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ART AND MORALITY
'CAN ETHICS AND AESTHETICS BE DIVORCED?'

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'Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'infer, qu'importe'

(Whether beauty comes from heaven or hell,
what does it matter?)

- Baudelaire.

"Beauty is the battlefield where God and the Devil
contend with one another for the heart of man"

- Dostoyevsky

"And we shall warn it's (Poetry's) hearers to fear its
effects on the constitution of their inner selves"

- Plato

INTRODUCTION :

In assessing the work of the painter Francis Bacon, Peter Fuller acknowledges what he calls 'Bacon's undeniable painterly talents' (7, P.69) but he adds that Bacon's case is a 'problematic' one. This is elaborated when he writes:

'In the end I find the vision of man he expresses quite odious I turn away from Bacon's work with a sense of disgust, and relief, that it gives us neither the "facts" nor the necessary "truths" about our condition.'

(7, P,70)

In saying this, Fuller is suggesting that aesthetic preference is related to moral concerns and that, in certain cases (Francis Bacon's work for example) the moral concern has primacy over the aesthetic. It is this relationship between the moral concern and the aesthetic concern which I aim to address - or to speak in broader terms the question of the value of art, for to attend to the relationship between moral and aesthetic judgement is to attend to the central issues with regard to value in the arts. In a secular 'post religion' society it is not surprising that the relationship between morality and art attracts relatively little interest or attention. It is practically universally held that art is autonomous and is therefore, like the artist, freer than ever before to pursue the ideal of beauty (or any other ideal within the realm of aesthetic interest) outside the constraints of morality.

I shall examine the separation which presently exists between ethics and aesthetics and consider the consequences, for us as individuals, and as a society which this separation has entailed.

In the first two chapters the areas of value and evaluation are considered and the particular meaning accorded to each term is of prime importance. value refers to the value of the practice of art in general as a human activity while evaluation refers to the assessment of value of individual works of art. The first two chapters ultimately attempt to show that if the practice of art can be justified then this justification of its value automatically affects the way we evaluate art - that value and evaluation are in fact always closely related. For example, if it were decided that the true value of food lay in its ability to nourish and sustain a healthy body, it would be natural to assume that the evaluation of food should therefore be in terms of nutrition and sustenance. Would it not be strange in this case, if food were evaluated primarily in terms of its taste or appearance?. The second chapter attempts to establish the important and wholly relevant relationship between artist and his art and the importance of this relationship to anyone aspiring to a just evaluation.

The third chapter, proposes a synthesis between ethics and aesthetics and attempts to ascertain why their separation has become regarded as the norm.

Finally the fourth chapter seeks to ground the themes of the discussion in a consideration of the work of Francis Bacon.

Fundamental to all that follows is the basic premise that 'we need improvement'. Kandinsky referred to humanitys 'forward and upward movement' (10). The religions call the ultimate aim or end of our self-improvement 'perfection'. Improvement and perfection are not the same however. While improvement and desire for it are considered noble and admirable qualities, the concept of individual perfection is one which has lost much of its meaning and as Iris Murdoch

reminds us, is regarded by many as simply unhealthy:

'Some psychologists warn us that if our standards become too high, we shall become neurotic' (13)

The concept of individual perfection, however, survives in most of us albeit in a watered-down form in the knowledge that as individuals 'we could be better'. Insofar as individual perfection might be considered the sum of countless individual improvements, most of us would acknowledge the considerable number of improvements outstanding between our present state and the state of perfection. It might be said that we are in a slight sense aware of our imperfect state.

Confronted with this deep-rooted awareness of our imperfection, we may choose to remain stagnant (or even disimprove) or we may choose to improve. Plato perceived that the quality of the whole depended on the quality of the parts which constituted it. The improvement of a society can be achieved by first improving its parts - its individual members, and it is to anyone thus concerned that this thesis is addressed.

CHAPTER 1 THE QUESTION OF VALUE

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I want to begin with a consideration of the value of art. For many people not directly or indirectly connected to the arts are often given to questioning this value and many if pressed could find no convincing reason to counter the view that art is dispensable. To assess the value of art we must look at what justifies its practice. Even the formalist Clive Bell concedes this need for justification:

'Of course they are right, who insist, that the creation of art must be judged on ethical grounds;
all human activities must be so justified' (14, P222)

If however, the practice of art could be satisfactorily justified on grounds other than ethical, in that case, such a justification would very likely relegate ethical concerns to a level of secondary relevance or lower.

This I perceive, is the justification which prevails today. The favoured grounds for axiological justification being art itself or more precisely the aesthetic experience of art. The central point of this view is that the ultimate end of art is art (and to a greater or lesser extent the 'experience' of art, for even the communicative role of art, the need for a viewer is questioned). In preceding centuries 'art for art sake' looked to 'beauty' as its ultimate end. Tolstoy was vehemently opposed to this view and wrote:

'Beauty cannot justify art because those who love art for its beauty make the mistake of placing beauty above the demands of morality, thereby illegitimately releasing themselves from demands of morality'. (5, P30).

As T.J. Diffey points out Tolstoy, with regard to current theories in modern art is in the dominant tradition because

beauty alone is no longer considered a satisfactory source for the definition or justification of art. In its stead came the all-encompassing aesthetic experience in which beauty was an old and unfashionable element.

Is then the aesthetic experience more likely to succeed where beauty failed in providing a justification for art? It is not immediately apparent that aesthetic experience is beneficial for humanity in contrast to the experience of the warmth and light of the sun for example which is self-evidently beneficial. There could be no question of the value of aesthetic experience if it were a beneficial and not merely pleasing experience. Pleasure can never be a valid justification, for do we not accept, that which pleases us is not necessarily that which is good for us? We need only recall the exhilaration of the German people with the grandeur and ceremony surrounding Nazism.

Tolstoy believed that the primacy of the belief in pleasure, enjoyment and amusement led to a process of secularisation which began in the middle ages. When, he writes:

'The upper classes lost their faith. There then grew up among them an art esteemed not according to its success in expressing men's religious feelings, but in proportion to its beauty - in other words according to the enjoyment it gave ... these rich and powerful people, stranded with no religious conception of life, involuntarily returned to the pagan view of things, which places life's meaning in personal enjoyment. And then took place among the upper classes what is called the renaissance of science and art, which was really not only a denial of every religion. but also an assertion that religion is unnecessary'.

R.G. Collingwood, with reference to western culture speaks in terms of a cultural disaster, T.J. Diffey writes :

'... a disaster which it seems is brought about by more than, or not merely by, the wills of individuals, their faults and personal failings. Like Tolstoy Collingwood sees art as amusement, establishing itself at the renaissance; we are still living though the disastrous consequences of this, indeed their full effect is yet to break upon us. For our civilisation, Collingwood says "has been caught in a vortex, somehow connected with its attitude towards amusement and.....some disaster is impending which, unless we prefer to shut our eyes to it and perish, if we are to perish, in the dark it concerns us to understand." '

(5. P90)

Just as pleasure or amusement may not justify art neither can art - 'centered' art be expected to constitute a serious justification. A species of art for arts sake, art 'centered' art came into being properly with the advent of the modernist movement and concerned itself with 'exploring mediums 'questioning the way we look at art' and provoking reactions, in the extent to which it abandoned tradition. Kandinsky said of art for arts sake:

'Hatred, bias, factions jealousy and intrigue are the consequences of this purposeless materialistic art'.

(10)

Iris Murdoch comments on the selfish nature of such art:

'We can see in mediocre art, where perhaps it is even more clearly seen than in mediocre conduct, the intrusion of fantasy, the assertion of self, the dimming of any reflection of the real world.'

(13, P59)

Clearly art centered art neither offers nor aspires to offer anything but inevitable sterility. Robert Philip Kolker summarises the problem with regard to cinema in his book 'A Cinema of Loneliness'

'For all their formal challenge and adventure the major films of the seventies and eighties speak to a continual impotence in the world, an inability to change and create change'.

(11.)

If we succumb to this attitude of despair we may accept the view that art is autonomous and self justifying but if we counter this despair by striving to 'change and create change' we must be willing to accept only art which offers or aspires to offer a view or experience outside of itself. If we were to try and conceive of the greatest possible justification for art as an activity we would arrive at an answer close to its ability to awaken and increase spiritual awareness. Kandinsky believed this to be the great purpose and value of art and Ruskin too when he made the distinction between 'aesthesis' and 'theoria', the former being a merely sensuous response to beauty , the latter being what he described as a response to beauty 'with our whole moral being'.

(7, P42)

In recent times the term 'spiritual awareness' and even the word 'spiritual' alone has become an umbrella term for an extremely wide range of ideas, concepts and experiences. To choose a topical example, one finds the word used extensively with reference to the work of the american painter Julian Schnabel who titled some of his pieces 'portrait of God' and 'St. Francis'. Suzi Gablik writes:

'Schnabel claims his paintings allude to some kind of power - the power of primitive, magical things - but you

can't attach some broken plates and a pair of antlers to a canvas, pass it on to Mary Boone to sell, and hope for mythic significance. The essential inner attitude is missing - the devotional frame of mind'.

(6, P219)

The interpretation accorded to the word 'spiritual' in the following discussion however is as far as possible a Platonic and Neoplatonic one, in other words, it refers to the 'reality' of which the world of our senses is like a shadow on the wall of a cave - to use Plato's metaphor. Plotinus speaks of distinguishing material forms from the 'Authentic - Existent' (17, P219), and the 'reality of Being' which is exhibited by the virtues. (17, P223). As to the value of such an awareness of reality, Iris Murdoch writes:

'It is our task to see the world as it is ...in intellectual disciplines and in the enjoyment of art and nature we discover value in our ability to forget self, to be realistic, to preceive justly'.

(13, P90)

Plotinus held that our perception of the real - of the beauty of the real (and notably the greater beauty of the reality of being exemplified by the virtues) enabled us to preceive our own 'real' selves. Thus not only does an awareness of reality enable us to perceive the world around us more clearly but we gain self-knowledge.

It seems then, that we may have arrived at a tenable justification for art as an activity and a provisional answer to the question, 'What is the value of art?' - namely that the value of art lies in its ability to awaken or increase our spiritual awareness, our sense of reality. This ability to awaken and increase our awareness justifies

art as an activity because it assists us in perceiving the necessary truths about ourselves and our society.

That such a justification may constitute a tenable definition of the value of art is in no way a novel idea.

Milton C. Nahm writes:

'For both Plotinus and St. Augustine art is not of highest value and its experience is principally worthwhile because from it one may turn to attain knowledge of universal beauty.... Neo Platonism concludes that the products of these arts ultimately owe their being to emanations from the real...Plotinus and St. Augustine tend to turn from values in the realm of art for the supreme value in the transcendental realm.'

(14, P58/59)

It would seem to follow then that for those individuals whose awareness and understanding exceeds that which even the 'great' artists and composers reveal, art can only be of limited value. Aldous Huxley (using the word 'suchness' in the sense of truth or reality) writes:

'What sculptures and paintings played a part in the religious experience of St John of the Cross, of Hakmin, of Hui-neng, of William Law? The questions are beyond my power to answer ; but I strongly suspect that most of the great knowers of suchness paid very little attention to art - some refusing to have anything to do with it at all, others being content with what a critical eye would regard as second rate, or even tenth rate works. (To a person whose transfigured and transfiguring mind can see the All in every 'this', the first rateness or tenth rateness of even a religious painting will be a matter of the most sovereign indifference) Art, I suppose, is only for beginners or else for those resolute dead-enders who have made up their minds to be content with the

'ersatz' (substitute) of suchness, with symbols rather than what they signify.'

(9, P100)

'The critical eye' (By which it is assumed Huxley means the 'art critic') is apparently unaware of or uninterested in the qualities which may give the work of art a value distinct from aesthetic values. Roger Scruton writes:

'It is said...that the Italian peasant who adorns a statue of the Virgin cannot, to the extent that he treats the statue as an object of veneration, appreciate it from an aesthetic point of view. For to the extent that his interest is religious he must treat its immediate object as a surrogate for something else. He sees through the statue to what it represents and is interested in it only so far as it evokes a true conception of the Virgin. The statue serves the peasant as a means for the transmission of a religious thought : it can have value as such a means to the extent that it succeeds in inspiring the thought, whether or not it also has a value a work of art.'

(21, P19)

Thus, the value that this statue has for the Italian peasant, namely that it evokes in him a truer conception of the Virgin corresponds with the suggestion made earlier that the value of art lies in its ability to awaken or deepen our spiritual awareness. That a cheap and undistinguished statue might have more value than say a landscape by Poussin or an opera by Wagner seems to be a ludicrous suggestion. Tolstoy in his polemic 'What is art?' not only excluded Shakespeare and Beethoven on moral grounds but also rejected all his own work up until 'Anna Karenina'. It wasn't merely that Tolstoy (or for that matter Plato) disagreed with the critical preferences of their day, but the criteria upon which these preferences and evaluations were based. like

Plato, Tolstoy judges the value of art by its utility, its educational effect. Milton C. Nahm in quoting Sidgwick summarises the problem:

'Both art and morality have an ideal ... but the ideals are not the same. It may be that the best we can do is to cherish alike aesthetic, moral, and cognitive values if we cannot harmonize them'.

(14, P234)

Nahm himself however goes on to say:

'If by morals one means the practical wisdom that deals with the entire sweep of human values, then it must be admitted that morals have primacy over life as a whole.'

(14, P234)

, Morality is seems must be accepted or rejected totally.
C.S. Lewis writes with regard to Christianity:

'It is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance, the one thing it cannot be is moderately important'

(12, P300)

That morality is 'moderately important' would appear to be the view of contemporary critics with regard to the place of morality in art and this in practice usually results in the separation of morality and art and the popular view that 'morality is fine in its place', but that place does not include the realm of art. The alternation of values which Nahm implies above does not on the face of it appear to be a satisfactory solution. If it were the case that aesthetic and moral values could not be harmonized, what in theory would perhaps be an alternating between value systems, would in practice result in the situation which exists in our society today where moral and aesthetic values are separated.

In his assessment of the work of Francis Bacon with which I began, Peter Fuller finds himself confronted by the dilemma of having to choose between the aesthetic assessment and the moral assessment - to choose which is ultimately of greater importance. In chapter three I intend to consider if in fact ethics and aesthetics are as distinct as commonly perceived.

In summary then, I have suggested that the value of art lies in its ability to awaken or increase spiritual awareness. If the value of art as a human activity lies in this ability then consequently our evaluation of individual works of art will be based on criteria related to this theory of value - many of the saints and mystics, therefore had little time for art. The example of the Italian peasant and the statue was given to illustrate the suggestion that two separate levels of resonance exist, the aesthetic level and the moral level. The question still remains unanswered however. Does a just evaluation of the statue (for example) involve a moral assessment, an aesthetic assessment or perhaps a synthesis of the two?.

The full equation however is not just 'work of art' and 'viewer/evaluator' but of course 'artist' also. I would like to postpone further consideration of the art - viewer/evaluator relationship until we have examined the relationship between the art and the artist.

CHAPTER 2 : EVALUATION - THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARTIST

=====

I wish now to try and ascertain the importance of the relationship between the artist and his or her work. If this relationship is such that it can be said that the art reflects entirely the artist then such a conclusion must surely have some bearing on the evaluation of individual works of art. My aim is to suggest that rather than concerning ourselves with the moral state of the artist we merely admit the possibility that a work of art may in itself be morally good or evil.

It is hardly worth saying that 'the art reflects the artist', such a general statement tells us little, yet if something as unassuming as our handwriting (I borrow this example from a friend) can be shown to reveal much about our character, how much more then does a work of art reveal? John Ruskin wrote:

'Artistic activity engages the whole man, including his moral nature.'

(19, P217)

Indeed such a suggestion should not surprise us for can we doubt that we are witness to the reflection of intense spiritual turmoil when we view Van Gogh's late self portraits or listen to Elgar's cello concerto? What exactly do we mean when we speak of an artist putting their heart and soul into their work? . I intend to consider the proposition that artistic activity does not merely engage an individual's moral nature, but reflects the moral nature which is itself a reflection of the artist's soul - or to use Platonic terminology, his reality. Plato when asked whether there is an affinity between artistic and moral harmony answered:

'The artist disposes all things in order, and compels the one part to harmonize and accord with the other part, until he has constructed a regular and systematic whole.. ..and what would you say of the soul?. Will the good soul be that in which disorder is prevalent, or that in which there is harmony and order'.

(16, P225)

That the reflection of this ordered or disordered soul need not be a conscious action on the part of the artist is pointed out by Aldous Huxley:

'A picture always expresses more than is implicit in its subject. Every painter who tells a story tells it in his own manner, and that manner tells another story superimposed, as it were, upon the first, a story in which one highly gifted individual reacted to his experience of our universe. The first story is told deliberately; the second tells itself independently of the artist's conscious will .

He cannot help telling it for it is the expression of his own intimate being'

(9, P.229)

Milton C. Nahm also acknowledges the unconscious reflection of the artist's moral nature in his/her work;

'The scheme of values that an artist holds, whether consciously or unconsciously, will determine to a large extent what he says in his work and how he says it.'

(14, P221)

The importance of the unconscious element is that it allows us to suggest that, if artistic activity engages the 'whole man including his moral nature' and if his moral nature determines unconsciously the substance of his work, then we may logically conclude that, morally speaking, a good man creates good work and a bad man is incapable of

creating anything but bad work - morally speaking. Robert M. Pirsig writes:

'You want to know how to paint a perfect painting? Its easy, make yourself perfect and then paint naturally.'

(15, P283)

But to speak of paintings or works of art as perfect or good or bad (again in the moral sense) is to suggest, that the works themselves are somehow morally 'charged'. That works of art are not mere products of an artist, reflections of his or her spiritual reality, but individual mouldings of a creative energy which has its source outside of us, was the view held by Plotinus. Milton C. Nahm in quoting, Plotinus writes:

'The work of art is in that lower and material world which "We take to be the very last effect that has penetrated to its farthest reach" because something of the light of the Forming Idea has irradiated matter which "first lay in blank obscurity". The efficacy of the soul "holds the rationalizing power latently moulding it by the seminal Rational Principles to the nature of the souls own real being". '

(14, P41)

In the final chapter which considers the work of Francis Bacon I hope to bring these Neo Platonic ideas to bear, for Bacon's work clearly testifies to a powerful creative energy which he moulds in a way very unmistakeably his own or to use Plotinus's words:

'To the nature of the souls own real-being'.

That creative energy may be moulded to selfish or selfless ends is affirmed by Iris Murdoch (although to speak in terms of selfishness and selflessness is inadequate for one could serve Nazism as selflessly as any religion or

noble cause):

'The talent of the artist can be readily and is naturally, employed to produce a picture whose purpose is the consolation and aggrandizement of its author and the projection of his personal obsessions and wishes. To silence and expel self, to contemplate and delineate nature with a clear eye is not easy and demands a moral discipline'.

(13, P64)

That goodness depends in part on moral discipline is hardly a novel observation but to apply this to the realm of artistic activity seems initially strange and not a little awkward. Jacques Maritain wrote on the relationship between art and moral discipline as enshrined in Christianity. In quoting Maritain's 'Art and Scholasticism' Nahm writes:

'The christian artist is warned; "Do not separate your art from your faith. But leave distinct what is distinct". Some lines further along in the essay however it is urged that the soul of the artist should control his work only by the "artistic habit", but it (art) will be christian, it will reveal in its beauty the interior reflection of the brilliance of grace, only on condition that it overflows from a heart possessed by grace'.

(14, P.70)

(Regarding the phrase 'Christian art', Maritain writes that 'Wherever art, Egyptian, Greek or Chinese, has attained a certain degree of grandeur and purity, it is already Christian, Christian in hope, because every spiritual splendour is a promise and a symbol of the divine harmonies of the Gospel.')

Nahm however argues that Maritain's view:

'Does not do full justice to the artist as a craftsman or as a maker of objects, since it implies that objects or events made by craft require as well the occurrence of a

miracle in order that they may transcend the condition of their sensible existence.'

(14, P 70)

Indeed, insofar as creativity and imagination constitute miracles (and Plotinus as we have seen would argue in favour of their divine source) Nahm is correct but he fails to see the implied distinction Maritain makes between mere transcendence of sensible existence and what he terms 'Christian art', by which I assume he means what Iris Murdoch meant in her use of the inadequate term 'selfless', namely, morally good art. So not only does there exist transcendence of sensible existence but Quality of transcendence which is entirely dependent on the spiritual state of the artist; it will 'reveal in its beauty the interior reflection of the brilliance of grace, only on condition that it overflows from a heart possessed by grace'. As to what is revealed and the effect of art produced by a heart possessed by something other than grace, Kandinsky writes;

'The gifts of one man, his talents (in the biblical sense) can become a curse - not only for the artist but for all those who eat of this poisonous bread. He peddles impure content in an ostensibly artistic form, he attracts weaker elements to himself, bringing them into continual contact with the bad. Such works of art do not assist the upward movement. - They hinder it.'

(10)

I have attempted to show then the significance of the relationship between the art and the artist. A work of art, is a largely unconscious reflection of the artists moral nature and can therefore be in itself morally good or bad. The consequences of accepting such a conclusion are of importance not because they seem to advocate that we pass

judgement on the artist (for who among us can cast the first stone?) but that they simply allow us the possibility of condidering that a work may be good or evil, and of bringing this possibility to bear in our efforts to evaluate justly.

CHAPTER 3 ETHICS AND AESTHETICS ARE ONE?

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"We certainly distinguish between aesthetic and moral judgement; we say for instance of the Kreutzer Sonata : It is brilliant work, but morally it is all wrong. 'I don't believe a word of it'. But I suspect that our aesthetic judgement is still charged with a certain sensibility which we must call moral. We are stuck, for instance, by a certain dignity and distinction in the handling of the story. With all its violence it has nothing exaggerated, nothing of what we call a false note, and these are moral attributes derived from a moral taste one cannot in fact split up the personality of a man - the sensible character of his being - into the aesthetic and the moral."

-Joyce Carey 'Art and Reality'

"Taste is not only a part and an index of morality - it is the only morality".

-John Ruskin 'The Stones of Venice'

Up to this point I have attempted to show the importance of moral judgement with regard to value and evaluation in the arts, but the precise nature of the relationship between moral and aesthetic judgement and perhaps most importantly - how they are to be exercised in a practical manner to evaluate individual works of art justly, still remains to be considered.

We have the option of alternating between two distinct value systems, but this in effect would be to grant art an autonomy which, I have attempted to argue, cannot be justified. The alternative to such an alternating value system is to conceive of a harmonization of aesthetic and moral judgement.

Such a harmonization, as I hope to show, is not an unnatural, awkward union or artificial construction, but a harmonious unity which in reality is meaningless to divide in two. That moral judgement and aesthetic judgement have been held since at least as far back as the Renaissance and right up until today as separate and essentially unrelated, I hope to show, represents a serious aberration in humanity's faculty of taste. To this end I wish to cite an argument presented by Roger Scruton in Art and Imagination.

Scruton begins by proposing the universality of moral judgement. (By which I am assuming he means what C.S. Lewis liberally terms 'The Tao' - an umbrella term for 'The Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes,' by which all societies and cultures view certain ways of behaving (ie selflessly) as intrinsically admirable and others as intrinsically detestable (i.e. cowardly). Whether or not men choose to respond to it, there exists, generally speaking, universal agreement as to what sort of behaviour is good or

bad. However Lewis writes:

'Its (The Tao's) validity cannot be deduced. For those who do not perceive its rationality, even universal consent could not prove it'.

(12, P49)

Scruton suggests that we could justify the demand for universality in aesthetics if we could show that sufficient relation exists between aesthetic and moral preferences. He arrives at two ways of conceiving this relation which correspond to two different attitudes to art. The first he calls the 'external' approach and defines it as regarding 'the appreciation of art as related only externally to considerations of morality.' (21, P 244). The second he calls the 'Internal' approach which regards the appreciation of art as internally related to the moral point of view.

(21, P 244)

Scruton's distinction between the internal and external approaches is rather vague but I understand it to mean that whereas the external approach might limit its consideration of morality to extreme cases, pornography or the depiction of cruelty for example, the internal approach sees the moral point of view as pertinent to all facets of art appreciation. Of the external approach Scruton writes:

'It is characteristic of the external approach to locate the value of art in its effects on the man who appreciates it. Art is held to be a form of education, specifically an education of the emotions. It would seem, that the two questions "How are works of art to be evaluated? and "What is the value of art?" must be treated independently, for it would be natural to argue that works of art are to be evaluated purely autonomously, by references to standards of success that are internal to the realm of aesthetic interest. Beauty and depravity can therefore co-exist.

The defender of the external approach would then argue that art is in some general way beneficial. As such one might wonder how far art is replacable by a more effective discipline.'

(21, P 245)

To analyse this complicated passage, Scruton perceives that because the external approach sees the value of art as a human activity as lying in its vaguely beneficial or educational effects on the viewer, but yet evaluates individual works of art by reference to standards of success related only to the realm of aesthetic interest - i.e. by standards of success unrelated to the external approaches theory of value, the external approach therefore permits what it perceives to be beauty and moral depravity to co-exist. This situation is similar to that of the earlier example in which, if the value of food (or of eating) lay in its ability to nourish, it would be strange if individual meals were evaluated primarily in terms of appearance or taste. While it is unlikely that a better substitute could be found for eating to realise its nourishing value, Scruton wonders to what extent art could be replaced by a discipline conducive to the value the external approach accords it. He writes:

'Johnson praised Petrarch, saying that he "refined the manners of the lettered world" and it might seem that such a beneficial effect of Petrarch's poetry could have been secured by some other means'.

(21, P 245)

Clearly the external approach corresponds to the attitude towards art which is prevalent at the moment where beauty (among other aesthetic qualities) and moral depravity appear not only to co-exist but positively thrive. Scruton continues however with regard to the internal approach which

sees the appreciation of art as internally related to the moral point of view:

'It seems we aim at agreement in aesthetic judgement whatever our opinion about the effects of art. The internal approach will therefore provide a more plausible explanation of universality provided it can be shown that aesthetic preference is in some sense continuous with the moral point of view. Now there certainly seems to be an internal relation between aesthetic and moral judgement. In moral judgement it is usual to praise a man for certain qualities, and these qualities may be such that the question "Why is that a reason for admiring him?" normally requires no answer. And it is interesting to note that the features of men and the features of works of art which are in this sense intrinsically admirable tend to coincide. We admire works of art, as we admire men, for their intelligence, wisdom, sincerity, depth of feeling, compassion and realism. It would be strange to acknowledge this and yet to deny that there is a relation between moral and aesthetic judgement.'

(21, P, 245)

Yet to conclude that moral and aesthetic judgement are thus related is for Scruton inadequate because even this internal approach is compatible with the argument that art is of merely instrumental value to a moral end, that 'a better substitute for art might one day be discovered' and that 'it may be unnecessary to look at art in order to admire the values conveyed by art'. Plotinus echoes this view which Scruton has difficulty in accepting when he argues that the 'beauty' of noble conduct and particularly the virtues, far exceeds that of the 'Graceful Forms of the material world' and indeed it is the former 'beauty' which Plotinus urges us we should aspire to glimpse and become. Plotinus implies that the beauty perceived is governed by the soul or condition of the soul of the perceiver.

'As it is not for those to speak of the graceful forms of the material world who have never seen them or known their grace - men born blind. Let us suppose, in the same way those must be silent upon the beauty of noble conduct and of learning and all that order who have never cared for such things, nor may those tell us of the splendours of virtue who have never know the face of Justice and of Moral Wisdom beautiful beyond the beauty of evening and of Dawn. Such is for those only who see with the soul's sight.'

(17, P.222)

In the earlier example of Roger Scrutons concerning the Italian peasant adorning the statue of the Virgin it was suggested that the statue had a value for the peasant insofar as it was a means for the transmission of a religious thought - Whether or not it also had value as a work of art. From Plotinus's reasoning the statue's value as a work of art is irrelevant because the peasant in simplicity or ignorance is seeing beyond the lesser beauty to the far greater beauty preceived by the soul. If we consider that a string of a particular pitch will cause only another string of the same pitch to vibrate - to resonate, the same holds true in this case also if we consider that for the Italian peasant the statue 'resonates' on a level which is very likely to be incomprehensible and alien to a knowledgable art critic - a level in which Plotinus tells us the greater beauty resides.

So are we to give up all hope merely because we did not have the good fortune to be born into a life of simplicity as was the peasant? Naturally, no. Plotinus summarises our situation:

'We, undisciplined in discernment of the inward, knowing nothing of it, run after the outer never understanding that it is the inner which stirs us; we are in the case of one who sees his own reflection but not realising whence it comes goes in pursuit of it'.

(17, P.228)

So when Scruton writes that the internal approach (in which moral and aesthetic judgement are closely related) is inadequate because aesthetic interest might involve no way of appreciating these moral qualities that is not available to the philistine, he is overlooking entirely the possibility that for the 'philistine' an object might resonate at a different level. Scruton however perceives what a developed or educated mind (i.e. a different level of resonance) requires in order to evaluate a work of art :

'When I react to a work of art I also think of it as an appropriate object of my reaction. Hence we say the aesthetic experience involves not only pleasure but also the exercise of taste - taste in the sense of reasoned discrimination.'

(21, P. 246)

It is the responsibility of taste which the intellect gains as it develops. In a strange sense it is a burden because whereas once a plastic statue or chocolate box painting might have 'reasonated', increased intellectual development means that these things are rejected as tasteless and something else must be found. Scruton then believes that the level at which taste (in the sense of reasoned discrimination) must be exercised is the only true level while I tentatively suggest that such a level is merely one among perhaps many such levels of resonance, a level characterized by the fact that taste is to be exercised. Eventually, perhaps, the development of the soul

at the particular levels of resonance of the philistine and the art critic will render material means of awakening or deepening spiritual awareness obsolete - the soul having finally attained the level in which Plotinus tells us the greater beauty lies. This view, that art is 'outgrown' as it were, when spiritual development reaches a certain level is, as we have seen, shared by Aldous Huxley:

'Art, I suppose, is only for beginners, or else for those resolute dead enders, who have made up their minds to be content with ... symbols rather than what they signify'.

(9, P100)

Scruton ends his book Art and Imagination with the words 'ethics and aesthetics are one' (21, P.249). And insofar as this may be taken to mean 'the good and the beautiful are one', Plato and Plotinus after him would agree. Plotinus writes:

'And it is just to say that in ^{the} Souls becoming like to God, for from the Divine comes all the beauty and all the Good in beings. We may even say that beauty is the Authentic - Existents and Ugliness is the principle contrary to Existence, and the Ugly is also the prime evil; therefore its contrary is at once good and beautiful, or is Good and Beauty; and hence the one method will discover to us the Beauty Good and the Ugliness - Evil'

(17, P. 224)

But if our reason tells us that the beautiful and the good are one, our experience seems to contradict this because much of what we deem to be beautiful - in the sphere of art at least, may exhibit little moral goodness.

The work of Leonardo De Vinci for example is generally regarded to be of great beauty and yet Andre Salmon wrote with regard to De Vinci's "Mona Lisa":

'The smile of La Gioconda was for too long, perhaps, the

sun of art. The adoration of her is like a decadent Christianity - peculiarly depressing, utterly demoralising. One might say, to paraphrase Arthur Rimband, that la Gioconda, the eternal Gioconda, has been a thief of the energies'.

(4, P 101)

Maurice Denis wrote of the same painting:
'What voluptuousness ... so like the seduction by the violins in the overture to Tannhauser'.

(4. P, 101)

The comparison to Wagner is interesting as until quite recently Wagner's music was banned in Isreal where it was viewed, because of the music's strong anti-semitic element one supposes, as being beautiful evil. That beautiful evil may exist however, Plotinus would hold is a contradiction in terms - true beauty being inseperable from the good. In the example given of Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, perhaps it is that what we term beautiful is in fact nothing more than what Simone Veil terms the 'Lustre of beauty'.

A well attended conscience is rarely in doubt about what is good and what is not, therefore it appears that the problem exists with regard to beauty - what is beautiful and what is not, i.e. the question of taste.

I wish now to consider the possibility that the judgement of an object which is not morally good as 'beautiful' is in fact the product of a corrupt or underdeveloped faculty of taste with regard to the beautiful.

The whole question of Taste is of course a veritable minefield but I hope with the help of Peter Fuller to examine what is apparently a seriously deficient or corrupted perception of 'true taste' and by extension true beauty. Fuller in his book Images of God writes:

'Again and again aesthetic taste is reduced to the lowest level of consumer preference'

(7, P. 26)

He argues that taste has not only been reduced to being subjective but to arbitrary judgements. The very idea that 'true taste' exists has been rejected and in its place stand attitudes which find their conclusion in the cult of Kitsch. Fuller writes:

'I believe that modern technological development, in conjunction with a market economy, has demeaned and diminished the great human faculty of taste.'

(7, P. 27)

While I would argue that the roots of the blame may perhaps lie deeper than the socio-cultural area, the slide into subjective and relative judgement which characterizes this century undoubtedly represents a tremendous injuring of our faculty of taste.

Concerning taste, Kant drew distinctions between the pleasant and 'the beautiful'. As regards the pleasant, Kant argued that everyone is content that his judgement, based on private feeling, should be limited to his own person. Fuller quotes the example Kant gives to illustrate this:

'If a man says "Canary wine is pleasant" he can logically be corrected and reminded that he ought to say, "It is pleasant to me" '.

According to Kant this is true of anything that is pleasant to any of the senses. And so as regards the pleasant, the fundamental proposition is valid : everyone has his own taste (the taste of sense). Regarding the beautiful however Kant writes that if a man says something is beautiful,

'he supposes in others the same satisfaction; he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things.' (7, P.28)
Therefore as regards the beautiful - we cannot, unlike 'the pleasant' say that each man has his own particular taste, 'For this would be as much as to say that there is no taste whatever, i.e. no aesthetical judgement which can make a rightful claim upon everyones assent.'

(7, P.28)

While Kant's conclusions would certainly appear to help our case to show that true taste does exist, Fuller feels that Kant conceded the relativity of even sensual taste much too quickly, he writes:

'Judgements about sense experience imply an underlying consensus of qualitative assumptions. For example, a man who judges excrement to have a more pleasant smell than roses would, almost universally, be held to have an aberrant or perverse taste.'

(7, P. 29)

Fuller feels that we obtain or reach this 'consensus' through 'culturally and socially determined habits' alone, and for this reason he blames cultural and social systems for creating a situation where individuals prefer 'rayon to silk, fibreglass to elm-wood, insipid white bread to the best wholemeals' . He writes:

'I am suggesting that modern productive economic, and cultural systems, in the West, are conspiring to create a situation not so very different from that of our

hypothetical example in which the odour of excrement was preferred to that of roses. In our society it may well be that a majority prefers, say, white sliced plimsoll bread, to wholemeal .. but the judgement of "true taste" will inevitably be made "against the grain"'. .

(7, P.29)

Fuller's belief that our conception of taste is culturally and socially determined is doubtless largely true but perhaps similarities exist between the essence of our recognition of true taste and that which Plotinus attributes to beauty:

'It is something that is perceived at the first glance, something which the soul names as from an ancient knowledge and, recognising welcomes it, enters into unison with it'

(17, P. 221)

Fuller continues by asserting that in aesthetically healthy societies a continuity between the responses of sense and fully aesthetic responses can be assumed:

'The rupturing of this continuity is, I believe, one of the most conspicuous symptoms of this crisis of taste in our time.'

(7, P.29)

As an example of one area where the continuity between the responses of the senses and fully aesthetic responses still survives Fuller gives the 'sub-culture of fine wines';

'Our connoisseur will certainly be prepared to admit his personal fancies, and even, perhaps, the idiosyncratic or sentimental tinges and flushes to his taste. But, he will tell us, his fancies do not prevent him from discriminating between a bad claret and a good burgandy. When he makes statements of this kind, our connoisseur is acknowledging that he, too, is not merely judging

for himself, but for everyone. He regards quality more as if it was a property of the wine itself rather than an arbitrary response of the taste buds ... Anyone who consistently inverted the consensus, e.g. Who regularly preferred "vin ordinaire" to the supreme vintages of the greatest "premier cru" wines could safely be assumed to have a bad or aberrant taste in wines.'

(7, P.30)

Fuller then concludes that even taste of the senses goes far beyond arbitrary pleasant 'for me' responses and he gives a final example of the inadequacy of such responses:

'If a man said that a mass-produced Woolworth's bowl, embellished with floral transfers, was as 'good' as a great Bernard Leach pot: I could not simply assent that he was entitled to his taste; rather I would assume that some sad occlusion of his aesthetic faculties has taken place'

(7, P.30)

It is such a sad occlusion or underdevelopment of our aesthetic faculties with regard to beauty which I am suggesting allows us to mistake the lustre of beauty for true beauty which is inseparable from the good.

To summarise then, Roger Scruton tentatively concludes that ethics and aesthetics are one and in saying this he is echoing Plato who urges us to love true beauty, for delight in true beauty is delight in what is truly good. Scruton however stipulates the importance of taste - in the sense of reasoned discrimination. He writes :

'The relation between moral and aesthetic judgement suggests that standards for the validity of the one will provide standards for the validity of the other. To show what is bad in a sentimental work of art must involve showing what is bad in sentimentality. To be certain in

matters of taste is, therefore to be certain in matters of morality: Ethics and aesthetics are one'.

(21, P 249)

This close relationship between 'matters of taste' and 'matters of morality' which Scruton speaks of is not to be seen in the vast majority of art and particularly not in the art of this century which has strenuously asserted that such a relationship does not exist, and which has no difficulty in accomodating the possibility of beautiful evil. In turning to Peter Fuller we find a possible explanation for the rupturing of the relation between taste and morality - an explanation as to how their separation has been effected and accepted. Fuller suggests and illustrates that even with regard to the pleasant and not only the beautiful there exists what he calls 'true taste' - that is to say, taste which at the very least is not subject to individual, arbitrary interpretation. Fuller argues that the great human faculty of taste has suffered a tremendous corruption. The blame for which he attributes (and this it must be said is in keeping with his political views) to modern technological development in conjunction with a market economy.

However, Tolstoy, and Ruskin also, believed that the rot had set in long before the industrial revolution and that the Renaissance which is generally acknowledged to have been the great flowering of humanity's potential, particularly in science and the arts, was in fact the point at which man turned with greater zeal to that which pleased him rather than that which was good for him. The Renaissance however evidently represented only an intensification of this tendency in man to give priority to that which pleases him for it is against such tendencies that Plato cautions:

'Let us freely admit that if drama and poetry written for

pleasure can prove to us that they have a place in a well run society we will gladly admit them ... but if they fail to make their case then we shall have to follow the example of the lover who renounces a passion that is doing him no good, however hard it may be to do do.'

(16, P436)

If we are serious in our efforts to perceive the true beauty Plato and and Plotinus speak of, it may be, then, that we should abandon immanent notions of beauty as flawed or at least coloured by attitudes acquired from a society in which the majority do prefer 'white sliced, to the best wholemeals'. However hard as Plato says, it may be to do this. In place of these abandoned notions we have the option of letting the good alone be our compass to what may transpire to be not only the greater good but the 'greater and loftier beauty'.

CHAPTER 4

=====

PRACTICAL APPLICATION - FRANCIS BACON

'Art is an attempt to transport into a limited quantity of matter, modelled by man, an image of the infinite beauty of the entire universe. If the attempt succeeds, this portion of matter should not hide the universe but on the contrary it should reveal its reality all around.

Works of art which are neither pure and true reflections of the beauty of the world nor openings on to this beauty, are not strictly speaking beautiful; their authors may be very talented but they lack real genius.

That is true of a great many works of art which are among the most celebrated and most highly praised. Every true artist has had real direct and immediate contact with the beauty of the world, contact which is of the nature of a sacrament'

- Simone Weil

'I would like my pictures to look as if a human being had passed between them, like a snail, leaving a trail of the human presence ... as the snail leaves its slime'.

- Francis Bacon

'I've always thought of friendship as where two people really tear one another apart and perhaps in that way learn something from one another.'

- Francis Bacon

The discussion so far has to a large extent been theoretical and speculative aided in places one hopes, by examples. However I would like at this point to ground the speculation and tentative conclusions in a specific and pertinent subject.

In attempting to choose a suitable subject to examine with reference to the moral and aesthetic areas so far dealt with, many artists came to mind : Da Vinci, Carravaggio, or in our own century, Salvador Dali, of whom George Orwell wrote :

'One ought to be able to hold in one's head simultaneously the two facts that Dali is a good draughtsman and a disgusting human being.'

(14, (P, 218)

All undoubtedly excellent potential subjects and yet I continually found myself returning to the example with which I began, that of Francis Bacon, whom Fuller found so problematic. An important consideration which makes Bacon and his work particularly suitable for examination is the fact that by his own admission he is an 'outsider' (22, P.43).

He has never become a part of the various movements or trends in art which have occurred during his lifetime. He has said of abstract art that it is limited in what it can convey. (22, P.60) and explains visceral responses to it as fashion. Insofar then as Bacon is uninfluenced by contemporary or modern theories concerning art or painting (specifically formal or technical theories with regard to painting) he is freed from any self-imposed obstructions or impediments to realising in paint his character. He has said :

'I'm just trying to make images as accurately off my nervous system as I can . I don't even know what half of them mean. I'm not saying anything. Whether one is saying something for other people , I don't know.'

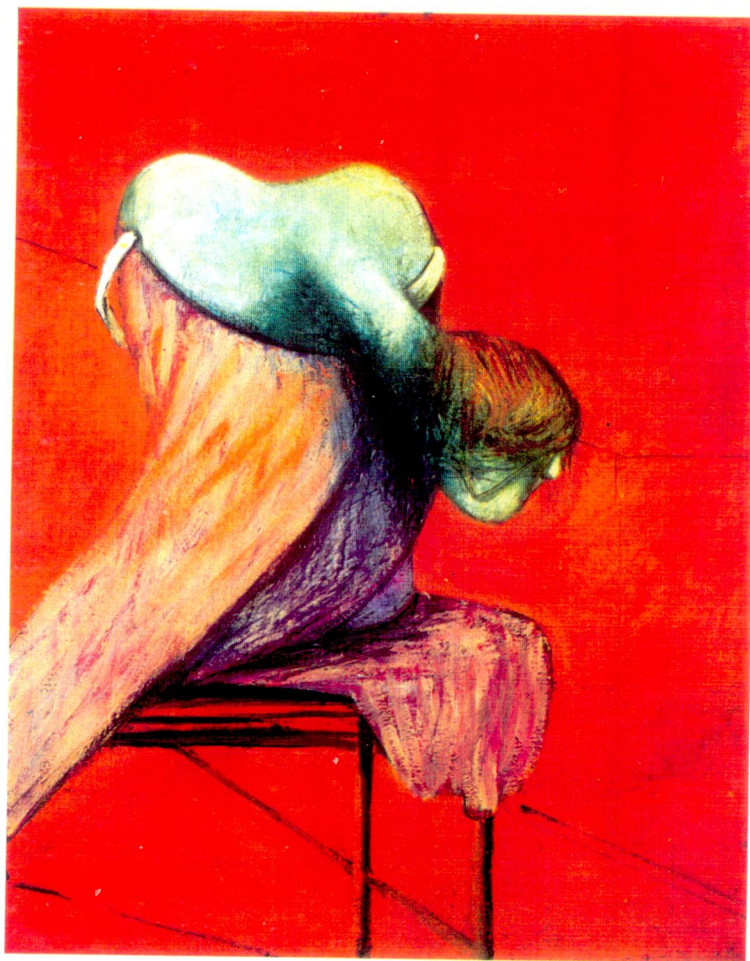
(8, P. 7)

Francis Bacon first came to prominence as a painter in 1944 at the age of thirty five with 'Three studies for figures at the base of a Crucifixion' of which Peter Fuller writes:

'Their heads are eyeless and tiny. Their mouths huge. Two of them are baring their teeth. All have long, stalk-like necks. The one on the left, hunched on a table, has the sacked torso of a mutilated woman; the body of the centre creature is more like an inflated abdomen propped up on flamingo legs behind an empty pedestal; the third could be a cross between a lion and an ox; its single front leg disappears into a patch of scrawny grass. They exude a sense of nature's errors ; errors caused by some unspeakable genetic pollution, embroidered with physical wounding. One has a white bandage where its eyes might have been. All are an ominous grey, tinted with fleshy pinks ; they are set off against backgrounds of garish orange containing suggestions of unspecified architectural spaces.'

(7, P.66)

Almost a half century later Bacon has produced a body of work that has been unrelenting in its intensity and has rarely wavered in its disturbing subject matter. Rather than seeking to convey violence or horrific imagery Bacon claims to reveal what he perceives to be the reality.



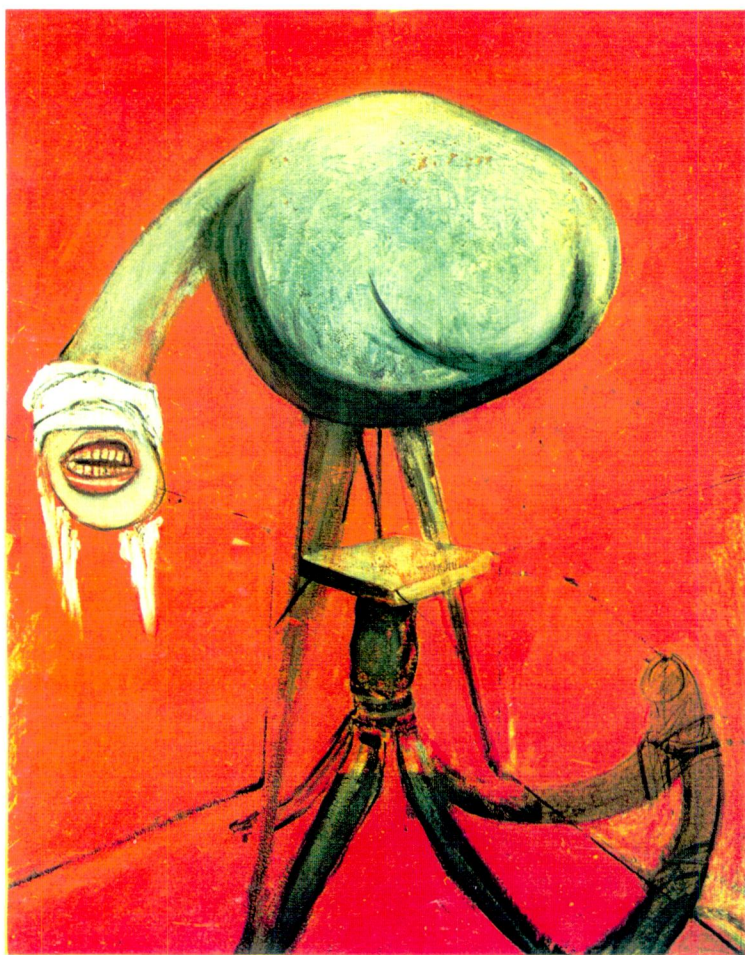


FIG 1. THREE STUDIES FOR FIGURES AT THE BASE OF A CRUCIFIXION

BACON , 1944

Oil and pastel on hardboard, each panel 37 x 29 in.

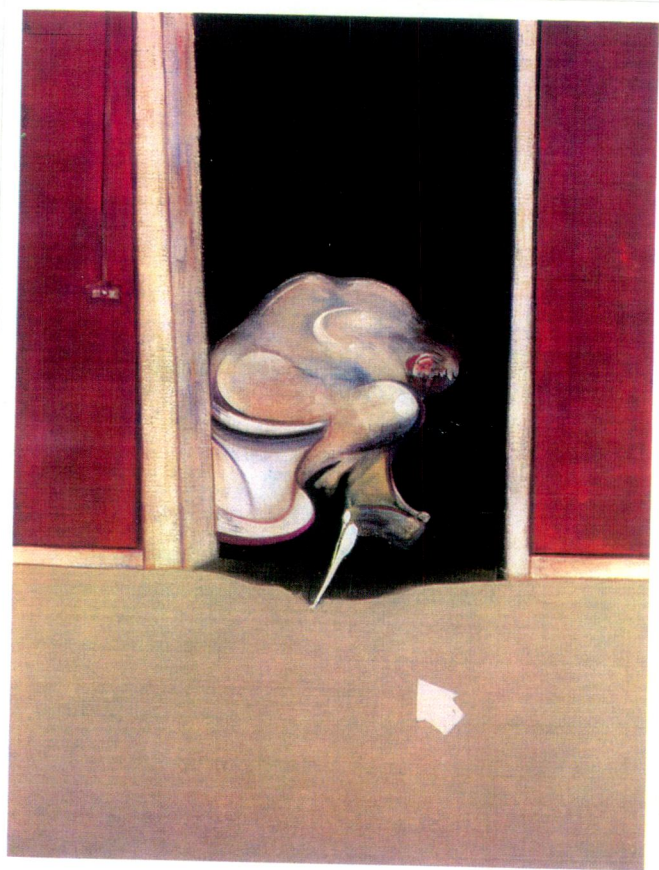
'When talking about the violence of paint, its nothing to do with the violence of war. It's to do with an attempt to remake the violence of reality itself When I look at you across the table, I don't see you but I see a whole emanation which has to do with personality and everything else. And to put that over in a painting, as I would like to be able to do in a portrait, means that it would appear violent in paint'.

(22, P 81)

Bacon has undeniably had great success in expressing with paint, what he perceives when he looks across the table at another human being. Take for example the 'Triptych May - June 1973' which presents us with the physical circumstances of the suicide of Bacon's close friend and lover George Dyer. One critic describes the painting :

'He has reversed the conventional left-right progression and has, again as in a film, abandoned a fixed viewpoint. We look through one doorway in the left panel and through another in the center and right hand panels. Read from right to left, the images depict the facts of Dyers death, as the nude figure vomits into the bathroom sink, crosses the room, then dies on the toilet. The sinuous agonized curves of Dyer's arm and shoulder at right are continued by the curve of the sink's drainpipe. The pitiful, almost fetally positioned figure at left has a closed composure in opposition to the distended agony of the adjacent panels. The white arrows in the foreground were added to counter the sensational character of the subject matter by inserting a note of clinical objectivity'

(24, P 75)



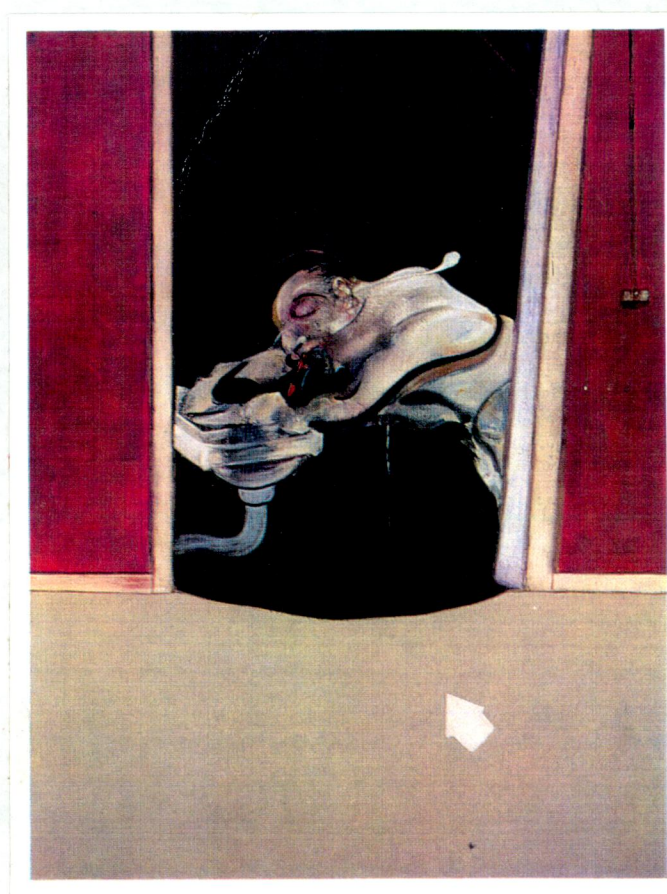
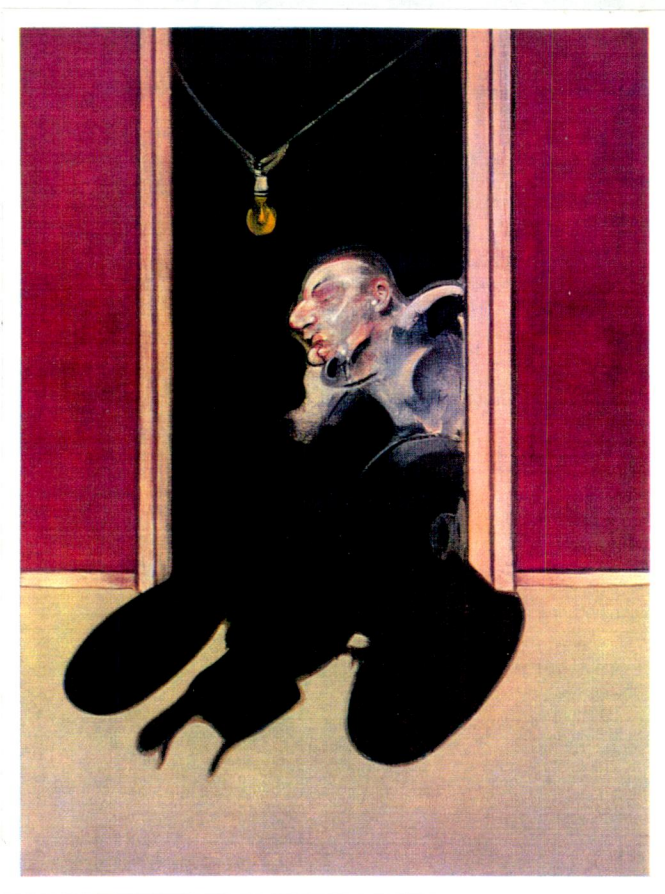


FIG 2.

TRIPTYCH MAY - JUNE 1973.

BACON, 1973

Oil on canvas, each panel 78 x 58 in.



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The critic also remarks that:

'A batlike shadow looms in the central panel, as though the illogical product of the bulb swinging wantonly over the figure, and seems to be some grim messenger of death'

(24, P 74)

Clearly Bacon's view of his dead friend is such that he is capable of cutting himself off from any feeling of compassion or love to present a clinically objective, entirely detached painting. This view of man extends to his view of himself. In 'Self Portrait 1973' we see a creature in despair, half draped over the sink, legs crossed and twisting in anxiety. The head lolls and is supported by an arm around which a watch announces each second, the approach of death. A mirror in the background accentuates the figure's isolation and a profound sense of desolation is all pervading. Bacon continuously presents us with figures, isolated in rooms, unaware of being observed 'at a moment of collapse or crisis.' (P24, P20). These figures are rarely engaged in any action - they are apparently unable to change, create change or even conceive of change. This is the reality which Bacon perceives in humanity and it is entirely consonant with and perhaps stems from his views of life, Fuller quotes Bacon as saying:

"I think of life as meaningless but we give it meaning during our own existence. We create certain attitudes which give it a meaning while we exist, though they in themselves are meaningless really ... man now realises that he is an accident, that he is a completely futile being, that he has to play out the game without reason." Thus in reducing itself to "a game" by which man distracts himself (rather than a purveyor of moral or spiritual values), "art more accurately reflects the human situation even than photography".

The human situation that is, as seen by Bacon.'

(7, P 67)



FIG 3.

SELF PORTRAIT 1973.

BACON, 1973

Oil on canvas, 78 x 58 in.



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Bacon based his painting 'Sweeny Agonistes' which has been described as a 'three panel excursion into a phantasmagoria of bloody murder and mayhem' (8, P. 33) on the poem of the same name by T. S. Eliot, in which are found the lines:

'Thats all the facts when you come to brass tacks:

Birth and copulation and death.' (8, P. 33)

Sam Hunter notes that:

'The Eliot reference recalls a similar sentiment of disenchantment regarding the futility of existence expressed by Nietzsche in a dialogue in "The Birth of Tragedy" 1872. When Midas asked Silenus what fate is best for men, Silenus answered; "Pitiful race of a day, children of accidents and sorrow, why do you force me to say what were better left unheard? The best of all is unobtainable - not to be born, to be nothing. The second is to die early." '

(8, P.33)

Paintings such as 'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion' and the series of variations based on Velazquez's 'Portrait of Pope Innocent X' stand to be interpreted as trying to evoke some residue of spiritual value. Bacon however, denies any such intention and regards the appropriation of religious iconography purely in terms of its formal possibilities. In 1966 Bacon claimed he used the Crucifixion because:

' I haven't found another subject so far that has been as satisfactory for covering certain areas of human feeling and behaviour'.

(1, P,22)

Peter Fuller writes:

'Bacon is a man for whom Cimabue's great Crucifixion is no more than an image of "a worm crawling down the cross". He is interested in the crucifix for the same reason he is fascinated by meat and slaughterhouses ; and also for its

compositional possibilities. "The central figure of Christ is raised into a very pronounced and isolated position, which gives it, from a formal point of view, greater possibilities than having all the different figures placed on the same level. The alternation of level is, from my point of view, very important". But for Bacon vicarious sacrifice, incarnation, redemption, resurrection, salvation and victory over death mean nothing - even as consoling illusions'.

(7, P.68)

Fuller in the end, finds he must reject Bacon's work: 'I find the vision of man he uses his undeniable painterly talents to express quite odious. We are not mere victims of chance; we possess imagination or the capacity to conceive of the world other than the way it is. We also have powers of moral choice and relatively effective action, whether or not we believe in God. And so I turn away from Bacon's work with a sense of disgust, and relief that it gives us neither the "facts" nor the necessary "truths" about our condition'

(7, P. 70)

But is this a satisfactory conclusion?. Does it result from a true understanding of Bacon's work? Fuller writes:

'Michel Leiris argues that Bacon presents us with a radically demystified art "cleansed both of its religious halo and its moral dimension".'

(7, P 68)

The question must be asked therefore if art cleansed of its moral dimension can, to use Plato's words:

'Prove to us that it has a place in a well run society'
(16, P.436) .

I have attempted to show throughout this discussion that while art may ostensibly have severed its ties with morality as enshrined in Christianity (or as Leiris says its 'religious

halo') and consider itself free or 'cleansed' of moral concerns, art as^a human activity is not outside morality and can give no adequate justification for its contention that it is. Within the boundaries of the canvas or the score the artist or critic may deem a work of art to be of such magnificence or genius that it is somehow above or beyond moral concerns, but a work of art is merely a part of a whole, (the whole being society) and is subject to moral concerns just as all individuals and activities without exception are.

In the case of Bacon there are those who hold that his work rather than being free of or above a moral dimension, in fact exemplifies many admirable moral characteristics. John Russell writes:

'As Bacon is so often associated only with a degraded idea of human activity it is worth saying that a great many of the paintings of the 1960's are in their implications the very reverse of squalid and claustrophobic. The portraits of Isabel Rawsthorne are for instance, an acknowled^ement of all that is staunchest and most generous in human nature. Energy, intensity of perception, depth of feeling, bodily magnificence and an undiminished vitality in the face of great private difficulty - all these come out in the work one way or another. It is not that Bacon has any illusions about human nature - 'Rotten to the core' spoken tutta forza, is his estimation of many people of his acquaintance - but rather that he never allows the shortcomings of others to dictate his feeling towards them.'

(20, P. 105)

I would disagree with Russell when he describes some of the above mentioned moral features, bodily magnificence for example as 'all that is most generous in human nature.' That aside however, it is interesting to remember back to the moral features cited by Scruton to illustrate the relation between moral and aesthetic judgement. Not alone are they similar to

those listed above by Russell and which Bacon's work apparently exhibits but both actually overlap on the quality 'depth of feeling'.

If we are surprised to see admirable moral qualities in the work of a man who has said he wants to live in 'gilded squalor' in a state of 'exhilarated despair' perhaps we should consider the moral qualities shown by men like Hitler for example, to whom the qualities of intelligence, depth of feeling, energy, intensity of perception are all applicable. In fact without these good qualities to serve as raw materials as it were for his own will and desires, Hitler would have been ineffectual. As mentioned earlier, a man may serve Nazism as selflessly and as obediently as he may serve a religion but in the case of Nazism he is taking that which is good - namely obedience, and placing it at the service of that which is not - thereby distorting and corrupting the good.

C.S. Lewis writes:

'Goodness is, so to speak, itself, badness is only spoiled goodness...the powers which enable evil to carry on are power given it by goodness. All the things which enable a bad man to be efficiently bad are in themselves good things - resolution, cleverness, good looks, existence itself.'

(12, P. 39)

When John Russell speaks of the admirable moral features of Bacon's work he is then, recognising the fundamental elements from which the work draws its tremendous strength - but these elements are employed by Bacon to present a vision of man unequalled in its despair. This I take to exemplify what Plotinus meant when he wrote of the moulding of creative energy ' to the nature of the souls own real-being.'

Perhaps the reader thinks that this is all an excessively harsh treatment of the work of Francis Bacon?. That he and his

work are merely products and reflections of the decaying society in which we all find ourselves, and that as such they are not in themselves 'at fault' as it were? The answer is simply this ; Francis Bacon is not an unthinking mirror, he is a human being with intelligence and free will. As Fuller says:

'We are not mere victims of chance; we possess imagination and the ability to conceive of the world other than the way it is. We also have the power of moral choice and relatively effective action.'

(7, P.70)

Society may condition, abuse and threaten to destroy us but it can never deprive us of our free will.

Perhaps one of the most tragic aspects of Francis Bacon's life which at the time of writing is in its eighty-third year is the profound sense of potential unrealised, like a man who longs that it could be different but is unwilling to even conceive of the possibility. In a certain sense he is as imprisoned as the figures in his paintings around which he constructs cage-like frameworks. In an interview with David Sylvester he has said ;

'I've always wanted and never succeeded in painting the smile ... perhaps one day I shall be able to paint a wave breaking on the shore'.

(22, P. 134)

As to what art can be, when the artist's heart is 'possessed by grace', I shall leave for Bacon himself to answer:

'When I made the Pope screaming, I didn't want to do it in the way that I did it - I wanted to make the mouth, with the beauty of its colour and everything, look like one of the sunsets or something of Monet, and not just the screaming Pope. If I did it again, which I hope to God I never will, I would make it like a Monet.' (22,P, 134)

In summary then, we looked at some examples of Bacon's work, examples broadly representative of the general body of his work, and we affirmed the consonance between the work's pessimistic and despairing nature and the moral nature of Bacon himself as revealed in his many interviews. It was observed that Bacon's work exhibited moral qualities comparable to those Scruton offers as examples to argue that aesthetic and moral judgement are one. It was then suggested that the recognition of particular admirable moral qualities was insufficient for a just evaluation of a work of art on the grounds that an evil man for example, requires good qualities to be effectively evil.

The key therefore, towards a just evaluation, lies not merely in identifying the moral qualities exhibited by a work of art but in identifying the moral nature of the end for which they are employed or moulded by the moral nature of the artist.

CONCLUSION

It can never be our place nor concern to pass judgement on Francis Bacon as a person but can it be denied that it is very much our concern to try and understand and assess the value of what we expose our senses to?

Perhaps it is that 'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion' is an intense, original and a skillfully and honestly-realised piece, and perhaps it is that in a certain sense, as many critics tell us, Francis Bacon is one of the greatest painters to have emerged in Britain since world war two. But are we not obliged to ask: What do all the adjectives amount to? What is the ultimate value of work which chooses 'exhilarated despair' rather than considering even the possibility of change and which is void of even the faintest glimmer of compassion? Suzi Gablik writes:

'Can we study art for moral results, as we already study it for social and aesthetic ones? I am convinced not only that we can, but that we must - that the social, the aesthetic, and the moral are inextricably intertwined, and that we have absolved ourselves of these vital connections at our own peril. Art is not value-free, as science tries hard to be, - it is motivated and purposive. When the question is one of moral worth however, it is not the finished product which we see which concerns us, but the inner values directing it ...'

(6, P.223)

I am not, I must stress advocating censorship - or at least not censorship of the 'state' variety, but is it not true to say that when we begin to take an interest in our physical well-being we exercise a form of personal censorship when we distinguish between foods and habits which are either beneficial or detrimental to that well-being? It seems strange that as adults we find no application to ourselves of

the reasoning behind the practice that has the parent censor what the child is exposed to, (through the media for example). The reasoning one presumes is to shield the mind from 'undesirable' influences.

This reasoning was of such importance to Plato that he was inclined to refuse all art admission to his republic :

'And we shall warn its (Poetry's) hearers to fear its effects on the constitution of their inner selves'.

(16, P. 436)

Even if we acknowledge that not everything we like is necessarily good for us and undertake to exercise a form of personal censorship, the difficulties facing us are immense. We may have to concede that what our reason and conscience tells us is morally bad is often what our taste tells us is beautiful - our taste alone, or at least alone in its present conditioned or underdeveloped state, is not to be trusted with the task of evaluating justly. Plotinus counsels:

'You must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birthright of all, which few turn to use.'

(17, P.225)

Kandinsky echoes this in 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' when he urges that we must learn to perceive with our souls rather than our eyes.

Our efforts at evaluation are not helped if we follow blindly the logic (sound as I believe it to be) by which Roger Scruton proposes that ethics and aesthetics are one (namely, that we describe them both in terms of their moral attributes) because as we have seen, the moral qualities exhibited by works of art such as those of Francis Bacon, qualities such as energy, intensity of perception, intelligence and resolution, might just as readily be applied to a mass murderer. In Bacons case

they are in fact the qualities from which his work draws its tremendous strength, the qualities which have been employed to his own particular end - moulded to 'the nature of the souls own real being.' We must look deeper, for just as we acknowledge a good person not merely because they exhibit certain admirable moral qualities, but because these qualities are moulded by that person to a good end, we must avoid the easier option of evaluating individual works of art 'solely' in terms of the moral qualities they exhibit but endeavour further to identify the ultimate end which these qualities serve.

And if, by perceiving with our souls and as Plotinus counsels, by allowing the good to be our compass, we can honestly say 'here indeed is a good work of art', we will find ourselves inclined to say 'here is a beautiful work of art' for we will have begun to understand the true nature of goodness and beauty.

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