*Sonus*, 37, 2016, 34-46

Aesthetics and the Israeli Music Scene\*

By Joseph Agassi,

Department of Philosophy, Tel Aviv University

\*An extended version of a talk delivered on April 12, 2016 at the Composers’ Forum, Department of Composition, Buchmann-MehtaSchool of Music, Tel Aviv University.

Thank you for the invitation to give this talk. The invitation flatters me greatly. Please feel free to interrupt me any time for any reason whatsoever.

My thesis today is this: what guides artists is the tradition within which they live; they follow it as best they can, but they usually find in it insufficient guidance. The way they supplement it is what makes their output reasonable as craft or success or failure as art. Though it is rather obvious, it was the great art historian and critic Sir Ernst Gombrich who argued for it extensively, and I think it still deserves airing.

For my part, I greatly regret that I did not know it early in my life. In my childhood I hoped to be a musician, because the songs I learned then enchanted me. I had no idea how one becomes a musician, other than by learning to play an instrument. My wish to learn any art or any craft was denied as it was deemed an impediment to my studies. My relation to art was then totally passive. Although popular folk music was heard then almost everywhere in my country and on any public occasion, it was very difficult for me to hear classical music of any sort. There was none of it at home, and very little on the radio. In my adolescence, during World War II, frequent record concerts were publicly available, arranged by the British armed forces for British soldiers. Less often I could hear records in homes of collectors of classical records as it was their custom then to organize such musical evenings. I learned to read music scores, borrowed from a friend of my sister, to make the most of such occasions. I remember very vividly the strong impression that I had watching the movie *Fantasia* (Disney, 1940) and more so a live concert—of the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra—as the sound there was so much sharper than what I was used to listening to vinyl records.

In my adolescence I dreamt of becoming a composer. I started studying in the Jerusalem conservatory and when I was released from military duty after the Israeli War of Independence I had to choose between studying science and music. I had a few reasons for my choice of science, but the crucial one seems to me now to have been the fact that there was no music background at my home beyond mere folk songs and religious songs on Sabbath and holiday eves, yet there was some science background there, however little. My efforts to learn music and about music all by myself clearly was not enough. Even reading the whole output of the famous musicologist Ebenezer Prout in the university library as well as older and newer authors did not suffice. A stronger motive was my dream of composing orchestral music that should bring to the notice of the music world at large the great folk music of my childhood. Of course, this is pathetic. Composers often use folk themes in their music, and it is mostly mediocre, of course. William Levi Dawson’s 1934 *Negro Folk Symphony* and the 1939 Symphony No. 4, *Folk Song Symphony* of Roy Harris are examples that I could not know about; but I soon heard the music of Marc Lavry and of Shabtai Petrushka and these, mostly medleys of folk tunes or similar works, cured me of my ambition. I soon changed my view of the folk music that I grew up on, perhaps even becoming too critical.

No doubt, my early admiration of folk music simply indicated poor taste. The better Israeli popular music is much younger, as is some better use of it that was led by composer-arranger Paul Ben Haim who wrote in the style that he christened as Mediterranean and whose work I learned about much later. That style came to express nationalist sentiment, following the Romantic tradition of East-European composers—with some Balkan and Middle-Eastern flavor, with a bigger dosage of influence of early twentieth-century composers like Bartok (the composer as well as the ethnomusicologist), Stravinsky, and Hindemith—with a touch of Schönberg for the more daring among them. (Serialist composer Stefan Wolpe was here a few years before the War. He contributed some terrific folk songs. His serial music met with too much hostility and he left. Others wrote serial and electronic music only a decade or two later, especially Yosef Tal.) That not much local music excelled is not surprising: excellence is rare by definition, and good taste requires much nurturing and traditions, not to mention toleration. These arrived with the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in 1936, but they took time to adapt.

I still maintain an interest in folk music and its integration in classical music, from the Renaissance, when the distinction between high and low art could not apply, to forays of high composers to folk music, such as the tremendously influential arrangements that Beethoven made of some Scottish folk tunes (Op. 108 and WoO. 156), Kol Nidrei by Max Bruch and by others, and the 1922 *Song of the Volga Boatmen* of Manuel de Falla. Of course, the list of great orchestrations and other arrangements of folk music is too long to recite here. Let me mention one oddity: hearing Norwegian folk music made me realize that Edvard Grieg should count among the composers of this sort. This was new to me, since Scandinavian folk music is not very popular. This, I suppose, is why Claude Debussy thought poorly of Grieg and Charles Ives appreciated him much more: Debussy was unaware of the roots of Grieg’s music in folk music, whereas Ives studied this as he developed the art of citing folk music to new heights.

I am mentioning all this not only as an expression of my envy of you, beginning composers, but also in order to illustrate the opinion that I wish to discuss, that composition as well as the assessment of its worth is involved in the general culture, so that even views concerning Grieg, the well-known composer, may depend on cultural backgrounds. It is thus not surprising that the border between folk and high music blurs, as in works of ethnomusicologists like Bartok not to mention the impact of Gospel and Blues on American music in general.

The proposal to take an interest in folk music may be useful; not so the demand to do so. This demand amounts to the condemnation of all art that is not well grounded in the culture, especially in popular culture. This condemnation follows from the theory that Lev Tolstoy presented in his famous novella *Kreutzer Sonata*, in which he judged that famous work of Beethoven as poor art. He repeated this theory in his book *What is art?*

Tolstoy demanded that all art be functional, that music be lullabies or military marches or funeral marches or even table-music. The role of the artist in such cases is clear, he explained, whereas artists asked to write symphonies or to create great works of art of any kind lose their way as they cannot tell what is required of them. This explanation is invalid: Tolstoy himself wrote both high art and popular art. He simply appreciated popular art very much but high art not so much. His own high art he considered a mere appetizer, he said, as the art of clowns performing in front of the circus tent in order to draw people to the real show. This is objectionable: it is hard to imagine Russian literature without taking his contribution to it into account. Lenin observed this. His testimony is redundant, though, since he was committed to the theory of art as applied art, since this was the theory that already Marx and Engels had advocated.

At first glance Marxist aesthetics is surprising: everyone knows the difference between Schubert’s Military March and a military march proper. I have heard many military bands in many countries on many occasions play all sorts of marches, and I never heard one of them play the March of Schubert. It is not that they cannot play high music. The victory march from Giuseppe Verdi’s *Aida* is popular. Hence, there is no sharp dividing line between abstract music and applied music or between high and low music. Yet, clearly, not every great piece of art is also applied art and the difference between them is pretty clear (even though they share much).

Tolstoy knew all this. His very choice of Beethoven’s famous sonata as the work to condemn testifies to his ability to recognize attractive music. He objected to music that was not sufficiently involved in the general culture even if it is attractive. This is why he dared to put down even Shakespeare. The *Andante Cantabile* of Tchaikovsky’s first string quartet (Op. 11) moved him to tears; presumably he allowed himself this luxury as it sounds very Russian and so is sufficiently involved in Russian everyday-life culture. This shows the paucity of music that he could consider this way. He appreciated the music of John Field, the Irish composer who had settled in Russia—just because he had settled in Russia and thereby tickled Tolstoy’s patriotism, rather than because he emulated Mozart—or rather his teacher Muzio Clementi—with so much success. This choice of Tolstoy is rather cheap.

Tolstoy wanted art to be functional so that it should speak to common folk. Regrettably, common folk usually have poor taste. Tolstoy stressed this: the hostility to poor taste is snobbish and so objectionable, its popularity among professional critics notwithstanding. Even Kitsch should not raise objection. But vulgar art is different: even as *Commedia dell'arte* or as vaudeville or operetta or musical comedy, vulgarity is distasteful, and much fashionable musical comedy is distasteful imitation folk music. What is the verdict on this kind of art from the viewpoint of Tolstoy? This is not clear. His calling Shakespeare vulgar disqualifies him from answering this question. (Giuseppe Verdi understood Shakespeare better as he indicated in his Falstaff. What in Shakespeare poses as vulgar is not, as G.K. Chesterton has observed in his comment on *Midsummer Night’s Dream*.)

The view of Marx is weaker than that of Tolstoy (his junior by a decade): he too demanded that art should have social messages, but he ascribed aesthetic value not to all works with social messages, but only to those with progressive ones. He thus made only political demands, no artistic ones. Still, he was in error, as his view renders left-wing posters superior to the Mona Lisa. Sophisticated Marxists answer this rather obvious criticism. They do so by claiming that Marxist aesthetics requires of the poster to be as effective as possible, thereby raising it to the level of high art. And on this they are right: it took a Toulouse-Lautrec to raise poster art to the level of high art. Moreover, the avant-garde pioneer Casimir Malevich ascribed to his abstract art high political value, as he declared in his *Suprematist Manifesto*. This Marxist sophisticated response is right but it is no answer: by Marxist aesthetics all progressive posters should count as good art, yet some of them still are not.

Marxist aesthetics is fashionable. The standard objection to it is from escapist art: it is usually inferior, as it is devoid of all challenge and offers very little. The Marxist response to this is that escapism is a political phenomenon, as already was the ancient Roman demand to feed the masses with bread and entertainment (*panem et circenses*). True. The political indifference of the producers of escapist art frustrates political activists seeking volunteers among artists. Here the Marxist confusion is evident: although all human activity, including art, has some political aspect, this says nothing about its quality as art; and the Marxist claim is that all and only progressive art is good art. It was the commitment to this theory that made artist Berthold Brecht write committed art. He became Marxist later (his first play was anarchist). Yet inconsistently he praised the reactionary 1939 movie *Gunga Din* of [George Stevens](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0828419?ref_=tt_ov_dr), inspired by the eponymous poem by Rudyard Kipling, that great reactionary writer. (Stalin also liked Hollywood movies about British Imperialism.)

Sufficiently many art-works testify to the fact that art can be good or poor regardless of its being progressive or reactionary. Here the case of Arnold Schönberg is interesting. Sneering at light music, especially when he singled out very few exceptions (Offenbach, Johann Strauss Jr., Joseph Achron and later also George Gershwin), he expressed an opinion contrary to that of Tolstoy. This was no contempt for common people: he was always interested in folk music, as his early (*Songs for Mezzo-Soprano or Baritone and Piano*, Op. 3) and his late (*Three Folksongs for Mixed Chorus a Cappella*, Op. 49) works testify. His style there shows that he accepted the demand for conservativism when composing in this vein. He was a progressivist nonetheless, and he considered progressive art as deviating [interestingly] from the trodden path (“Brahms the Progressive”).

It is strangely hard to speak of good taste without sounding snobbish. Taste prescribes independent judgment whereas snobs follow fashion. Nevertheless, good taste partly depends on tradition. As Stravinsky has observed (in his autobiography), reasonable free judgement requires familiarity with tradition. I have cited an example for this: proper appreciation of Grieg depends on some—not much—familiarity with Scandinavian folk music. Another example is the appreciation of the music of Aaron Copland: he sounded much less daring and much less interesting after the music of Charles Ives won its exposure (in the fifties). This is similar to the fact that the music of Mozart eclipsed that of his student Johann Nepemuk Hummel, who may still attract attention in his native Bohemia. This should be qualified: Hummel composed some remarkable works —even by comparison.

This is so quite generally. Few works compare with those of Giovanni de Palestrina, yet the folksy Misa Criolla of Ariel Ramirez is preferred to it by some audiences on some occasions and surprisingly both in the church and in the concert hall. This is significant and the best answer to Tolstoy. For, the works of Palestrina and of Ramirez are both functional and folksy; the former still is the better though the latter is more up-to-date. We may but need not consider this a refutation of the view of Tolstoy. The same holds for the fact that artists had repeatedly to wait for the public to learn or to get used to their idiom before they could comprehend their works and only then be able to judge their works of great or small value: art works thus can become better integrated in tradition. (We see this in the rise of the popularity of the music of Vivaldi in the ‘fifties.) The possibility of change in popularity seems to support the view of the famous though verbose romantic philosopher Hegel that all great artists have to wait for the public to comprehend them. This idea is silly, even though, to repeat, there are repeated examples for it: it holds for cases in which artists develop new idioms that are difficult to learn. For, not all great artists develop new idioms and not all new idioms are hard to learn. The art of the cinema is a striking example: it has quite a few idioms, all of them new, as it is but a century old, and yet almost all of them were easy to acquire. The new cinematic idiom of Charlie Chaplin is easy to comprehend; so is the style of painting of the pointillists and of the fauvists, not to mention the new music styles, like the ragtime of Scott Joplin and the jazz from the oldest to the latest of the *avant-garde*, not to mention the Beatles and Heavy Metal. One may remember that the very use of the electric guitar met with tremendous objection, and not due to any difficult to comprehend or enjoy. The hostility might have prevailed but for the repertoires and the charming personalities of electric guitarists Les Paul and B. B. King.

All these examples come to show that aesthetics does not favor any set of rules beyond its having become a part of tradition. And it became a part of tradition simply by excelling and gaining public approval. At times, as Robert Cogan has noted, it is the intelligent use of multi-media that helps hasten this process. Here the movies have a special role in rendering a new music style acceptable: the introduction of serial music to the cinema raised no objection. (The first movie was the 1938 thriller *Spider’s Web* of James W. Horne that is otherwise quite conventional.) And indeed the test here is of success: artistic tools concern the artist; it is art works that concern audiences. Yet it is important to notice that—contrary to both Tolstoy and Marx—learning about the tools may help enjoy the product. There are two schools in culinary art, those who keep the recipe secret and those who expose it; in the high arts, experience shows, exposure helps more than concealment. This fact pertains most in the history of architecture: in this kind of art usefulness contributes positively to artistic value. This has led to the rise of the school of thought called functionalism (in architecture); it required rendering obvious the function of each aspect of a building. Whether it was a right move or not, it is now agreed that functionalism in architecture was a passing phase. The application of this lesson to music may require ingenuity: it is not easy but it may comprise a serious challenge to make a small band sound like a big orchestra or merely two singers (or even one violin) produce rich sounds. These may be exceptional achievements. And they may count only because they are exhibited in great works, not otherwise. But at times it is only the innovation that is interesting, and then good artists may borrow innovations that lesser artists have introduced. Even composers who deem Wagner a poor artist may admit that he has created some new techniques that they may want to borrow. That depends on the kind of art they wish to create; only if they try to suggest a new message and lack the tools to perform it will they seek the tools in works of some other composers. These other artists may deserve Tolstoy’s criticism, yet his dismissal of them is still erroneous since their innovations were better used by other artists.

Not only may there be innovations poorly used by their originators but better used by others, at times artists may contribute by offering works of art that serve the public as mediators, as interpreters of the new idioms of other, greater artists. They function as artists who usher the great innovative works into the tradition. There are such artists, novelists, painters and musicians, who are deemed daring and win popularity for a while. Examples are Walter Piston and his student Arthur Berger. The latter is more interesting, as he developed consciously a style that is a mix of Schönberg and Stravinsky. The public that has learned the new idiom from these mediating artists then discover the older, better and more daring artists; they then tend to forget the artists who served as bridges between the old and the new, which at times may be regrettable. Or they may be remembered in sheer nostalgia, which is not quite to the point.

Gombrich wrote about nostalgia. He stressed that there is nothing wrong with it as long as it is not accompanied by the loss of the sense of proportion. For, in any case, all art is tied to some extent in some tradition, and that limits both its production and its consumption. This is how Tolstoy’s support for popular art and his demand that art be functional have gained credibility and popularity. Contrary to it, however, the very culture to which some art belongs is radical: it may require detachment from tradition. This happened in the early twentieth century, when every ambitious artist tended towards the avant-garde and sought to be innovative. The romantic philosophy of Hegel influenced the development of the idea that all great artists break received rules. This idea too has a credible element. Thus, Schönberg viewed Brahms as progressive and innovative and he rightly stressed that this is much superior to slavish adherence to traditional rules. The musicologist Donald Tovey went further, and not too wisely. He viewed the whole of the history of music as that of breaking rules. Though Beethoven’s first symphony is so terrific as it is full of life, it is easy to ignore this and praise it because it starts with a discord and has a scherzo. Incidentally, the scherzo is not so new, as it is the Italian for the older and French badinerie and the latest humoresque. The choice between these terms is a matter of tradition. Beethoven’s innovation was his deviation from Haydn’s scheme in replacing the minuet with a scherzo. Should we condemn his eighth symphony for its return to the minuet? Indeed Tovey did not know how to handle it and declared it a mere "comedy of manners".[[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._1_%28Beethoven%29#cite_note-4) but this is no odd case. Should we blame Schönberg for his return to tonality or should we join Bernard Shaw and dismiss serialism as merely a passing phase?

There is no way to avoid using judgment rather than criteria. Still, we need them. But the criterion of breaking the rules is too easy. Quite a number of artists took it seriously, especially the Dadaists. It leads to the loss of orientation in accord with the thinking of Tolstoy. In music the easiest way to break the rules is to bang the piano—with the fist or with the elbow. Of all the composers who used this idea in the early twentieth century, the only great survivor is Charles Ives. Yet this introduced into music composition two new items that are by now permanent citizens: the cluster and its cousin the cascade. These brought in their wake the use of the tape as a hint of the once avant-garde *musique concrete* that the TV sci. fi. classic *Dr. Who* and the Beatles’ movie *The Yellow Submarine* have made popular, and the prepared piano and the synthesizer and more.

To go more wild, one may try to mix traditions. This trend began with the way painters used paintings from the Far East and Debussy treated music from Bali. This still meets with great objections. I had a daughter who was a music critic for the *Jerusalem Post* and who defiantly reviewed for that respected daily the ethnic music that was then less-than-respected and known derisively as central-station music. Now it is known as oriental music (though its roots are in the Maghreb, namely, in West Africa). It has gained some respectability since, as it is used for color in the already mentioned Israeli high music known as Mediterranean.

It is hard to know how much the story of Israeli Mediterranean music has together with George Bizet’s *Carmen* that used Spanish popular style lavishly. Even as late as 1890, Nietzsche expressed in the opening of his *Contra-Wagner* appreciation of *Carmen* to show that he was no prig.

As artists depend on some tradition, they have their own styles whether they want it or not, and if they are good their styles have their own character, often but not always known as their fingerprints. The idea that all great artists have their individual fingerprints is exaggerated if not even too vague. Also, some fairly mediocre artists have their own distinct fingerprints. (The most obvious example is Joaquim Rodríguez.) Let me add in conclusion that breaking rules and having fingerprints are two distinct characteristics, related on the basis of the idea that one cannot abide by the rules yet achieve a distinct style. This idea is the assumption that following the rules is very constraining. It clashes with the fact, discovered in the nineteenth century and stressed by Cogan and Escot, that if the predominant chords are by the book, other chords pass too. (This is a generalization of the old permission for dissonant passing notes.) The relaxation of rules rendered composition less challenging; it makes for the light application of severe rules that characterizes kitsch, or chocolate-box art or vaudeville. Yet even this can challenge, as is obvious in works of Eric Satie, Amadeo Modigliani, and Charlie Chaplin. Things may go the opposite way: following any set of rules may produce works of art that are too slick to count.

This is not to specify a challenge: whatever we specify as such may provide a challenge to some artist to refute it. So we may try to specify and hope to fail. This, however, is vague enough: any artistic contrast—say between the two themes in a sonata form or of a song form or between a scherzo and a trio—has to be between two items that are not too distant from each other. The power of the art will appear in the failure of switching similar items between two symphonies (perhaps in transposition). The same holds for a theme and variations: they have to share some idea that characterizes the whole piece. And, indeed, the avant-garde composers who wrote variations had to find new ways of combining theme and variations, yet in ways that still harp on the traditional conception of this art form. (See Eliot Carter’s notes to his 1955 *Variations for Orchestra*.)

The romantic idea that a great artist must encounter hostility has quite a few remarkable examples. The hostility was a part of the recent culture. The expression of this idea is not so much the attitude of support of new ideas, since we never know which of the many innovations gets the jackpot; rather it is the fierce opposition to the obviously new. The most notorious assault on avant-garde music was directed against *The Rite of Spring* of Stravinsky; it took place not on the opening night but on the occasion of the second performance, and it was well organized. A survey of programs of performances of leading orchestras around the world shows significant improvements in offering daring repertoires after the mid-century. Here in Israel both diverse orchestras, including the Philharmonic Orchestra, and the music radio programs, are far more daring today than they were but two or three decades ago. The Israel Contemporary Players**,**devoted to contemporary music, plays frequently to full houses programs that were quite unthinkable three decades ago. This is true of pop art too. Even the fury about the Beatles looks strange now. And it brings home the fact that avant-garde art can be high or low, easy or difficult to understand.

We are now much more aware of the fact that the great works of Johan Sebastian Bach are more difficult to listen to than, say, the highly dissonant *La Valse* of Ravel, that it is hard to decide whether the *Sprechgesang* of Schönberg was more or less revolutionary than his serial music. It is hard to use experience to judge this, as his *Ode to Napoleon*, *Pierrot lunaire* and *A Survivor from Warsaw* are less difficult to listen to than his tonal chamber Symphonies, not to mention his *Erwartung* or *Jacob’s Leiter*.

 We learn all this when we acquire a synoptic picture. At first we are much more struck by the difficulty of acquiring a new idiom, especially after having acquired the classical idiom that looks to us misleadingly natural. (It is no accident that the major target of the criticism that Gombrich has launched against classicism is the view that western representative art is naturalistic.) After getting used to the heavy language of Milton or of classical church music or of Renaissance high art, we find James Joyce and Schönberg and Picasso more baffling than incomprehensible. Indeed, we find baffling even works that are easy to comprehend, like *Façade* of William Walton and the works of Krzysztof Penderecki. But we get used to them faster than we did before.

Consider Schönberg’s choral *De Profundis*, Op. 50B, his last completed work. It is difficult to listen to because of its rich texture, despite its echo of the talking chorus that is reminiscent of the ancient Greek chorus. It is a hyper-modern chorus, influenced by Berthold Brecht’s method of directing his theatre (that he called epic theatre), as were the choirs of the left-wing Kibbutzim that Schönberg was obviously echoing, in allusion to the kibbutz ethos. (Indeed he dedicated its manuscript to this music school and served as its first honorary president.) Its demand on the listener is less due to its new idiom and more due to its rich texture.

The greatest release of the modern artist is not from this or that set of rules, since this is greatly variable anyway, but from the idea of artistic experience as that of edifying beauty. This idea is still operative, but no longer as utterly necessary; perhaps in a sense the idea that art is beautiful still hold universally, but then not in the ancient sense in which every artful sight or sound or any other sensation should be pleasant, in the sense in which Praxiteles or Rafael or Palestrina or Sappho or Keats is the supreme artist. In that sense the harmony of *De Miserere* of Giorgio Allegri is unsurpassable and so music has come to an end long ago. In that sense Tchaikovsky was most successful in his melodious *Andante Cantabile* and the Waltz from his *Serenade for Strings* (Op. 48). In this sense *Scheherazade Suite* of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov is a much more significant work than is usually considered. It may even make us consider Mozart’s *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* his greatest work rather than his monumental works, or the charming Minuet in his *Don Giovanni* to be the high point in that grand opera. Clearly this is not our judgment, yet we needed a shakeup before we gave up the identification of art with pleasant or edifying beauty. There is a clear incongruity here between the identification of artworks with beautiful works and the great appreciation and great popularity of works of Hieronymus Bosch as well as of Beethoven’s fifth symphony and the *Andante con moto* of Schubert’s second trio for strings (Op. 100). And, indeed, this incongruity makes for quite a few performances of that trio as sweet music. They seem to me barely tolerable. The same goes for the *Quartet for the End of Time* of Olivier Messiaen and for *A Survivor from Warsaw* of Arnold Schönberg. This is not to deny that the use of strong colors is dangerous, as it can easily misfire. This is why we do not appreciate gothic art or *Un Chien andalou*, the 1928 short movie of Luis Buñuel. It is the miracle of the Fauvist movement that most of its output are great works of art despite their preference for strong colors. It is agreed among art critics, including those among them who consider Gothic poetry intolerable, that *The Raven* of Edgar Allan Poe is a great poem nonetheless. The same goes for all strong colors: they usually miss but when they hit they bring great joy. So it is with the most famous psalm, Psalm 23: “He makes me to lie down in green pastures … though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Today composers have at their disposal many instruments that enable them to surprise and shock their audiences. They should be aware of the ephemeral character of such means and of the fact that only artistry may turn their use into art; this is of no positive use, but it is a warning that is better heeded: art with no challenge is ephemeral at best. On the whole, the rules that promise success are deceptive. It has been observed that the rules of composition that the great Palestrina laid down are almost complete, so that one can use them to compose reasonable music with no effort. Leonard Bernstein said the same of serial music: it is money-back guaranteed. He meant the opposite, of course: any set of rules that guarantees success guarantees that the outcome will be not art but at best its semblance. And so the idea is that although art does follow rules, these are any rules that the artist chooses to follow, and that these may help create some reasonably passable works, but hardly art: art, said Gombrich, is what supersedes the rules, it is the added value. This way he superseded all traditional views of art, the classic, the romantic, that of Tolstoy and that of Marx. It allows guidance for artists the way Tolstoy wanted but only up to a point: beyond that point it leaves them to their devices. This is a recognition of the autonomy of artists, but as a possibility, not as a given. This goes extremely well with the fact that we may value works of art for different reasons, or for complementary ones.

And so, in conclusion, the ability to enjoy diverse kinds of art for diverse reasons should close much of the disagreement between diverse schools of aesthetics, if we allow the change from their demands to recommendations that we can take as challenges. It remains significant, though, that although most art is by definition mediocre, great art can come in diverse sorts, depending on the challenge that the artist undertakes and that the public is ready to try out. This is not to deny that there are works of art that are hardly acceptable, the manipulative and those that aim at poor taste. I did not discuss these here. I direct the readers interested in a discussion of this to the book by myself with I. C. Jarvie, *A Critical Rationalist Aesthetics,* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008.