorenzo as an unwilling leader, who nonetheless became the charismatic focus of Florentine pride, the title 'Magnificent' being earned through his conduct. Cronin, V., *The Florentine Renaissance*, Glasgow, 1972, pp.240-67. There is no doubt, however, that he presented himself and acted as an autocratic leader. In Florentine government, 'the democratic element was almost eliminated'; Checksfield, M.M., *Portrait of Renaissance Life and Thought*, London, 1964, p.22.

6 The events of that decade show that the quest for the inner life had been growing. Savonarola's preaching, a call for the spiritual cleansing of Florentine life, received an enthusiastic response.

7 C.f. Gombrich, E.H., 'The Early Medici as Patrons of Art', Gombrich, E.H., *Norm and Form; Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, London, 1966, pp.52-7. Gombrich suggests (pp.35-57) that Lorenzo is perhaps the first of this type of patron.

There appears, then, to be a clear association between democratic government and the empirical ideal, and between autocratic rule and the transcendental ideal. This seems to be borne out by the continued presence of a style of art conforming to the empirical ideal, although remaining untheorised, in the Low Countries, from the time of Jan van Eyck (1385-1441) and Roger van der Weyden (1400-68), through to the nineteenth century.

The naturalistic style that evolved in the Burgundian region of Flanders owed its presence to the success of the commerce of the towns: a success that gave to the towns a wealth that ensured a high level of autonomy from autocratic control. This naturalism arose as part of the general stylistic movement of what has come to be known as the Gothic - a style erected on the wealth of the towns (8). As early as 1302, at Courtrai, Flemish workers defeated Philip IV of France and the Flemish nobility, to set up a republic that lasted eighty years (9), demonstrating a strong republican will. But the towns of Flanders were to decline under the control of the Spanish after 1556, and the developing naturalistic artistic tradition was to pass to the northern provinces, where the United Provinces of the Netherlands were established by treaty with Spain in 1609 (10). Here the extreme naturalism of Frans Hals (1580?-1666) found a patronage responsive to an often unflattering brush, every detail uncompromisingly portrayed (11).

In Florence, the flowering of naturalistic humanism in the early Republic can be seen, in part, as a response to external threat as well as the consciousness of freedom, the latter being enhanced by the former (12). Hartt has argued that the control over form, space and design signified

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8 The emergence of the Gothic style has been discussed in Ch.III. C.f. Hauser, A., *The Social History of Art*, London, 1951, vol.I, pp.III and 11.

9 The workers of Bruges, Ghent and Ypres were defeated in 1382 by Flemish and French nobles at Roosebeke, the same year that a workers' republic was defeated by the merchant élite in Florence.

10 Artists migrated northwards towards the free territories. C.f. Nash, J.M., *The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer*, Oxford, 1972, p.13. The distinctive Dutch-Flemish contrast only emerged in the seventeenth century; for the previous two hundred years there was much interchange of stylistic elements, with the movement of artists between urban centres. For discussion of fifteenth and sixteenth century art, c.f. Friedländer, M.J., *From Van Eyck to Bruegel*, Oxford, 1981. Friedländer does, however, identify a Germanic northern tradition as distinct from French influence in the south.

11 On Hals' portrait paintings and the place of portraits in Dutch culture, c.f. Kahr, M.M., *Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, New York, 1978, pp.67-88.

12 The 'Baron Thesis' - c.f. discussion in Ch.III; also Baron, H., 'Fifteenth Century Civilisation and the Renaissance', *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol.I, Cambridge, 1971, pp.50-75.

for the Florentines:

> ... [an] intellectual and moral victory over the enemy and over the inner man. (13)

Freedom was associated with control of, and conformity to, nature. The United Provinces were established within a context of a similar external threat, a Protestant confederation with the Catholic Spanish still in control in Flanders. The strong sense of identity that accrued from the sense of threat, enhanced republican sentiments and strengthened the naturalistic art form as a life confirming experience. Portrayal of 'ordinary' experience, the mastery of the sea, the Dutch landscape, the interior domestic world - these were a matter of pride, of self-confirmation. Living in accordance with nature, in harmony with the world as it is given to the senses, was, for the Protestant, an acceptance of God's creation. To affirm the world of experience was to praise God's work. What appears to be a pure empiricism, naturalism, was also an affirmation of a presence, of God in nature: a version of the empirical ideal that did not find rational aesthetic expression in a theory of artistic practice, but nonetheless informed visual style. The depiction of the good citizen carrying out his/her work, of the charitable society or the man of business - these showed both a rational this-worldly orientation and the conduct of God's will in the world.

The Dutch Republic was constituted out of nine territories, each governed by a representative parliament sponsored by burgher oligarchies in the major towns. Executive power was placed in the hands of an elected pensionary, and each province's military commanded by a hereditary stadtholder. In five provinces this was the Prince of Orange. Within the Republic the burgher element generally favoured peace, neutrality, religious tolerance, and free trade, while the Orangists sought intervention in foreign affairs, an English alliance, and were intolerant Calvinists. This Orangist group were supported by the rural classes, and the inland provinces. It is predominantly from the burgher classes that support for the naturalistic representational art of everyday life scenes came - from the group most commited to individual freedom and democratic

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13 Hartt, P., 'Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence', Kleinbauer, W.E. (ed.), *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History*, London, 1971, p.307.

government, and least Calvinistic. Protestantism in itself does not promote an approach to reality that is rational and empirical, but it does facilitate such an outlook within a democratic context. The burgher classes tended to reject the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, supporting the arguments of Arminius, which asserted the possibility of free will, more in tune with the democratic spirit. The tension between naturalism and symbolism in Dutch art stems from this conflict between Calvinist and Arminian doctrine (14).

Another example of a republican government shifting style in the direction of the empirical ideal is to be found in the Venetian Republic. In the fifteenth century, Venetian artists adopted a Gothic style, and abandonned an iconographic style influenced by Byzantium. Following developments towards humanism taking place in Florence, the representational arts in Venice came to uphold a natural yet idealised form. The naturalistic emphasis is clearly seen in Giovanni Bellini's (1431-1516) *Madonna and Child* compositions, but, like the movement in Florentine art, this developed into the more idealised classical vision in the paintings of Giorgione (1478-1510) and Titian (1477-1576). In this development, it followed the general Italian trend towards the transcendental ideal of the High Renaissance. However, Venetian art retained a healthy tension between the two classical ideals throughout the sixteenth century; the transcendental ideal does not fully develop into its Mannerist form. This, it can be argued, was due to Venice's continued independence, avoiding domination by a foreign power in the wars that plagued the region during the century, and the absence of autocratic government. There was a history of republican government in Venice from 1297 until the close of the eighteenth century, when Napoleon's armies entered the city in 1797. However, Venice did suffer a pronounced decline in political and economic power from the sixteenth century.

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14 On the conflict between Calvinism and Arminianism, c.f. Maland, D., *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, London, 1968, pp.186-92. Although Calvinism became the state religion, the tension was never resolved. The symbolic nature of Dutch art can best be seen in still-life painting, where natural objects are collected together to provide a theological lesson. The Dutch pictorial world 'is in fact the vehicle for religious and moral preoccupations': c.f. Kahr, M.M., op cit, p.xi. But for some it was a much more secular vision, especially for the burgher classes, though it would not be correct to dismiss all theological reference, as Larson does; c.f. Larsen, E., *Calvinist Economy and Seventeenth Century Dutch Art*, Lawrence, 1979, esp. pp.59-63.

Republican government in Venice was effectively rule by a merchant élite, which was represented by a rotating senate of two hundred, and the 'Council of Ten', with the Doge as its figurehead, in a princely yet titular role. This merchant ruling group was effectively a closed estate by 1325, forming a hereditary élite (15). Venice, then, did not attain the same level of democratic organisation as Florence, nor did it suffer the internal strife that ensued in Florence and the United Provinces. But, like Florence and the United Provinces, it possessed a strong sense of its own autonomy, of individual rights and civic duty. Its ruling élite espoused liberal values. In all these republics, there were disaffected groups, but these groups could only find expression of their conscious state through art if they were in a position to act as patrons (16). In Venice, patronage was predominantly in the hands of the ruling élite, whose taste tended to be more decorative than that of the Florentines. Venice expressed its republican pride through ceremony and colour, captured by Canaletto's (1697-1768) scenes of Venice, theatrical as much of Venetian public life actually was, yet naturalistically portrayed. The concern for colour and light that marks out Venetian painting from the Quattrocento, that can be found in the work of Titian and Giorgione in their restrained transcendental classical form, dissolves into an impressionistic style in Francesco Guardi's (1712-93) atmospheric paintings (17). In Venetian painting, the tension between ideals ebbs and flows, pulling towards the transcendental ideal particularly during the period of Catholic Reformation, influenced by developments outside Venice.

Titian, Veronese (1528-88). Lotto (1480-1556) and Tintoretto (1519-94), show themselves capable of extreme naturalism, yet in their mythical and religious (historical) paintings clearly demonstrate influences emanating from Mannerism. Venetian art became part of a rapidly developing international Baroque, its internationalism demonstrated in the patronage of Titian, by the Duke of Farrara after 1516, the Duke of Mantua after

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15 C.f. Hale, J.R., 'Venice and its Empire', Martineau, J., and Hope, C. (eds.), *The Genius of Venice, 1500-1600*, London, 1983, p.13.

16 On patronage of Venetian artists, c.f. Fletcher, J.M., 'Patronage in Venice', Martineau, J., and Hope, C. (eds.), ibid, pp.16-20; and Puppi, L., 'Patronage on the Venetian Mainland', ibid, pp.21-3. Fletcher argues that the ideology of the state was so pervasive that there is little difference between state patronage and private. There was no single, all-important, patron to establish and dominate style.

17 On Venetian art in the sixteenth century, c.f. Martineau, J. and Hope, C. (eds.), ibid, Murray, L., *The Late Renaissance and Mannerism*, London, 1967, pp.79-112.

1525, the Emperor Charles V after 1532, as well as the Papacy, and Philip II of Spain after 1550. Other Venetian artists also found that there was wide demand for their work. But this external patronage alone does not explain the adoption of a more transcendentally informed art: Tintoretto worked almost exclusively for the Venetian state and public, as did Veronese after he moved to Venice from Verona. It may be speculated that Venice was heavily shaken by events on the Italian mainland in the sixteenth century, and by the growing challenge to its commercial position by the Atlantic countries' commercial expansionism (18), as well as by losses it had received in the Lavent. The enhanced theatricality of its pageant hides an uncertainty, a doubt about the future, magically fending off a more repressive reality. Having said this, Venice must be contrasted with Florence under Cosimo de Medici (1537-1574), where Mannerism flourished under a repressive régime. Both Venice and Florence were inevitably influenced by the climate of Catholic Reformation, with its turn towards transcendentalism.

Just as the adoption of the empirical ideal seems to be an expression of a liberal consciousness, of freedom to act in the world, so the transcendental ideal better expresses an authoritarian repressive consciousness. In its extreme form, Mannerism, the transcendental ideal equally potrays a sense of loss and longing for a power to order reality. In this Mannerist form, art expresses a religious longing of an 'otherworldly' (19) nature. The ease and brutality with which the French, and then the Spanish, established their dominance of Italy in the sixteenth century was a severe blow to the Italian people. The sacking of Rome (1527) seems to have been a real turning-point, providing a climate of spiritual reflection. In Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel (1535-41) can be found a deep psychological tension, intensified through the presence of a vengeful Christ. The legacy of the fifteenth century, the faith in humanity and Man's ability to act in the world, is shaken. Francesco Parmigiano (1503-40) had earlier portrayed

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18 After this internationalism of the late sixteenth century, Venetian art suffers a decline in line with the fortunes of the state. C.f. Steer, J., *A Concise History of Venetian Painting*, London, 1979, pp.169-208.

19 By 'otherworldliness', I refer to the tendency for consciousness to be directed to transcendental themes, to a reality beyond and outside our rational control. This contrasts with a 'this-worldly' consciousness, promoting active participation in the world of experience.

himself reflected in a convex mirror, a rejection of naturalistic conventions (20). Correggio (1489-1534) constructs figures no longer contained by the picture-frame, breaking the formal and perspectual conventions of earlier humanistic Classicism. The rational empirical view of the world is thus brought into question, proportion abandonned for the emotional appeal of a distorted human form (21). It is, then, this stylistic turn that is developed into a Catholic Reformation style.

Mannerism was adopted and adapted to the needs of the European courts (22), which, whilst still expressing a hierarchical universe, and required to signify the experiences of authority and subordination, also looked to the confirmation of social and religious status through the portrayal of order and splendour. The aspiring absolutist monarchs of Europe sought to surround themselves with the most cultivated examples of art works, and in doing so set the fashion for lesser monarchs, aristocracy and landed nobility, as well as, to some extent, the wealthy members of the commercial classes seeking social recognition. The international style that developed has been termed 'Baroque', a term, as we have seen in Chapter V, that is broadly applied, but at its most typical is a decorative, flamboyant, courtly art, tending towards the Mannerist, especially in the sixteenth century, but more to the decorative in the seventeenth century. The Baroque, unlike Mannerism, is essentially a confident style, expressing the triumph of monarchy in France and the Habsburg Empire, but also the earthly and spiritual power of the Church in Rome.

If Mannerism had a base outside Italy, it was in Spain, where the demand for transcendental, emotional portrayal of religious scenes, was particularly stimulated by Jesuit influence at court. From Spain, this style found an influence throughout the Habsburg courts of Europe. Here

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20 C.f. discussion in Maland, D., *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*, Basingstoke, 1985, p.395.
21 As in Parmigiano's elongated bodies - *The Madonna of the Swan Neck*, 1532.
22 Francis I of France founded a school of artists at Fontainebleau. He appointed Leonardo as Premier Peintre, Ingénieur et Architecte du Roi, and employed him for the last three years of his life. But it is with the patronage of Rosso and Primaticcio to decorate Fontainebleau that the French school is founded (1528-58); Mannerist elongation and elegant serpentine line being combined with decorative motif. C.f. Smith, B., *France: A History in Art*, London, 1984, pp.102-5. The French-Style specifically refers to the combination of stucco ornament and mural painting.

the identification of the crown with the Church was most fully internalised in cultural life. Two artists who are representative of Spanish Court religiosity, Luís de Morales (?-1586) and El Greco (1541-1614), clearly show their debt to Italian Mannerism, though there is a strong recourse to the 'icon' traditions of early Flemish and Byzantine representation (23). Over the next two centuries there was a gradual separation of religious and court art, as the courts moved more enthusiastically towards a decorative Baroque style that was heavily ornamental.

The seventeenth century Spanish court favoured a more sober style of painting than did the French, keeping some of the tone of earlier religious iconography. Velásquez (1599-1660) became Court Painter to Philip IV and, in doing so, changed his style, from a Caravaggio inspired realism - in his *Old Woman Cooking Eggs* - to a lighter, more ephemeral style. In Barzin's words:

> ... he gives expression to that profound feeling of loneliness that came naturally to the Spanish soul, for which there is in the world no reality but that of God. (24)

It was in the Germanic half of the Habsburg Empire, and in the Southern Netherlands, that Baroque was to obtain its strongest expression. Spain remained to some extent insular, and in the eighteenth century found itself left out of developments taking place in the rest of Europe. Barzin argues that Mannerist art continued as the dominant style in the Germanic countries until the Thirty Years' War (1618-48), after which the Habsburgs in Austria gained political and cultural dominance (25). Habsburg dominance saw artists and architects imported from Italy, promoting the Baroque style that was flourishing there between 1660 and 1690 (26).

In the Austrian Empire there was more of a conscious effort to create the culture that would suit the needs of empire. The growth of the court

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23 For discussion of Spanish taste, c.f. Murray, L., op cit, pp.181-96.
24 Barzin, G., *Baroque and Rococo*, London, 1985, p.60.
25 C.f. ibid, p.105. The Mannerism to which he refers is, however, closer to the north-European Gothic, though heavily spiritually enhanced by the spread of Jesuit preaching, than to Italian Mannerism.
26 ibid, pp.105-8.

was:

> ... complemented by the display and symbolism which inspired (as they also reflected) loyalty to the imperial idea. (27)

By the end of the seventeenth century, despite its:

> ... diversity of territories and institutions, the Habsburg Monarchy.... basically supported a single culture. (28)

This statement can be accepted only if we exclude Spain itself, where a considerable amount of regional variation existed (29).

The Southern Netherlands produced Rubens (1677-1640), one of the most representative of Baroque artists, owing more to Italian Catholic Reformation art than to his Flemish forbears (30). He was widely patronised by court and Church, but it is interesting to contrast the Baroque transcendental ideal of the commissioned work with the more impressionistic and empirical style of his non-commissioned portraits of Hélène Fourment, whom he married in later life. These portraits of his wife and children express a this-worldly yearning denied in his more formal Baroque manner; the pictures retain the Baroque sense of fluidity, but there is no doubting the particularity of the portrayal. This would seem to suggest that his consciousness was not being freely expressed in his work, and that it differed from that of his patron, that if he had produced art for himself it would not have been in the high Baroque style.

Rubens did much of his work for the French Court, and it is in France in the seventeenth century that the political and religious claims of monarchy are most fully developed into absolutist state control. This development took place under the supervision of Cardinal de Richelieu (d.1642) and Cardinal Jules Mazarin (d.1661), but found its fullest expression in the reign of Louis XIV, who took personal control of the direction of the state. Emerging from the sixteenth century as Europe's

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27 Evans, R.J.W., *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550-1700*, Oxford, 1979, p.152.
28 ibid, p.311.
29 See Barzin, G., op cit, p.56.
30 He worked in Italy between 1600 and 1609, and was heavily influenced by Italianate art.

leading power, France became the centre of European court cultural life (31). As divine monarch, in 1692, Louis claimed temporal independence from the Pope, and granted himself absolute right to all French lands and property. Through his First Minister, Jean Baptiste Colbert, and Charles Lebrun (1619-90), First Painter to the King, he attempted to centralise and control developments in the arts, creating the French Academy in 1648. Under Lebrun, French Baroque continued in the tradition of Rubens and the artists of the Italian Baroque (32). Art was called upon to glorify the monarchy, and to deify the crown.

This court style, however, did not find full support in the Academy. Although Lebrun tried to impose an aesthetic, he had to deal with the appeal of a French painter who exerted considerable influence on Academic art from outside France - Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) (33). Poussin's refined classicism, especially in his later works, is uncontaminated by decorative motifs, and resists the distortions of Mannerism. It is a poetic art that presents a dream-like world, an escape into the mythical classical past. Resident in Rome, Poussin was working as an independent artist developing his own classical vision. He was following his own inclinations, still within the Classical tradition, concerning the true nature of art, a possibility facilitated by the academic system of occupational control. But there had to be a market to support this art, and Poussin was popular and sold widely. In France, his paintings were particularly popular among the 'noblesse de robe', and he sold works to Louis XIV, indicating a taste that was not entirely focussed on self-aggrandizement, although ownership of great art can itself be a form of aggrandizement.

The mixing of stylistic elements affirming the transcendental ideal, pointing beyond the phenomenal world to a reality that can only be experienced in the presence of an emotionally uplifting and inward contemplative vision, with decorative motif, is typical of court taste. Under the influence of the Catholic reformation, the inner spiritual life finds its fullest expression, but as confidence replaces spiritual

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31 C.f. Barzin, G., op cit, pp.113-210.
32 ibid, p.145.
33 C.f. discussion in Ch.V.

questioning, so earthly glorification tempers the spirituality of religious art. It is the tension between these two elements that defines Baroque art. Court Baroque is an art form that is at once uplifting and reality affirming, yet its inner tension, its restlessness, derives from its spiritual transcendental foundation. Court Baroque, whilst being an affirmation of earthly power, cannot entirely rid itself of the presence of an otherworldly spirituality, though this is heavily disguised by decorative motifs. A sense of oppression of the will pervades, a spiritual weight that balances the gilt-laden decor of the court interior. Escape can only be found in the mythological and religious scenes, turned by Baroque artists into flights of fancy - François Boucher (1703-70) was particularly adept at this, but also Poussin and Watteau provide a contemplative release.

Into the Modern Era

The reaction against Baroque takes two paths, both antagonistic to the excesses of decorative style, seeking a purification of art. These two reactions have already been identified as the Romantic and Neoclassic. In France, the Neoclassic takes its purest form, as an expression of the empirical ideal, in full opposition to the excesses of the Rococo and the transcendental spirituality of the previous two centuries. Neoclassicism is the art form that corresponds to the intellectual movement of Enlightenment: it stresses Man's inherent freedom and reacts against any form of constraint, religious or secular. As I have shown, David's Neoclassicim is a revolutionary art form, not just affirming reality, but setting out to transform it (34). In Neoclassicism, the sense of freedom bursts forth from an oppressive society. But why did the Neoclassic revolt take place in the mid-eighteenth century? It is not possible to go into detail here, but I would argue that the Baroque age had straddled a period of transition in which the potential for commercial and industrial development had become apparent, and the social forces, the bourgeois class and the rational consciousness, prepared for moving society rapidly forward into a new era. There was a growing consciousness of a new era dawning, and, with this, a disquiet with those

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34 C.f. discussion in Ch.V.

institutions, like the monarchy, that seemed to be holding progress back. During the eighteenth century, Britain had begun to move rapidly forward and France seemed on the point of economic and political decline. The Seven Years' War (1756-63) saw the loss of France's colonial empire. French intellectuals increasingly turned to England as an example, to a country where absolutism had been halted and a level of representative government attained - a country that could produce Locke's *Treatises of Government* (1690) (35).

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, absolutist monarchy had increased its centralised control, but it never entirely removed centres of local power in the rural areas, and in the towns the bourgeoisie maintained a degree of independence, gradually increasing their economic and political strength, but without an outlet for political or cultural ambitions. Perhaps as important to the direction of events in France in the eighteenth century, the centralised state created a bureaucracy of privilege that became an obstacle to change. Although France had made great advances in science and technology, commerce and industry, and in the cultural and intellectual field, through the seventeenth century, the reign of Louis XIV had instituted a system of government that came to have a stultifying effect on initiative. Under Louis XV, the bureaucracy of state ossified as a bastion of privilege. Louis XVI's attempts at reform of state bureaucracy and commerce, under the ministership of Turgot, though progressive, failed. As Rudé argues, they failed because they could not break through the system of privilege, the vested interests of parliaments, clergy and aristocracy; there were limits beyond which reform was not possible within the prevailing system (36). Indeed, it was not just the case of limits to reform; in many respects, society in the eighteenth century was becoming increasingly conservative and closed, the rich and educated bourgeois having little opportunity to enter the state bureaucracy and gain privileged stations (37).

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35 Locke's 'Treatises of Government' was influential in the developments that led to the French and American Revolutions, with its attack on monarchical power. '*Who shall be Judge* whether the Prince or Legislature act contrary to their trust?.... I reply, *The People shall be Judge*.' Locke, J., *Two Treatises of Government*, New York, 1965, vol.II, §240, p.476.
36 Rudé, G., *Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1974, p.305.
37 ibid, p.307.

With the example of Britain's rapid economic development and liberalised constitution, but perhaps more importantly of American independence, the consciousness of freedom, that had been philosophically grounded in Enlightenment thought, spread rapidly throughout society. Accompanying this spread of deomcratic consciousness in art was the Neoclassic style. The empirical ideal expressed in plastic form Man's ability to control and create events in the world; it called for active intervention in history.

A similar development began in the German states, but here the hopes of 'Aufklärung' were not to materialise. It is here that Winckelmann gave theoretical form to the Neoclassic ideal, but there was no painter comparable to David, or painting to the *Oath of the Horatii*. Instead, German intellectual life and artistic form was pulled towards the creation of a Romantic aesthetic. Germany had fallen almost entirely under the influence of French culture in the early part of the eighteenth century, but by mid-century a distinctively German cultural tradition was emerging. Romanticism developed as a more emotional and spiritual response to Enlightenment, and was at once more inward looking. Aufklärung was itself stimulated by developments in France and England (38), but instead of developing into a democratic consciousness of the freedom of the individual, it was turned towards providing a rational basis for a strong state, as in the writings of Hegel - enlightened despotism as it developed under Frederick II of Prussia, where Aufklärung became the guiding principle of the state (39).

Enlightened despotism itself led to a more purely bureaucratic, in Weber's terms, state machinery; in 1770 an examination system was established for entry to the civil service, and a programme of continual supervision of work implemented. It also led to a thorough reconsideration of the education system, which, in the following century, was to provide a model

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38 This is demonstrated by study of references made to French and English ideas in biographical accounts written by a cross-section of the educated classes in Germany; c.f. Brunschwig, H., *Enlightenment and Romanticism*, trans. Jellinck, F., Chicago, 1974, p.7.

39 ibid, pp.15-21. Brunschwig describes the three characteristics of aufklärung in Prussia as being a rational philosophy, a tolerant religion and an enlightened despotism; ibid, p.22.

for other European countries. In economics, rationalisation did not lead to free trade, but enhanced the mercantilist system of control, rigidly enforced by the state bureaucracy (40).

There was, then, a correspondence between intellectual ideas and the practice of the state, in the rational ordering of affairs, and yet the net result was increased constraint, not freedom. A new mood was to emerge after 1770, with the 'Sturm und Drang' (41), a movement stressing feeling and the spirit of national identity. The new emphasis on feeling is exemplified in Goethe's 'The Sorrows of Young Werther' (1774), but in the wider societal context it goes beyond this, to a revived mysticism and mediaevalism. It is this wider anti-Aufklärung movement that is the basis upon which German Romanticism is engendered.

The German Romantic movement, at one level, has its origins in the frustration and isolation of the intellectuals in the last quarter of the eighteenth century (42), and in the failure of Aufklärung to liberalise and expand the economy, so as to open opportunities for social mobility. But it was much more deeply rooted than this, in the mentality of a generation.

> In the moral sphere the crisis took the shape of the slow formation of a new mentality exactly the reverse of that of the Aufklärung, its gradual permeation of the masses and, finally, its capture of the élite itself. (43)

It was towards the mystical that society turned at the close of the century. Art became the expression of a collective transcendentalism that increasingly took an individualised form, producing an art style

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40 ibid, pp.41-5. 'Whereas increasing freedom of trade promotes the rise of large-scale private capitalism in England and France, Prussia becomes the home of state capitalism': ibid, p.45.
41 ibid, pp.91-5.
42 ibid, pp.147-63. C.f. also discussion in Ch.VI of this thesis, of Goya's reaction to the failure of Enlightenment, and Gwyn William's comments. Williams sees Spain's experience in the late-eighteenth century in terms of a 'cycle of frustration', stemming from the impossibility of revolutionary change in Spain. As Williams points out, Marx had viewed the situation in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century in similar manner, describing Germany's failure to enter the Modern age. Marx, K., 'Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', first pub. 1843/4, McLellan, D. (ed.), *Karl Marx: Early Texts*, Oxford, 1971, p.117. C.f. Williams, G.A., *Goya and the Impossible Revolution*, Harmondsworth, 1983, pp.165-78. Cardinal has defined German Romanticism in terms of frustrated desire: 'Romanticism is rooted in a sense of the rift between the actual and the ideal. The starting point is the desire for something other than what is immediately available, a desire for an alternative which will completely reverse that which is.' Cardinal, R., *German Romantics in Context*, London, 1975.
43 Brunschwig, H., op cit, p.181.

that was a variant of the transcendental ideal, moving over into its Modernist expressivist phase. The failure of Aufklärung was also the failure to adapt to international forces moving in the direction of industrial democracy; instead, it had enforced a more severe form of authoritarian control through the expansion of bureaucratic tentacles of the state. This was bound to lead to feelings of oppression, and, in Germany's situation, an escape into the inner life, in the absence of a progressive social group strong enough to bring about social change: the opposite of the intention of Aufklärung was achieved. The only way to break out of this oppressive atmosphere was alignment with a mystical force - religious, and later expressive of collective destiny. The individual awaited the act of redemption, longed to be carried forward by the irrational forces of historical evolution.

On the eve of the Modern period, in France, Neoclassical art and, in Germany, Romantic art, expressed two opposed mentalities: in France an active consciousness of freedom; in Germany consciousness of oppression, that sought freedom in the irrational and mystical. In England, the developments in artistic style generally favoured the empirical ideal. Britain, unlike France, had not fostered a strong tradition of artistic accomplishment of its own, but relied on the importation of artists and traditions since the Renaissance. The Elizabethan court had adopted the transcendental ideal by elevating the neo-Platonic conception of love to a fashionable virtue - in the art of Nicholas Hilliard (c.1547-1619), and in the icon-like portraiture of Elizabeth (44). But British taste has generally favoured the empirical ideal: in Hans Holbein's (c.1497/8-1543) portraits of Henry VIII and van Dyck's portraits of the seventeenth century for the Stuarts, the attention to detail far outweighs any idealisation of form. Even though under the Stuarts, there was a fashion for French and Italian Baroque (45). The only English Baroque artist of note was James Thornhill (1675-1734), whose *The Triumph of Peace and Liberty* and *The Return of the Golden Age*, at Greenwich, were evocations of the new Hanoverian era.

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44 Exemplified in *The Ditchley Portrait* (anon., c.1593) and *The Rainbow Portrait* (Isaac Oliver, c.1568-1617), both symbolic of Royal authority.
45 C.f. Gaunt, W., *A Concise History of English Painting*, London, 1978, p.48.

It is during phases when monarchy seems to be reaching for absolutist power that the transcendental form of art is favoured, as might be expected from the schema presented here. England has a long history of liberalism (46), and a consciousness of freedom amongst its landed and commercial classes, of which the civil war and republican era, 1642 to 1660, was but one phase. At no time in the history of monarchy did 'Divine Right' become instituted, and parliamentary democracy had a gradual but relatively uninterrupted development. Barrington Moore Jnr. dates the growth of a commercial capitalist outlook in the countryside from the early fifteenth century, that set in motion:

> ... one of the significant forces propelling England towards both capitalism and a revolution that would make capitalism eventually democratic. (47)

According to Moore, Britain experiences a complementarity and unity of commercial interests from town and country, through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that opposed the power of the crown (48). Authoritarian control was resisted, indicating a strong consciousness of freedom: a practical, active consciousness that finds its way into English Enlightenment thought (49). Moore's model of the transitionary routes to the Modern world taken by England, France and Germany, offers a socio-historical explanation of differing political responses, but it also has value for interpreting the cultural response in the field of fine art, and, more broadly, intellectual life as a whole.

In the eighteenth century, Britain was beginning to expand economically, with increased commerce in her world-wide colonial markets, and the development at home of a factory-based system of production, facilitated by technological revolution (50), moving into a period of self-sustained growth - Rostow's 'take-off' (51) - and, exerting economic, political and military influence in Europe. The 'Industrial Revolution' was not limited to technological change and economic growth; as Milward and Saul argue,

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46 Liberalism has a basis in religious tolerance, itself stimulated by the English Reformation. C.f. Dickens, A.G., *The English Reformation*, Glasgow, 1973, pp.438-41.
47 Moore, B. jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Harmondsworth, 1973, p.7.
48 ibid, esp. pp.3-39. Moore sees land enclosure as an early individualistic economic practice, demonstrating a commercial mentality, and leading to the growth of a class of yeomenry and decline of the peasantry.
49 C.f. discussion in Ch.V.
50 C.f. Landes, D.S., *The Unbound Prometheus*, Cambridge, 1972, pp.41-123.
51 Rostow, W.W., *The Stages of Economic Growth*, Cambridge, 1971.

it involved a total social transformation (52). But in Britain, the social fabric was flexible and prepared for such transformation. There is little evidence to show that the Industrial Revolution was at first experienced as in any sense destructive; it was a gradual transformation infecting the countryside as well as the urban centres. Initially industrial development was experienced as progress; only later did a response to its 'dehumanisation' and to ecological effects develop in the Romantic art and literature of the nineteenth century (53).

No great wedge was driven between bourgeoisie and aristocracy as was the case in France. And the confidence, among the upper and middle classes, can be seen in the art of the period: that of John Wootton (1682-1765) and George Stubbs (1724-1806) showing the gentry at play, the portraiture of Romney (1734-1802), Reynolds (1723-1792) and Gainsborough (1727-1788), and the popularity and interst in the picturesque landscapes of Alexander Cotman (1717-86) and John Robert Cozens (1752-c.1797/9) through to John Crome (1768-1821) and Constable (1776-1837).

Britain's experience of entering the Modern era was in no sense forced; it led the way and did not produce extremes of reaction. Even the adoption of Neoclassical style in art and architecture was far from a political act, but rather part of the natural inclination towards the empirical ideal. At the turn of the century, a reaction did, however, take place, and an English Romanticism developed, in the work of William Blake (1757-1827), Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), and J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851). But these artists produced very individualised responses to the new era: Turner's work has already been dealt with at length in Chapter VI, where it was suggested that his expressivist art could be seen as a personal psychological response. Blake's art is more in tune with the Gothic revivalism of the period, and has affinities with German Romanticism in its religiosity and mysticism, while Fuseli evoked a sinister dreamworld,

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52 Milward, A. and Saul, S.B., *The Economic Development of Continental Europe, 1780-1870*, London, 1973, p.29.

53 An excellent collection of writings showing the range of response to Industrialisation is contained in Clayre, A. (ed.), *Nature and Industrialisation*, Oxford, 1979. The countryside and its traditional way of life only became idealised in contrast to urban life; George Crabbe portrays a life of toil for the village labourers in his 'The Village', 1783.

a threat to reason's domain. None of these artists were, however, typical of English art of the period. What they demonstrate in their individualism is that the artist's consciousness has now become firmly established as constitutive of the work of art. This freeing of the artist's creative consciousness takes place on the eve of the Modern era; the artist is able to take stylistic control from the patron, or, increasingly likely, the purchaser, and impose his consciousness on style to a much greater extent.

Up to this point, I have been primarily concerned to show that the style of art, whether it tended towards the empirical or the transcendental ideal, could be located as associated with a prevailing consciousness of freedom or an authoritarian consciousness within a collectivity, the assumption being that this collectivity determined, through patronage, the style that best suits their vision - or visual ideology (54). In the case of autocratic patronage, the dominant style is that patronised by the autocrat, but more often it is a collectivity with economic and/or political power that determines style. It is an aspect of the Modern era that artists create art for themselves, and are less responsive to public taste. The notion that the artist is arbiter of taste had been fostered within the academies, where artists were trained to become experts, to study art and create taste, not purely to cater for a patron's wishes. But the acceptance of an 'ideal', to be theorised and practically sought, had also fostered the advocacy of rules that had themselves become constraining. The emphasis on reality as process saw the erosion of the academic rule, and placed much more control in the hands of the experiencing artist. This was accompanied by the growth of a market in art, which largely replaced the system of patronage (55).

The effect of this shift in authority over style, placing stylistic concerns more firmly in the hands of the artist, is to produce the phenomenon of the 'movement'. Groups of artists collaborate for the purpose of creating 'art', defining principles underlying style (56). I

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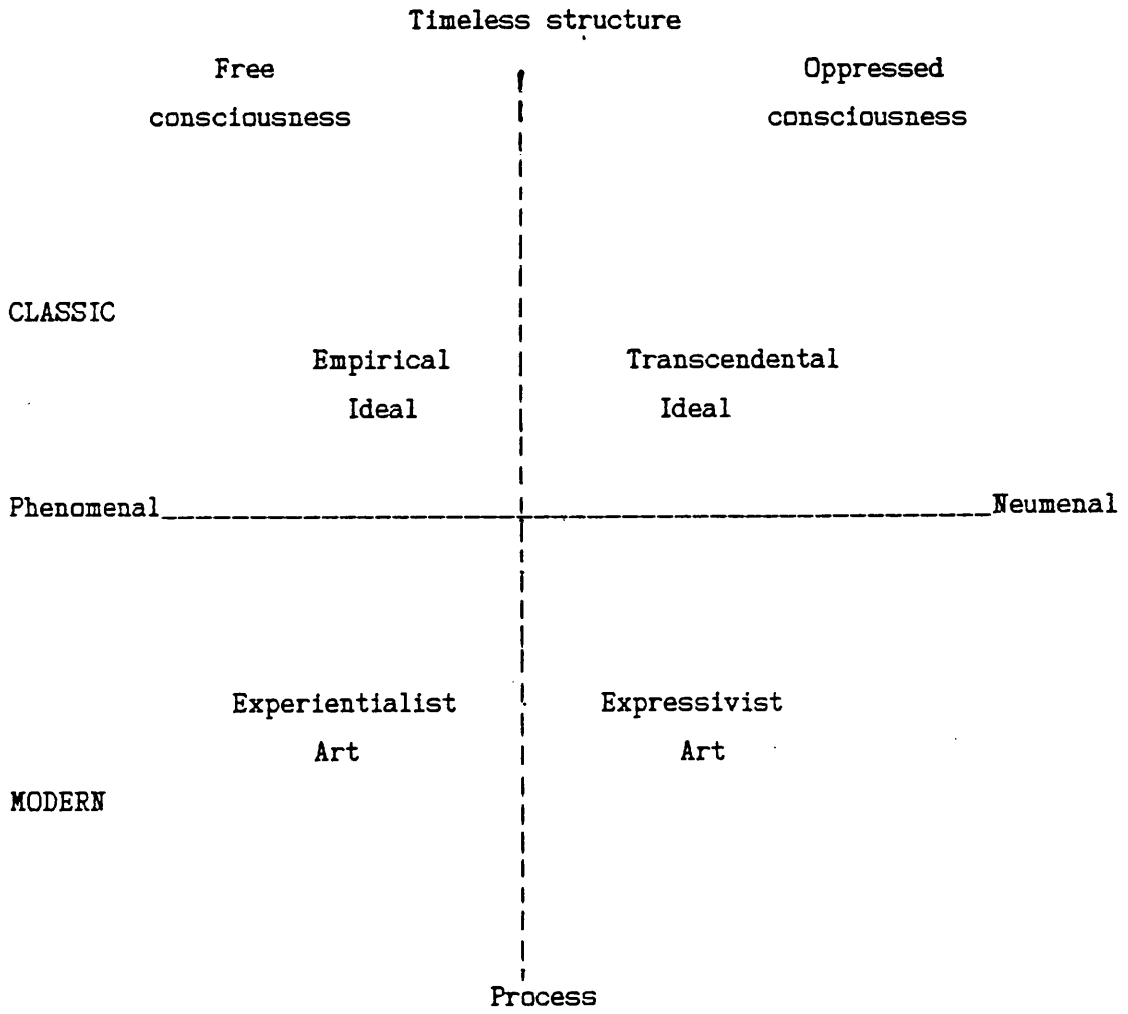
54 I use the term 'visual ideology' to refer to those typical attitudes that form within collectivities, that help shape the reality of its members, and determine their approach to the world. I do not imply any negative connotation.
55 C.f. discussion in Ch.VI.
56 As I have already argued, the 'Movement' is a distinctly modern social category.

shall return to this point. What is important to stress here is that it is the consciousness of the movement or individual artist, which may or may not find broader social support, that increasingly is reflected in artistic style. The association between patronage group consciousness and style is gradually eroded, until only a shadowy relationship holds between authorial consciousness and the art public. Nonetheless, I would maintain that in the Modern era the two strands of the fine art aesthetic continue to be formative of style and to mediate consciousness, though the aesthetic object, as I have demonstrated, has become processional. A general pattern is discernible in the development of, what in the Modern era has become, experientialist and expressivist art forms.



The Modernist Aesthetic

In France, the experientialist aesthetic dominates developments in art in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Naturalism, Realism, Impressionism, Cubism, are all variants of what I have termed experientialist art. Art is given an avant-gardist function, taken over from Neoclassicism. It is an expression of the overpowering consciousness of freedom inherited from the Revolution. It is not that the Revolution of 1789 made life in society a condition of freedom; for it did not. This is not the issue. Rather it instilled a value of 'being free', especially in the consciousness of the intellectual classes, but also among the general populace. And being free meant active involvement in public affairs, the belief that action can change social reality - hence the revolutionary uprisings of 1830, 1848, 1871, and the student-led protests of 1968, which show that the tradition has not been entirely lost (57).

French art movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought to define reality as an interactive experience. The development from Naturalism to Cubism has to be understood in terms of this quest for reality as process, as a conscious effort to define the moment at which the experience of reality is manifest. But this experience of reality was also an act of creation; it uniquely defined the point of contact between reality and experience, a moment at which reality and experience became one and the same. The Naturalist trusted his senses, still believing he lived in a world of shared symbols; the Realist sought to select and heighten awareness of reality that could no longer be taken for granted; the Impressionist personalised experience, dissolving the appearance of objectivity, refining the experience of the senses in the quest for a greater objectivity (58); the Cubist dissected

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57 For political overview of France through this period, c.f. Mettam, R. and Johnson, D., *French History and Society: The Wars of Religion to the Fifth Republic*, London, 1974; c.f. also Magraw, R., *France 1815-1914, The Bourgeois Century*, Oxford, 1983.

58 Impressionism has been viewed as a turning point: 'something decisive happened in the history of art around Manet which set painting and the other arts upon a new course.... a kind of scepticism, or at least unsureness, as to the nature of representation in art': Clark, T.J., *The Painting of Modern Life*, London, 1984, p.10. For Clark, this formed part of the 'spectacle', the illusion of Modernity itself, that detracted attention from class reality. Yet what is class reality but conflict in Marxist terms, itself a conception of process? Impressionism and Marxist theory are within the Modernist structure; what is real for Marx is historical process, this may be viewed as a different expression of Modernism from the Impressionist vision of reality, [contd.]

appearances, evoking an ever-changing restless reality of collage and shifting perspective. All this took place in a society where the intellectual classes saw their role as active, in which avant-gardism was a natural extension to the experientialist vision.

The dominance of England, economically and militarily, in Europe after 1815, and the subsequent rise of Prussia in Germany, had the effect of displacing France from the position of cultural leadership. There was half a century of national stylistic development in France, England and Germany. But towards the end of the nineteenth century, French artists were again finding international emulation. This can be explained in terms of the appeal of France's strong experientialist tradition on British, and later American, intellectuals and artists. Britain never became a cultural centre for the fine arts; I believe this may be explained largely in terms of its less assertive experientialist development. By this, I mean that British intellectuals and large sectors of its populace experienced economic and social change, and the processes of democratisation as controlled development - gradualism. They did not have to assert their freedom in the cultural sphere as a revolutionary activity. Nor did they experience the state as oppressive and seek an expressivist solution as in Germany.

There was very little avant-gardist mentality, certainly of a political nature, in the English tradition. Victorian culture did, however, produce one major movement of note - the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (59). Pre-Raphaelitism contained a mixture of the experientialist and expressivist aesthetic, tending to emphasise the latter, particularly in the painting of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82). It was an art tensioned between extreme naturalism and mysticism (60). Pre-Raphaelitism was a critical

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but Modernism itself cannot be denied as a category of experience, neither can it be encapsulated within a single style of becoming.

59 Founded in 1848 as a secret brotherhood, they attracted much abuse from critics, who saw them as attacking the Classical ideal of beauty, and advocating a more primitive art form. Their work was defended by Ruskin, and their style greatly influenced later Victorian artists. The original members were William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John Millais. C.f Wood, C., *The Pre-Raphaelites*, London, 1983.

60 Gaunt points out this contrast between the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris, and also the Realist tendency with its social comment in Ford Madox Brown's (1821-93) work. C.f. Gaunt, W., op cit, p.180, note to paintings.

response to Victorian society; emerging in the wake of the Chartist movement, it projected an uncertain consciousness and did not find for itself a progressive symbolism, essentially turning to a contemplative moral reflection on the life that had been lost: modern life was to be rejected through an escape into a mythical past. It tapped an oppressive current in Victorian life, but could not confront it directly. Though it produced some remarkable art, it did not prepare the ground for a further movement (61), but rather shaded into the Victorian mainstream of uncritical art, with its naturalistic representation of all aspects of middle and upper class life, its sentimental approach to the lower classes, and its mythologising of Britain's past and present. As Gaunt has noted, the English artists seem to have been 'perfectly in harmony' with middle class taste (62).

In the Germanic states can be found a different development. German artists increasingly looked to Italy - Rome in particular - for inspiration in a period of religious revival. The Nazarenes turned their backs on the German Academic system and settled in Rome (63) in 1810, and sought a German art in the revival of the spiritual life of the Middle Ages (64). The spiritual, mystical art of this group stands in direct contrast to the Neoclassicism advocated through the Academies, yet it sought to particularise, and in this is pulled towards a naturalistic style, in opposition to the idealisation of the German Neoclassic. The Romanticism of the early nineteenth century was not discarded as German painters moved in the direction of more naturalistic art, a direction taken internationally. The Academic system retained a strong hold, keeping the Classical ideals alive, supported by the continuation of strong centralised states, in Prussia and Austro-Hungary. Particularly in Austro-Hungary, there was still a strong court influence and a continuation, if weakened, of the decorative style - almost a refusal to enter the modern world. This was not the case in Germany, where state confidence was mounting with growth in economic and military power. In the second half of the century, Naturalism was the dominant style,

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61 The Arts and Crafts Movement that was greatly influenced by Pre-Raphaelitism never became a Modernist 'movement', but continued into the twentieth century as a recurring counter-theme to the high art tradition.
62 Gaunt, W., op cit, p.196.
63 Finke, U., *German Painting from Romanticism to Expressionism*, London, 1974, p.31: 'Between 1800 and 1830 Rome really became the artistic capital of Germany.'
64 C.f. ibid, pp.31-66, and discussion in Ch. VI of this thesis.

painters like Adolph von Menzel (1815-1905) depict the life of state and that of the individual in naturalistic terms. And yet, the intellectual climate remains bleak with little movement made by the state towards liberalisation even after the 1848-9 uprisings, perhaps explaining the strong undercurrent of expressivist feeling (65). By the last decades of the nineteenth century, there were Academic breakaway movements of artists in Vienna, Munich and Berlin (66), following international trends towards abstraction and individualism. These movements, though they may be described as avant-gardist in their rejection of the Academic system, present their art in expressivist forms - Symbolism and Expressionism. They reacted to the repressive Academic and political climate in which they sought to work as artists, responding to external constraints by seeking a release of inner forces. To the external forces of bureaucracy and repression, the artist held up in opposition the inner-life - Franz Marc's:

> ... victory is not achieved by numbers, but by the strength of the spiritual ideas. (67)

Up until 1933, when Hitler labelled expressivist art 'degenerate', and artists were no longer able to work in Germany without conforming to a more 'healthy' realism, expressivist art retained its position as the dominant stylistic force, from the primitivism of Kirchner to the black satire of Beckmann. Again in the 1960's, German art began to take on a distinctive national outlook, returning to expressivist modes after being largely dominated by American influence during the post-war period. The new Expressionism has its immediate origins in West German feelings about the Hitler years, the oppression of a historical process that ran

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65 Writing of the German artist's response to French Impressionism, Finke observes the resistance offered by reality to being dissolved into impressions. There remains the 'dualism between the expression of content and pure visual experience'; Finke, U., ibid, p.156. Cardinal, R., op cit, p.11, points to the 'dismal' political horizon confronting intellectuals and artists in the nineteenth century, a continuation of the direction set in the eighteenth century. Eley has pointed out that the German response to British liberal capitalism was to strengthen the traditional, authoritarian and aristocratic value system, a development which the bourgeoisie failed to stop, and ultimately colluded with. He makes the point that a bourgeois society does not have to be 'liberal', and is often very repressive. C.f. Eley, G., 'The British Model and the German Road; Rethinking the Course of German History before 1914', Blackbourn, D., and Eley, G., *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century Germany*, Oxford, 1984, pp.56-90.

66 C.f. Vergo, P., *Art in Vienna 1898-1918*, London, 1975.

67 Franz Marc, 'Die Wilden Deutschland', reproduced in Rosenthal, N., 'The Will to Art in Twentieth Century Germany', Joachimides, C.M., Rosenthal, N. and Schmied, W. (eds.), *German Art in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1985, p.13.

out of control, that turned men into monsters. But there is also the shadow of the Berlin wall and a divided nation - the presence of a repressive bureaucratic order. It is interesting to note that artists from East Germany have been greatly influential in the formation of a new German Expressionism (68).

In Britain, after the 1914-18 War, developments are hard to trace; artists follow individualistic styles, and their work is overshadowed by movements in France and Germany, to which many British artists respond sympathetically. The English tradition retains its experientialist bias, but there are a number of exceptions. Having been influenced by Futurism and Cubism before the war, and having associated himself with abstract Vorticism, David Bomberg's return to figurative painting in the post-war period is to portray an oppressed humanity in an expressivist, Vorticist style. Paul Nash, in the same period, expresses the desolation of war, a waste-land where abstracted feeling is all that can exist. Later, Graham Sutherland's expressive style is a particularly individualistic response in the expressivist mode, while, in sculpture, Henry Moore is most notable. The period between 1870 and 1914 saw Britain in competition, economically and eventually militarily, with Germany: a liberal democratic state against an authoritarian state. During this period, the age of 'Imperialism', expressivist tendencies were strengthened in the art of European countries. As Anderson demonstrates, the optimism of mid-eighteenth century begins to disintegrate after 1870, and there is a reaction against realism, a growing self-doubt and turning towards the irrational (69). It is during this period that British artists began to turn for leadership to Europe, and Futurism in particular made its mark. Combined with Cubism, it formed the basis of the Vorticist movement. After the war, it is much more difficult to trace the directions of influence, partly due to the more individualised response of British artists whose avant-gardism did not take a collective form.

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68 C.f. biographical details of artists included in the Royal Academy exhibition of 'German Art in the Twentieth Century'; ibid, pp.478-501. Penck moved from East Germany as recently as 1980.
69 Anderson, M.S., *The Ascendency of Europe, 1815-1914*, New York, 1985, c.f. esp. pp.358-72. I shall return to this point in the following section.

1945 is a turning-point in the history of art. After this date it is America that takes the cultural leadership and exerts its influence on Europe, coinciding with American dominance as an economic and military power on the world scene. It is the experientialist aesthetic that is asserted. America had a long tradition of naturalistic painting, but European influence had moved artists towards abstraction in the first half of the century. After 1945, the first American movement that was to be emulated throughout Europe was Abstract Expressionism. The term 'Expressionism' is misleading; it refers to a purely interactive process of applying paint, and the style is correctly viewed as experientialist, as it does not 'express' anything, but rather represents the experience of interaction with the medium (70). This art form became accepted at a time of 'cold war' politics, when American consciousness was made sharply aware of the dichotomy between liberal democracy and authoritarian Communism. Abstract Expressionism was asserted as the art of a free nation, a purely individualistic art, an expression of personal freedom. Developments through Formalism, Pop Art, to Minimalism, represent the continuation of this experientialist tradition. As in the Florentine experience of external threat, a form of art was found that could represent liberal democratic ideals.

The association between the empirical ideal/experientialist art and the consciousness of freedom, and the transcendental ideal/expressivist art and the consciousness of constraint, has to be developed a little further here. Firstly, it is necessary to say something about individualistic elements in style. There are always biographical/psychological factors within the experience of the artist that help determine consciousness, and that have an effect on individual style that makes this unaccountable for in purely societal terms. In some artists' work, individual psychological influences take predominance over societal conditions as the main source of style. Van Gogh's expressivist art is an individual expression of this type, and, to a lesser extent, as I have argued, is that of Turner's later style. As earlier indicated, an artist such as Rubens may have been skillfully affecting a style for a patron that was

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70 The experientialist aesthetic was theorised by John Dewey in 1934; c.f. Dewey, J., *Art as Experience*, New York, 1955. The true work of art, for Dewey, requires 'a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self with objective conditions, a process in which both of them acquire a form and order they did not at first possess'; p.65.

not his personal style. Unimpaired by concerns of patronage, the Modern artist is much more likely to allow free play of consciousness in the creation of a work of art, both because the artist consciously seeks his own style, and because the Modernist aesthetic encourages this. A sociological account cannot shed light on individual aspects of style without having recourse to personal psychological biographic detail, and even then it is limited; but it can attempt to explain why society finds a place for such individualistic forms of expression - I shall return to this shortly. The important thing to note here is that the artist's consciousness, in the Modern period, is reflected in style to a much greater extent than in the Classical period.

Secondly, how is it possible to account for Soviet Realism (71) and Facist Realism (72) in terms of the model presented here? Both these art forms appear to be naturalistic, experientialist art forms, yet they are sponsored by totalitarian states. In both cases, I would argue, the naturalism is forced and is in fact far from natural. Whilst these 'Realisms' seek to express the free spirit of the people, they also seek to use art as propaganda, as didactic and emotionally uplifting. They seek in the representation of a particular man the ideal for all men, and in doing so the particularity of the representation is lost. The representation takes on the quality of a model, lifeless, approaching the iconic, but failing to transcend its own institutional context, or, more successfully, it serves as a 'Romanticised' depiction. The reality of totalitarian government, and its accompanying oppressive consciousness, refuse to allow a popular realism to emerge; instead an expressivist reaction is suppressed. In Germany of the Weimer Republic, the shadow of oppression fed expressivist and 'decadent' art, but the 'cleansing' process initiated by the Facists could not produce an art form more authentic (73). Russia of the revolution experienced a period of truly

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71 On Soviet Realism, c.f. Valkenier, E., *Russian Realist Art; The State and Society*, Michigan, 1977. Realism had a long tradition, starting as an anti-academic art in the 1860's, becoming the academic style of the turn of the century, and being revived as the state art between 1932 and 1956.

72 C.f. Hinz, B., *Art in the Third Reich*, trans. Kimber, R. and Kimber, R., New York, 1979. The promotion of National Socialist Realism was accompanied by a rewriting of German art history, as part of the illumination of 'degenerate' art.

73 The Weimar years had seen the surfacing of cultural tendencies nurtured in pre-war Germany, the development of expressionism into an avant-gardist weapon and given an internationalist focus. The Weimar Republic 'liberated what was already there'; Gay, P., *Weimar Culture; The Outsider as Insider*, Harmondsworth, 1974, p.6. These tendencies Hitler labelled as 'degenerate', and set about replacing them with a more 'healthy' cultural climate, which in fact transformed and directed the repressed energy of the nation. For a review of the period, c.f. Willett, J., *The Weimar Years; A Culture Cut Short*, London, 1984.

experientialist art, Constructivism, which sought to integrate itself with the revolutionary moment taking an active part in practical social life (74). But in place of this experientialist art, Socialist Realism was imposed from above as a state orthodoxy, thus taking away the possibility of a 'free art' at a time when the oppressive aparatus of the state was turning a popular revolution into an authoritarian régime. Both 'Realisms' fail to produce 'authentic' art.

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74 C.f. Gray, C., *The Russian Experiment in Art, 1863-1922*, London, 1971.

THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

It is necessary to return to the issue of Post-Modernism and theories of the end of art, at least as it has been known since the Renaissance. The prevailing pluralism, the inability to define in value terms what is art, has been identified by Hauser as an indication of crisis (75). But, as Hauser points out:

> Art's time is only past when we cease to think not only about the possibility of solving artistic problems but about the problems at all. It can neither order itself to be condemned to collapse nor announce it; if it does so, it still exists. (76)

The true criterion of art's collapse is not its own pronouncements; it is the:

> ... failure of its social functions, (77)

but social functions themselves are subject to historical change. Art, thus, according to Hauser, may change, yet continue to be connected with its traditional forms. We are not, then, at the end of art, but can it be that we are at the beginning of a new era? Clearly, Hauser is using the term 'art' very broadly. My own concern here is with the sphere of fine art practice, within which art obtains its contemporary meaning. In this sense, art's 'functions' are structurally delimited, fixed in terms of its aesthetic purpose. To abandon this aesthetic purpose is to become other than fine art. There are then two related questions to pose. Is the fine art tradition at an end? Is Modernism at an end?

Let me begin by posing one further question: What is 'Modernity' in art? This has to be the starting point of a discussion of art's contemporary status and its future possibilities. Hauser identifies the origin of the main trends in Modern art in the Expressionism of van Gogh, Munch, Strindberg, which represents a rejection of the :

> ... inwardness of impressions (78)

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75 Hauser, A., *The Sociology of Art*, London, 1982, p.658.
76 ibid, p.659.
77 ibid, p.659.
78 ibid, p.662.

in the painting of Seurat and Cézanne. After this, he argues, there is an unbroken continuity in art, due to the stability of economic and social circumstances (79) - it is the beginning of welfare society when governments seek legitimation in the eyes of the masses, in the aftermath of the turn of century crisis, ending in World War I. This departure is marked by the rejection of the past, and, in art, of naturalism, which Hauser sees as having dominated art since the Renaissance.

> The task of complying with the character of empirical reality was never questioned in Western art since the end of the Middle Ages. (80)

I hope I have demonstrated the incorrectness of this view. The transcendental ideal tended to the deformation of the natural order, as does its Modernist counterpart, expressivist art, which has its origins in German Romanticism. The Expressionists were not breaking entirely with tradition, and neither were the Impressionists whose stylistic departure is to be located in a tradition of experientialist art that spans the past two centuries. Hauser is correct in opposing Expressionism to Impressionism, but is wrong to see in this particular historical conjuncture a break with art's past. My thesis would explain the more prominent position of expressivist art in European culture after the 1914-18 war as due to a growing consciousness, among intellectuals, of oppressive structures acting outside of their control - the hopelessness of Eliot's 'The Hollow Men':

> Shape without form, shade without colour,
> Paralysed force, gesture without motion. (81)

This may help explain the growing tendency towards abstraction generally, as the artist searches for a form both to represent his feelings of alienation and to break through the torpor of conventional symbolism. But the period between the wars only enhances this alienation; the socio-psychological conditions of the sense of alienation and the artist's own distancing from society are grounded in the wider context of Modernism as it developed from the eighteenth century.

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79 I find this a strange conception of a period with two world wars. I assume he refers to the fact that there has been no real challenge to bourgeois hegemony.
80 Hauser, op cit, p.663. Clark sees this same shift taking place with Impressionist art, an art form that Hauser views as still tied to 'impressions'; c.f. Clark, T.J., op cit, pp.10-11.
81 Eliot, T.S., 'The Hollow Men', 1925, *Collected Poems, 1902-62*, London, 1963.

This alienation begins as a search for meaning, in a social context where intellectualism, enhanced by enlightenment rationalism, frees itself from the classical identity of the unity of all things. For, as Weber writes:

> ... under these conditions, art becomes a cosmos of more and more consciously grasped independent values which exist in their own right. Art takes over the function of a this-worldly salvation, no matter how this may be interpreted. It provides a salvation from the routine of everyday life, and especially from the increasing pressures of theoretical and practical rationalism. (82)

In the artist's search for the creation of aesthetic forms, free from non-artistic content, there is an imperative towards abstraction. This is enhanced by the consciousness of the processual nature of the aesthetic object, which denies form any naturalistic stability. The development of photographic techniques may have helped speed up this process, but cannot be cited as the cause of art's increasing abstraction (83). This lies in the aesthetic of process that pictures the dynamics of beauty as a constant becoming. Expressivist and experientialist art share in this foundational condition of Modernist art. The association of progressivism with expressivist art, in Hauser's case, is an attempt to define art in avant-gardist terms, as cultural symbolic representation of forward moving social forces - art, true art, begins in the experience of reality and 'transcends it' (84). Hauser recognises that avant-gardism is itself a conscious artistic movement, rooted in Romanticism (I have argued also Neoclassicism), but does not see this movement as significant in the twentieth century. Futurism and Dadaism, which most embody the avant-gardist doctrine, do not signify the Modernist thematic in its most developed form according to Hauser (85). It is Expressionist art that does this, with its opening of psychic depths. But to argue that this is more fruitful than Impressionism is to contrast wrongly expressive human form with experientialist objectification of nature. Impressionism did not objectify, though it sought to use objective procedures to capture a moment of an interactive, constitutive experience. It presents a

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82 Weber, M., reproduced in Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C.W. (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, London, 1970, p.342.

83 The link between the development of photography and the move towards abstraction is an important one. As Gombrich has argued, photography 'pushed artists further on their way of exploration and experiment', away from what could be achieved 'better and cheaper' by a mechanical devise: Gombrich, E.H., *The Story of Art*, London, 1974. Photography also changed the public's perspective on art by presenting art itself through reproduction; c.f. Malraux, A., *Museums Without Walls*, London, 1967.

84 Hauser, A., op cit, p.680.

85 ibid, pp.680-5.

representation no less humanly meaningful than one filled with expressive content, but based on a different conception of what it is to tap the essence of reality as experience. However, Hauser is correct to recognise that abstraction has, in the long term at least, led to loss of human content; in confining the work of art to an individualistic expression or experience, Modern art has failed to distinguish between reality and illusion. Art objects have come to be justified by their status as individualised entities (86); having little meaning outside of this for the potential audience. In this they are the concrete expression of the artist's own sense of alienation in society. As a statement of alienation, yet as an assertion of art, the contemporary art object in its pluralistic universe is a symptom of a 'legitimation crisis' which can only be resolved, as Radnoti has discerned, in the reassertion of the:

> ... general concept of art. (87)

But it is precisely this general concept, contained within the system of fine art practice, that has increasingly been challenged this century.

For Habermas, there have been many expressions of 'Modernism' in history:

> The most recent Modernism simply makes an abstract opposition between tradition and the present. (88)

The most modern is here the most authentic, finding its artistic/aesthetic expression in the notion of the avant-garde, which eventually leads to the cult of the 'new'. This Modernism is, he argues, a product of a new 'time-consciousness':

> ... a value placed on the transitory, the elusive, and the ephemeral, the very celebration of dynamism, discloses the longing for an undefiled, an immaculate and stable present. (89)

To rebel against the past is to be modern, but more than this, it is to rebel against:

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86 ibid, p.175.
87 Radnoti, S., 'Mass Culture', trans. Féher, F. and Fekete, J., Heller, A. and Féher, F. (eds.), *Reconstructing Aesthetics*, Oxford, 1986, p.77.
88 Habermas, J., 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', trans. Benn-Habib, S., *New German Critique*, no.22, Winter, 1981, p.4.
89 ibid, p.5 - a conception that Habermas associates with Bergson.

... all that is normative. (90)

Habermas correctly argues that we have to stand back from art and look at the broader processes of Modernity in order to put this in perspective. The 'project' of Modernity, he argues, is the development of the fields of cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive rationality (91). In the twentieth century, these areas of practice have become more autonomous and disconnected from everyday experience. The sphere of artistic pratice has become increasingly specialised since the Renaissance, with the doctrine of art-for-art's-sake established in the nineteenth century, when the:

... media of expression,... [and] techniques of production (92)

became the aesthetic object. Art became a 'cultural mirror' of the impossibility of unity between art and social life, against which the avant-garde attack on art was made. But, according to Habermas, these anti-art movements have proved to be no more than 'nonsense experiments' (93); instead of achieving their objective, the avant-garde having given new legitimacy to artistic specialness, they have not re-integrated art into social life. Criticising Surrealism, in particular, he argues that there has been no 'emancipating effect' from this attack on artistic form, which is itself only one element in a distorted social reality; the true project of emancipation is a restructuring of the social life world as a whole. One may ask exactly what part art can play in this restructuring; has it a general social critical role to play? Certainly this was the original avant-gardist intention within the experientialist tradition from Neoclassicism. Or should it seek to blend into, and contribute to, social life, as was the intention of the Arts and Crafts Movement? The failure of the first of these options, as Habermas recognises, in the notion of art as a 'critical mirror', led to the anti-art attack on art itself. Habermas shares with many Modern artists, and with avant-gardists in particular, the desire to establish an undistorted 'gemeinschaft', but this has yet to be shown to be a possibility. Until it is, according to Habermas, the project of Modernity has not yet been fulfilled. However, the idea of a project implies intention or direction, both of which

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90 ibid, p.5.
91 C.f. discussion of Habermas's social theory in Ch.II.
92 ibid, p.10.
93 ibid, p.10.

suppose some sort of guiding hand or historical necessity. This I would reject - to the extent to which projects are human social manifestations, as was the Enlightenment, there is no necessity that they should either be completed or continue on the same course.

Modernism, as I have presented it, primarily stems from a state of social consciousness concerning the nature of reality. This is not to refute entirely Habermas' view, but rather to see the process of artistic and intellectual development as taking place within structures of consciousness. Posed in this way, the notion of continuity with the Enlightenment is to be questioned. As Habermas recognised, Modernism is linked to changed time-space experiences. But these erect a structural barrier between Modernism and the past.

Giddens takes this analysis of time-space discontinuity further, linking the change to Modernity with:

> ... transformation of time-space relations introduced by the spread of industrial capitalism in the late 18th and 19th centuries. (94)

I believe that this interpretation has some validity, so long as the relationship is seen as an association and not as a causal relation, as part of a total transformation rather than a chain of events. There is an accompanying shift from mercantilist to free trade notions, with Britain's success in industrialising, showing a shift of perspective on the nature of economic reality towards the possibility of open-ended progress. Giddens specifically relates modern time-space relations to the notion of 'quantified time' as determined by transactions in the labour market. I would look beyond this to the role of time in our lives as related to technological change and determinism, in helping to form the contemporary process mentality. Quantifying time in monetary or production terms places time at the centre of industrial consciousness, but it is only one aspect of time relations, that demonstrates the importance of time as process in our lives. Time shows itself to be infinitely flexible and divisible however we try to approach it - as the law of relativity demonstrates, time-space relations are not constant. In

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94 Giddens, A., 'Modernism and Post-Modernism', *New German Critique*, no.22, Winter, 1981, p.15.

our everyday lives, we are aware of time through changes taking place around us. Industrialisation was at the root of a quickening of the pace of transformation of the exterior and the interior world, but by itself does not provide saufficient explanation of the transformation from the Classical to the Modern structure of aesthetic theory. Rapid change has a contradictory effect on the way we see ourselves:

> On the one hand, modern identity is open-ended, transitory, liable to ongoing change. On the other hand, a subjective realm of identity is the individual's main foothold in reality. (95)

Modern man is placed in a position of continuous 'crisis of identity'. Certainly this is something that afflicts artist in particular. The striving for an identity through art has to be viewed as a major motivation to stylistic development. The artist is constantly asserting 'self' through the work of art, to the point where the development of self becomes the work of art. Thus it is possible to analyse Picasso's development through changes in his artistic style. This is the prevailing approach to art criticism, even though some recent critics have proclaimed the death of the author. Of course, the death of the author cannot take place without inflicting a mortal blow upon art itself. The death of the author/artist would be the death of art.

Bourdieu's analysis of the art world in terms of the production of belief has identified the 'charisma ideology' as the basis for allocating value to the work of art:

> The ideology of creation, which makes the author the first and last source of the value of his work, conceals the fact that the cultural businessman (art dealer, publisher, etc.,) is at one and the same time the person who exploits the 'creator' by trading in the 'sacred' and the person who *consecrates* a product which he has discovered and which otherwise would remain a natural resource; and the more consecrated he personally is, the more strongly he consecrates the work. (96)

This conception better explains the contemporary state of the art world. The author/artist is not dead, except so far as recent structuralist and post-structuralist critical discourses are concerned (97); he has become

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95 Berger, P.L., Berger, B. and Kellner, H., *The Homeless Mind*, Harmondsworth, 1977, p.74.
96 Bourdieu, P., 'The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods', trans. Nice, R., Collins, R. et al, *Media, Culture and Society*, London, 1986, p.133.
97 C.f. discussion in Ch.II.

increasingly more significant. And, as Bourdieu's comments indicate, the author/artist has become the product and source of artistic value - though this reviled status as an object of value has been paid for by increased dependence upon the promoters of images within the market for art. The artist's 'ritual acts of sacrifice' (98), the attempt to break the hold of the critic, gallery, and dealer, have been readily accepted as statements of art and nullified. The very existence of such statements, and their status as art, depends upon the packaging of the artist for the public (99). The artist has become an 'image' for public consumption, a situation that is the culmination of the anti-artist's attack upon the aesthetic object.

The Modernist conception of reality as process is tied up with the notion of progress. This provides the motivation behind the avant-gardist attack on tradition. Avant-gardism is often assumed to be synonymous with Modernism, so the phenomenon needs to be considered in some depth. The idea of progress is contained in Peter Bürger's theory of the avant-garde (100), for here the adoption of an authentic avant-garde position entails the self-awareness of art's pre-history as one of institutionalisation. The avant-garde identifies style as a mechanism of alienation and seeks to break out of style in order to free art. In 'bourgeois society', art portrays bourgeois self-understanding, according to Bürger, and it does so on the basis of individualistic production and consumption. As such, art is seen as abstracted from real life praxis:

> The European art movement can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life praxis of men. (101)

In order to negate 'art as an institution', the avant-gardist seeks to produce 'manifestations' which lack an aesthetic purpose, that are collective productions, and are collectively received. This seems to me to be a very 'particular' definition of avant-gardist intention, seeing avant-gardism in its purest form in Dadaism and possibly Surrealism.

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98 ibid, p.136.
99 The importance of the promoter and dealer in art is also discussed in Cork, R., *The Social Role of Art*, London, 1979, pp.65-7. And c.f. discussion in Nairne, S., *State of the Art: Ideas and Images in the 1980's*, London, 1987, pp.58-87.
100 Bürger, P., *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Manchester, 1984.
101 ibid, p.49.

The purpose given to the avant-garde is too narrowly defined as a conscious project of merging art into life. The irony here is that the effect of weakening the status of the art object is to put the artist in its place as the only possible authentic expression of artistic practice. It enhances the position of the individual author, and in no sense collectivises art.

If the avant-garde is defined in these terms and seen as synonymous with Modernism, then Modernism is the avant-garde movement itself, rather than a period style, theme or mentality, and it becomes necessary to explain the status of all those forms of art that do not fit into the Modernist movement so defined, and yet co-exist in the same period. Theorists of the avant-garde do not explain the presence of 'conventional' art; it is simply dismissed. My argument is that Modernism generates avant-gardism, but also other art responses. Here I am much more sympathetic to Poggioli's account of the avant-garde as grounded in the Modernist phenomenon of the 'movement' (102).

The assumption that the avant-garde is synonymous with Modernism has a strong hold on the contemporary mentality. Bürger identifies a decline, an indication of failure of the avant-garde, in the 'neo-avant-garde' of Pop Art, Happenings, etc., where the work of art retains its central position. In neo-avant-gardism is the evidence of the :

> ... institutionalisation of the *avant-garde as art* [which] negates genuine avant-gardist intentions, (103)

Their works have failed to shock , have become respectable. This view that the bourgeoisie are no longer shocked by art is shared by Kramer (104), who uses a wider conception of avant-gardism in terms of the:

> will to innovate, (105)

which I find more acceptable in the historical context of the variety of avant-gartdist movements. For both theorists, the age of avant-gardism

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102 C.f. discussion in Ch.VI.
103 Bürger, P., op cit, p.58.
104 Kramer, H., *The Age of the Avant-Garde*, London, 1973.
105 ibid, p.18.

is over.

There is no doubt that this institutionalisation of innovation has taken place, if we mean by this the willingness of the art market and gallery system to accept and promote all kinds of 'statements'. However, the general public has shown its capacity to be shocked - over André's 'Bricks' for example - though it is true that art is not taken as a personal affront; it is no longer directed at, or seems able to find, the dominant values that society seeks to protect. But this cannot be because there are no more sacred cows to kick. Artists, as we have seen, often shocked their nineteenth century audiences, and this ability to shock was still a social presence for the Dadaists this century, although I would argue its impact was more intellectual than socially critical. It is with the dominance of American culture after 1945 that avant-gardism is progressively tamed. With the assertion that a free art, defined as individual expression, is the best evidence of a free democratic society, art was in effect depoliticised - shifting abstraction from the status of a degenerate art in the eyes of many Americans, to the symbol of freedom in the face of Socialist Realism (106). American Realism of the 'thirties had come much closer to presenting a critical view of society than did the abstraction that was to follow, and had certainly become more involved in social life. From Abstract Expressionism on, the avant-garde revolt is internal to art itself. This is the direction that Greenberg advocated in his 1939 essay, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' (107), in which artists were urged to defend 'Culture' by withdrawing from social involvement and innovating within the medium of art itself. In 1965, he theorised Modernism in terms of the search for that which was particular to each art form - Modernism in culture generally is viewed as a process of self-criticism (108). This is indeed the way that art developed in the period after Abstract Expressionism, and in doing so it became more 'de-humanised', in that it lost contact with its humanly meaningful aesthetic component. It was no longer avant-gardist in the sense of a

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106 C.f. Burgin, V., *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*, Basingstoke, 1986, pp.23-4.
107 Greenberg, C., 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', first pub. 1939, *Art and Culture*, Boston, 1965, pp.3-21. This was a reaction against the use of art in the totalitarian context.
108 Greenberg, C., 'Modernist Painting', Battcock, G. (ed.), *The New Art*, New York, 1973, pp.66-77.

social movement, because even those who professed an avant-gardist stance, like Warhol, failed to make their art socially significant. Habermas is right to see the art of the anti-artists as 'nonsense experiments', though this is not the way I would describe the work of the Dadaists (109). It is perhaps now, when the avant-garde is seen to have failed, that the time has come for a reassessment of Modernism, and the place of the various avant-gardes in its development.

The concern with Post-Modernism is largely directed at the vacuum left by the disappearance of the avant-garde; but if avant-gardism in the form of an anti-art movement is only one aspect of Modernism, and I have already argued that there is an alternative way of viewing avant-gardism, in terms of the two variants of the Modernist tradition, then the assertion of a Post-Modernist era is brought into question. Bürgin identifies Post-Modernism with the turn to Conceptualism. Modernism, he argues, was characterised by:

> ... [an] existentially uneasy subject speaking of a world of 'relativity' and 'uncertainty' while uncomfortably aware of the conventional nature of language. The post-modernist subject must live with the fact that not only are its languages 'arbitrary' but it is itself an 'effect of language', a precipitate of the very symbolic order of which the humanist subject supposed itself to be the master. (110)

But this is a limiting perspective; it proclaims what ought to be as defined by a particular discourse rather than what is. As such, it is itself in the avant-gardist tradition, a Conceptualist proclaiming his manifesto in the face of tradition, interpreting tradition through his discourse, and in his own terms creating it in the act of criticism. Post-Modernism proclaims itself as a new departure, as all Modernisms have in the past. There is nothing new here, not new enough to take Bürgin's own Conceptualist stance outside of the Modernist tradition he rejects. That the subject is an effect of langauge is not, thankfully, a universally accepted belief, nor does it represent a dominant conception in the world of art practice, though it is more widespread among art critics, and as such may explain, to some extent, the impasse of pluralism. I do, however, accept the description of Modernism he

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109 The Dadaists sought to expose the corrupt practices of art, to comment on society through art, and in this they were not unsuccessful.
110 Burgin, V., op cit, p.49.

provides, which remains, I would assert, as central to today's art as it was for early twentieth century art and for nineteeth century art, which Bürgin labels as 'pre-modern'. It may be asked, does Bürgin really believe that he as a subject is an 'effect of langauge', trying to convince by argument other similar subjects?

Peter Faulkner has placed fairly definite limits on Modernism in literature, locating it historically between 1910 and 1930, but finding its roots in such turn of the century writers as Henry James and Yeats, and acknowledging its partial continuity into the 'sixties (111). The turning-point for him comes with the end of the nineteenth century concensus, that assumed that writer and reader share a notion of what literature is and should convey (112). Modernism is seen as beginning with the acknowledgement of the eclipse of concensus, the recognition that:

> ... relativism and subjectivity are facts of everyday experience. (113)

It is not that this situation is entirely new, suddenly arriving as an existential reality in the first decades of this century; he acknowledges that to some extent it was the consciousness also of the Romantics. The substantive difference for Faulkner is the 'self-consciousness' of writers of the Modernist movement who could not rely on some transcendent inspiration but had consciously to manipulate their medium (114). If Faulkner is correct concerning the break with the nineteenth century, then it would appear that my model is deficient. However, whilst recognising the literary unity of a particular historical period he defines as Modernist, relativism and subjectivism only set it apart in that these concepts become consciously exploited by the writer - Joyce. Woolf, Eliot, Pound - and in the British context.

The persistence of the view that Modernism is a twentieth century phenomenon is based in the identifiable shift towards abstraction in art and nihilism in literature towards the close of the nineteenth century.

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111 Faulkner, P., *Modernism*, London, 1977, esp. pp.1-12.
112 ibid, pp.2-3.
113 ibid, p.15.
114 ibid, p.20.

The consciousness of bourgeois Europe prior to 1870 was dominated by the liberal free trade model provided by Britain as economic leader, encouraging a temporal consciousness with a teliological character. Even in a world of process, order seemed to prevail. After 1870, the more competitive international environment, the challenge of Germany and the United States of America, led to renewed protectionism and war. This was associated with a movement towards contingency in thought (115), the potential for which had been present throughout the century. Associated with changes at the international level was the decline of classical liberalism, and the proliferation of more conservative governments towards the turn of the century. Confidence as represented in the Victorian absolute institution of family and religion was undermined (116); the moral and religious revivalism of the century was not able to stop the spread of the relativistic consciousness of process. Relativism and subjectivism, the sense that each man is alone with his consciouness in an unstable, unpredictable world, a world without meaning, has given rise to a variety of responses at the cultural level. The 'theatre of the absurd', as Esslin notes, is also a reaction arising from the same fundamental attitude:

> ... the sense that the certitude and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away. (117)

But its contribution is to present the Modernist condition through the portrayal of the sense of senselessness. This itself is a variant on the theme of nihilism developed by Nietzsche and found in the anti-hero of Dostoievski, whose work is usually and correctly considered as Modern. More distant, Goethe's sense of a world not fit for the pure sensuous being, that of Werther, presents an early form of nihilism. Throughout the Modernist period there has been a prevailing sense of disjuncture between world and being. Through the nineteenth century, art offered the possibility of wholeness, a spiritual salvation for those intellectuals and members of the middle-classes who had lost faith in tradition and religion, and this basic trust in art has changed little in the twentieth century. Even anti-artism is proclaimed in the name of art, as an

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115 C.f. Anderson, M.S., op cit, pp.358-72.
116 A point of view expressed by Stone, N. *Europe Transformed, 1878-1919*, Glasgow, 1983:'... the old world of nineteenth century absolutes had been dealt a mortal blow, long before 1914.' p.404. For discussion of the turn to abstraction, nihilism and relativism, c.f. pp.389-411.
117 Esslin, M., *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Harmondsworth, 1976, p.23.

exercise of purification, and although we may not deny the sense of meaninglessness conveyed by Dostoievski, or the absurdity of life as portrayed by Beckett, we still look to these for a meaning they apparantly deny, yet their works possess by virtue of being art (118).

Adorno, writing on the meaninglessness displayed in Beckett's plays, argues that they put meaning back on the agenda, and not simply as a conceptual theological issue.

> Theology aside, what counts is the fact that the emancipation of works of art from meaning becomes *aesthetically* meaningful as it realises itself in aesthetic material.
>
> With the same sense of conviction as traditional works, they have their positive meaning in the fact of meaninglessness. Art continues to live up to the postulate of meaning even though it rigorously negates it. (119)

Even if this aesthetic statement is rejected, it does not alter the meaningful appeal of Beckett's work, or that of the anti-artists, to those who seek art in the work of these negationalists - for to acknowledge these works as art is to impute a meaningful purpose.

Many theorists of the Post-Modern have tried to argue that Post-Modernism is the recognition of art's 'ordinaryiness', that art has no special meaning or purpose outside itself, the end of the avant-garde being the formal acceptance of the anti-artist's claims concerning the death of art. Gerald Graff has termed this version of Post-Modernism, 'apocalyptic', and identified a more positive strain that sees a new 'art' emerging out of the decay as the 'visionary' (120). The idea of a breakthrough, a distinctive cultural departure, is, he argues, a myth; in fact, what is claimed to be Post-Modernist remains within the Modernist tradition. The Modernist concept of man remains intact, a concept in which man is seen to be:

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118 C.f. discussion of Kung's theory of art in Ch.I: Kung, H., *Art and the Question of Meaning*, London, 1981.
119 Adorno, T., *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Lenhardt, C., London, 1984, p.221; and c.f. discussion, pp.219-25.
120 Graff, G., 'The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakdown', Bradbury, M., *The Novel Today*, Glasgow, 1982, p.218.

> ... totally and irreparably alienated from a significant external reality, an objective order of values. (121)

This shared concept provides Post-Modernism with its continuity with Modernism, right back to its Romantic roots, and throughout this period there is maintained a:

> ... common theory of art as an autonomous, self-contained entity. (122)

True, the art object has been given an autonomous status, but this is in recognition that it exists as art through the aesthetic that it contains. But this aesthetic itself reaches beyond the confines of the particular object that gives it form. The nature of the aesthetic is such that each particular work is a unique entity, deriving meaning from its own existence. In the aesthetics of process, there is nothing to compare each work of art with other than itself, for it is the condition of being it represents. This is true of expressivist or experientialist art forms, and leads to the contemporary pluralistic situation. In this sense, art's alienation reflects that of the condition of man in Modern life, cut off from external reference. Yet this solopsistic solution is avoidable, for art is indeed a reflection, or, more precisely, a creation of man as historical being. Art has a reference point in man as a psycho-social being experiencing and creating reality in time and space; and, to the extent that he strives to construct and interpret reality, he struggles against the sense of alienation, seeking meaning in life. It is only an extreme form of intellectual nihilism that rejects all possibility of approaching meaning, accepting the alienated state as the inevitable condition of being. Philosophically Modern man can reach such conclusions, but practically he strives for release from his alienated consciousness.

This is what art seeks: a tangible representation of the meeting of consciousness and meaningfulness. This has informed art's development since the Renaissance, as an intentional project of the artist. In the Modern tradition, reality has come to be identified as processual and

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121 ibid, p.228.
122 ibid, p.229.

dynamic, and artists have responded by attempting to capture, in expressivist or experientialist terms, the moment of being in which consciousness and meaning merge. At such a point, there is hope of an undistorted communication with the collectivity, alienation from meaning and from one's fellow men are resolved in that instant of aesthetic realisation. The notion of aesthetic realisation is clearly identified by Adorno in his conception of the 'spirit' of the work of art:

> The definition of art works in terms of Spirit is closely related to another conception, namely the one that defines them in terms of their phenomenality, as an appearing essence, not as blind appearance.... it is the appearing essence, not blind appearance; it is the non-factual aspect of the facticity of art that constitutes art's 'spirit'. (123)

This appearing essence, this moment of truth, is something that we seek in art; even in the anti-art 'statement', if it is successful, there is a 'shock' to consciousness, a moment of realisation. What the avant-gardist tradition did, was to associate this aesthetic experience with the social phenomenon of public reaction and to an affective response provoked through an art of opposition. This oppositional aesthetic turned into anti-artism and lost its aesthetic direction, producing a bewildering display of 'statements', but begging the question, *Is it art?* Largely under the influence of the theory of avant-gardism, art in the second half of the twentieth century, has turned in on itself, producing the situation described in Chapter I, where art forms emerge out of an internal dialogue, reaching as styles towards Textualism, Functionalism, Objectivism, Subjectivism, but failing to maintain a foothold in absolute meaning. There is evidence of the draining away of the 'spiritual', the failure of art's 'aura' (124). And yet there is resistance to this, in the revived search for art among artists and critics; and there is evidence of the continued need for art in the growing art public.

The fragmentation that art has experienced in the past two decades can be related to the broader social context. I have already argued that the dominance of America, economically and militarily, has been accompanied

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123 Adorno, T., op cit, p.128.
124 This aura had been little effected by the introduction of mechanical reproduction; c.f. Benjamin, W., 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Arendt, A. (ed.), *Illusions*, London, 1970.

by an assertion of experientialist art forms. Freedom of expression has become synonymous with Western democratic institutions. American cultural hegemony has been extended throughout the developed and into the underdeveloped world - Illich's 'coca-colonisation':

> ... the translation of thirst into the need for a Coke. (125)

Frederic Jameson has argued that a radical break with the past took place some time after World War II, possibly as late as the early 'sixties, a speeding up of the tempo of life:

> ... planned obsolescence; an ever more rapid rhythm of fashion and styling changes; the penetration of advertising, television and the media generally to a hitherto unparalleled degree. (126)

These developments, he sees, correctly, as paralleling changes in the arts. The arts now feed directly into consumer culture, and Modernist art is fully integrated into society's value system. Jameson argues that Post-Modernist art (the examples of this he gives are Pop Art and Photo-Realism, but also, among other forms, punk and new-wave rock) reinforces the logic of consumer capitalism, in its:

> ... transformation of reality into images.... [and] fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents. (127)

One result of this, he sees, is the loss of a sense of history. But if the wealth of information and images we now receive does have the effect of making the recent past appear more distant, the adverse of this has been the growing awareness of the past as a resource for the present. Not only is this true of art, it is so with fashion, popular music, taste in furniture and housing. But then this nostalgia for the past has been with us a long time, since the Gothic revival, and, before that, Classical Renaissance. What is new is the speed of transformation of fashion, original or plundered from the past, and this certainly is linked to consumerism and the promotion of style. Another important development, constituting consumer society, has been the growth of the public for

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125 Illich, I., 'Outwitting the Developed Countries', Bernstein, H. (ed.), *Underdevelopment and Development*, Harmondsworth, 1973, p.362.
126 Jameson, F., 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', Foster, H. (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, Washington, 1983, p.124. Perry Anderson has also argued that 1945 was a turning point, the universalisation of bourgeois democracy: Anderson, P., 'Modernity and Revolution', *New Left Review*, no.144, 1984.
127 Jameson, F., op cit, p.125.

consumer goods: the working-class, the young, women, have increasingly been drawn into the market-place. As Frith and Horne point out, this change, which they also identify as a movement to the Postmodern, also marks the moment of birth of 'rock culture' (128). It is, then, a period of media revolution as well as the extension of consumer society, and it marks a point of expansion of educational institutions, including art colleges - the spread of high culture and the birth of mass culture and their mingling in the market place.

There seems to be a blurring of the distinction between high culture and mass culture. This itself is associated with the growth of a consumer public for 'culture' at all levels, and the institutionalisation of culture. Far from the cultural sphere coming to dominate the social structure and the political sphere, as Bell has argued (129), it has itself been brought into line with economic and political concerns; though these concerns are not primarily, as Bell perceives them, efficiency and equality respectively, but exploitation and legitimation. There was, in fact, never the disjuncture of spheres that Bell theorises, although the autonomy given to high culture in the name of art did facilitate an experimental attitude, an exploration of the possibilities open to modern thought and the Modernist symbolic universe. That subjectivism, nihilism, relativism, are taken to extremes in the practice of the fine arts is due to this autonomy, an autonomy that has itself ensured the limited impact of avant-gardist claims on social life. The 'freer' the artist became, the less social impact he was able to make. To assert, as Bell does, that the notion of the avant-garde gave to culture a leading role in transforming society and that its institutionalisation ensured its victory - the primacy of culture (130) - is to invert the equasion. The autonomy of art has been long proclaimed, and Bell is correct to see Abstract Expressionism as a turning-point, when its autonomy became institutionally accepted - to the extent that high culture can be identified as:

> ... detached and self-determining. (131)

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128 Frith, S. and Horne, H., *Art into Pop*, London, 1987, p.5.
129 Bell, D., *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, London, 1979.
130 ibid, p.34.
131 ibid, p.40.

But it is wrong to see this as the institutionalisation of an 'adversary culture' (132), a culture in opposition. Bell sees the adversary culture as finding its political expression in the 1960's, but the aligning of Modernist themes with political activity was only one aspect of the 'sixties youth movement. Much more widespread was the consumerisation of the imagery of high culture, the filtration downwards of the themes and images into a mass audience, a mass culture. Some of these themes were pushed to the fore; the search for identity, the advocacy of the new, the idea of the movement, took hold of the masses, apparently giving direction. But none of this can be described as adversary culture, except at the level of the negational character of style, the seeking for the new through the rejection of the old, often involving the intentional act to shock the representatives of the old.

The diffusion of high culture has added to the problem of the identity for art. Art as avant-gardism, the search for the new and opposition culture, appears increasingly to be the property of the masses of a popular culture, while at the other extreme there remains a high culture, controlled by artists, critics and connoisseurs, working within the market in fine art and looked to for meaning by a large educated élite, a sphere where art has become a matter of private vision (134) and public image. Avant-gardism has shifted its sphere of operation, from proclaiming a liberatory function, to an idolatory of the new, and finally to an adjunct of consumerism, art as image without human depth. Having placed so much emphasis on the avant-garde element within Modernism, the art world is now at a loss, for art's purpose had come to be seen as synonymous with the creation of the new. Yet the new has increasingly become identified with the image, with an insubstantial reality. In the 'seventies, art critics began to ask questions about the nature of art, art's meaning. This highlighted the confrontation between art object as an image in a culture of images, and art's claim to meaning at the human

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132 ibid, p.40.
133 Marshall Berman sums up the contemporary age: '... as the modern public expands, it shatters into a multitude of fragments, speaking incommensurable private languages; the idea of modernity, conceived in numerous fragmentary ways, loses much of its vividness, resonance and depth, and loses its capacity to organize and give meaning to people's lives. As a result of all this, we find ourselves today in the midst of a modern age that has lost touch with the roots of its own modernity.' Berman, M., *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, London, 1982, p.17.
134 McMullen, R., *Art, Affluence and Alienation*, London, 1968, p.257.

level, a sign that all is not lost to illusion, that the artistic centre may yet be retrieved.

Oppression can be presented as freedom, through the life of illusion. Richard Sennett argues this point when he identifies repression in contemporary 'free sexuality' (135). The modern belief structure, he suggests, can be stated as follows:

> The intensification of the idea of imminent personality to such a point that the world becomes a narcissistic mirror of the self....
>
> ... the self becomes a protean phenomenon - infinitely transformable....
>
> This imminent protean self interacts with others and creates the conviction of its own existence by engaging in market transactions of self-revelation....(136)

The artist is archetypical of this protean self. As a result of the assertion of this infinitely transformable protean self:

> Meanings in the world become psychomorphic; the sense of meaningful and also impersonal life disappears. (137)

And, as he continues:

> ... conversion of the desire for liberation into the desire for personal liberation well serves to maintain the system as a whole. (138)

The mass culture society which promotes conformity on a scale hitherto unknown in history, also provides the illusion of individuality and personal freedom. Art has fallen into this illusion - on one level it creates the illusion - and is in danger of abandonning entirely its foundations in the humanly meaningful. In its experiential mode of the Modernist aesthetic, art firstly turned in on itself, and secondly became the toy of the artist whose creativity has been asserted as the activity of freedom, self-constitution. The art object is at one and the same moment dehumanised and the illusionary essence of all that is human.

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135 Sennett, R., 'Destructive Gemeinschaft', Birnbaum, N. (ed.), *Beyond the Crisis*, New York, 1977, pp.167-97.
136 ibid, p.183.
137 ibid, p.176.
138 ibid, p.179. A similar argument is presented by John Carroll, who identifies modern culture as 'remissive' - 'drawn by hedonist aspirations and has as its task release of inherited guilt', but it achieves little more than 'a drift into pleasure'; Carroll, J., *Puritan, Paranoid, Remissive: A Sociology of Modern Culture*, London, 1977, p.16. The counterpart of this remissive culture is increased stability in advanced industrial society with a high level of the exercise of authority by technical and bureaucratic means.

This is the extreme to which art has reached in the past three decades, a state of contradiction in which the art object is constituted as a thing in and for itself, yet is seen as the embodiment of the intensely personal creative act. Art's reception has also become viewed as a matter of personal experience, yet the artist's charismatic presence stands over the aesthetic space in which art objects and public interact. Once the relationship between artist and art object is acknowledged, and once reception is seen as taking place in an aesthetic space within which artist and art object also are located, the illusion of art as independent and as personal experience begins to break down. This is the space that defines a practice as 'art'. Art is a social act and it is in the context of social life that art is to be understood and experienced. But it is also an aesthetic statement, though inextricably bound with social being.

A sociology of art grounds artistic production in the life-world of social being, but it does not, cannot, deny the presence of the aesthetic. Art, as I have demonstrated, is only art in so far as it locates an aesthetic object, a humanly meaningful reality. If belief in the aesthetic is suspended, so too is art lost. Contemporary art has come perilously close to this situation, yet it still draws upon the artist's, and the public's, belief in the 'spiritual' nature of art. I make no apologies for using the term 'spiritual', for it seems to me that this best expresses a side of existence that is all too often denied by our materialist objectivist culture (139). It expresses the human desire to be located in a world outside our own subjectivity.

> Nowhere else does the sheer durability of the world of things appear in such purity and clarity, nowhere else therefore does this thing-world reveal itself so spectacularly as the non-mortal home for mortal beings. It is as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art, so that a premonition of immortality, not the immortality of the soul or of life but of something immortal achieved by mortal hands, has become tangibly present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read. (140)

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139 I do not use the term 'spiritual' in its transcendental sense, but in the humanist, in the manner that Paulo Freire can speak of liberation as an 'act of love': Freire, P., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.26.
140 Arendt, H., *The Human Condition*, New York, 1959, p.147.

Once the potential of art is grasped, so its value can be asserted, and a critical awareness of art's presentations develop within the field of aesthetic theorisation and art criticism. Pluralism is the sign of a failing, the inability to take such a critical stance. If this persists, there is the possibility that art will be lost and, with it, the aesthetic dimension as an object of consciousness. We cannot return to the Middle Ages with the location of the spiritual beyond the world of human endeavour, but we can fall into the contemporary illusion, locating meaning in the objectified images of consumer society.

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MODERNISM AND THE CRISIS IN ART:
THE STRUCTURE OF FINE ART PRACTICE, A SOCIOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

by Anthony Hincks

ABSTRACT

The fine arts can be described as in a state of crisis, manifest in the tendency for style to fragment and pluralism in art criticism - the view that the work of art is a document and that there are no privileged criteria of artistic value. Following the example of the anti-art avant-garde, recent art critical and sociological theory has rejected the notion of artistic 'specialness', and undermined the category of aesthetic experience. In this context, it has been suggested that art is finished, that a new era of Post-modernity has begun. This thesis confronts these claims by raising the question of the nature of art.

This thesis argues that:

- Theorisation about the nature of art can be located within a structural framework, itself a response to the existential reality of the socially mediated categories of art and aesthetic experience.

- The fine art tradition was historically constituted as a social category, with the theorisation of the special relationship between artist, art object and aesthetic object.

- Theorisation took two forms within the Classical tradition, each developing into distinct aesthetics in the Modernist period, the form of the aesthetic being related to the art style and its social conditions of production and consumption.

- The form of the aesthetic can be shown to be structurally related to the consciousness of freedom/oppression in society, providing an important component in the dynamics of style.

- Contemporary art remains Modernist. Claims concerning the end of art and Postmodernism have wrongly delimited Modernism, often narrowly confined to avant-gardism. Nonetheless, since 1945, artists have pushed art to the limits of the structural framework that defines it as a special social practice, all but abandoning art's aesthetic core, but not erasing its public's expectation of 'meaning'. In this context, a more evaluative response to art is called for from a critical sociological discourse.

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