

**HIGH-LOW ART DISTINCTION & CLASS: A CRITIQUE OF MARXIST
AESTHETICS**

by

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*To my mother, who comforted me when I cried
And to my father, who loved me when I was ungrateful*

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ABSTRACT

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The concept of high and low art have a very close relation to social class. There is a prevailing notion within developed countries that certain forms of art are more legitimate and deserving of respect than others due to their association with the upper class. This social aspect of art leads to the question of how art is used in society and whether it should be used in that way. Marxists' deep interest in class have made their perspective particularly prominent concerning debate on the subject. Having such a deep interest in class, it is expected they have their own opinions on the role of class in art's usage. Despite their immense influence on the subject, I find the Marxist perspective concerning class and art lacking. In this work, I will attempt to critique the Marxist position on the relation of art and class and attempt to provide a unique perspective on this subject. I will be examining art and class in terms of two questions. First, what is the relationship between class and art and how is art used by social classes? Second, what should the relationship between art and class be and how should art be treated in society? I will first examine the Marxist position through Theodor Adorno and Hebert Marcuse, present Bourdieu's sociological findings on the subject, and present thinkers outside of the Marxist position while building my position in contrast to these thinkers.

CHAPTER 1. THE MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

1.1 Adorno: A Natural Evolution of the Orthodox position

It is probably best to start a discussion by establishing the standard Marxist view. Theodor W. Adorno does not take an orthodox position, but his stance is a natural evolution from it. Adorno is considered by many to be the most prominent figure of Marxist aesthetics in the 20th century. We will be examining Adorno's lecture series from November 1958 to February 1959. In this lecture series he talks about the role of modern art and its relation to the developments of capitalism. In short, Adorno believes that modern art is a force against the increasing despiritualization and reification¹ of society. Once we have established Adorno's position, I will argue that Adorno is defending a new form of high art not seen until the 20th century. Adorno's position not only aligns with upper-class taste despite his denial of the upper classes, but he promotes a new view among high taste circles that beauty is not necessary for art.

Adorno begins his first lecture by noting that the area of aesthetics holds less prestige in philosophy than other areas such as metaphysics or ethics. He believes this because aesthetics does not have a strong tradition and its development has been erratic. Often when discussing aesthetics, the concept of disinterested interest arises which originated from Kant. Adorno rejects the concept of disinterested interest by taking up Hegel's aesthetic views as a basepoint for his own. He claims that Kant's 'disinterested interest' is rooted in an inherent observer-subject relation that leaves no room for inherent beauty. Hegel's definition of beauty is quoted as "Beauty is the sensual appearance of the idea", which Adorno argues is an argument for objective idealism and objective

¹ Reification: The process where the social relations between producers of goods are viewed in terms of things. This creates a situation where autonomous people are treated as mere goods with economical value. (Stahl)

dialectics. The concept of disinterested interest I would argue is not inherently subjective, since we can use the reactions of the observer, especially an experience one, to gain some insight that may be lost on laymen. (Adorno 1-4)

Adorno also establishes that he does not want to fall into what he calls “formalism”, the idea that there are strict criteria that must be met for art to be good. Adorno also rejects aesthetic relativism due to its flexible standards concerning acceptable taste, calling such a position bourgeois. As you will notice as we explore other thinkers this goes opposite to the standard view. For example, Bourdieu or the orthodox Marxist position would state that bourgeois ideas of art are built on strict standards of taste. Such strict standards would suggest a lean toward aesthetic objectivism, which would suggest aesthetic objectivism as a bourgeois notion. While formal logic cannot be applied to aesthetic matters, Adorno believes that there is aesthetic logic. Adorno blames the widespread acceptance of the “irrationality of art”, the idea that art is inherently irrational, on the rampant consumerism found in modern society. This consumerism actively tries to dumb down the populace by encouraging them to accept art as a diversion rather than something that requires serious attention. People also fear analyzing the theory of art because they think they will lose enjoyment. This is a common fear against any type of theorizing and allows for the consumerist culture to thrive. Adorno ends his first lecture by stating that he is not making any comments on artists or their thought processes in this lecture series. Artists are concerned chiefly with creation and they alone cannot give a full explanation of the nature of art. (Adorno 7-11)

Adorno’s comments on the “irrationality of art” set a tone for the upshot of much of this lecture series. That being the bourgeois having relativist notions of art and seeking only enjoyment rather than understanding. While this is occurring, capitalist society is unable to see art as more than just enjoyment rather than something that should gain attention. Adorno laments the

current status of art as being the fault of a capitalist system and bourgeois values, but I would argue that Adorno is embodying and advocating upper-class taste. Adorno's conception of the bourgeoisie valuing enjoyment is the opposite of the reality, which is that the proletariat value enjoyment while the bourgeoisie value understanding and shun enjoyment. We will see in his later lectures that his approach of giving attention to art rather than enjoying art is unbalanced and has had negative repercussions for the arts since the 20th century. The problems that arise from the relationship of class and art are not what Adorno believes them to be.

In the second lecture, Adorno describes his position in the nature-nurture dispute by explaining his thoughts on artistic talent. While he acknowledges that there are those who have more natural ability than others, he puts much more emphasis on practice and development in determining true artistic talent. Given that Adorno is a Marxist it should not be surprising that he believes that environment and actions are more important than any genetic factors in determining the behavior of an individual. This would suggest that either humans do not have any natural predisposition to good aesthetics or that if they do it can easily be overridden. As Adorno develops his thoughts, we will see how he describes objective aesthetics in terms of social and cultural factors being the prime influencers. (Adorno 14)

He states that the focus on natural talent, sensuality, and irrationality concerning the arts is a way for consumerist society to discourage any development of not only artistic talent but human development as a whole. These attitudes can be seen manifesting in the accepted narrative that art is a "waste of time". Adorno explains that the notion that art is a pointless activity because it lacks immediate survival application is linked to the presence of an authoritarian father figure in the lives of those who hold this view. From Adorno's point of view the emphasis on the innate nature that humans are born with is used to suppress any potential people may have. This suppression

maintains authoritarianism because if people believe you are born a certain way and cannot improve, they will not push for change. The notion that nature is completely dominant and nurture has no effect naturally leads to the conclusion that any human affected change is impossible. While Adorno is quick to label systems and circumstances as the result of authoritarianism and fascism, which I do not believe is usually the case, he does point out the danger of not appropriately accounting for environmental factors. Adorno is correct in that a totally nature view of human behavior will lead to the view that human affected change is impossible. Yet despite this, I would argue that the role of nature is somewhat larger than nurture. The lack of attention and consideration to human nature when creating aesthetic objects is a key reason why certain aesthetic problems developed in the 20th century. (Adorno 14-15)

The third lecture makes a distinction between artistic experience and pre-artistic/material experience. The former is an experience of an artwork for its objective features while the latter is an experience of an artwork based on how it relates to you. This distinction is used to help explain why art should not be a source of entertainment but rather something that must be understood. Often when discussing aesthetics there is a distinction between nature and art, with nature being a basis for art. Adorno does not believe that nature is isolated from human experiences and states that appreciation of natural beauty has been affected by historical experiences. These historical experiences have changed our perception of nature from being our day-to-day environment, to fear, and then awe. This falls in line with Adorno's emphasis on the malleability of human behavior. (Adorno 26-28)

Adorno explores the relationship between sensuality and spirituality in the arts. While the sensual, that is sexual and desiring part of art, is essential for true art to arise there must be a spiritual aspect that goes beyond that sensual aspect. Adorno agrees with the orthodox Marxist

position of fulfillment in reality is more important than the ideal of spiritualization, but he does not conclude that spiritualization is irrelevant because they occupy different spheres. Adorno is critical of *l'art pour l'art*, or “art for art’s sake”, because he believes that reference allows for art to point to something beyond itself. Without this feature, art suffers. Despite being critical of *l'art pour l'art* Adorno is sympathetic to the concept due to the increasing commodification of art. Consumerist society has exploited the sensual aspect of art through commodification and kitsch² to completely get rid of its meaning and value. Therefore, modern art has developed to be increasingly less sensual to combat this. Sensuality has been weaponized to promote a hollow and spiritualess capitalist society, so true art must increasingly reject this part of art. In its place, modern art uses different methods of acknowledging suffering while retaining sensuality. Modern art like this is necessary because it reveals the truth of our times. It is critical to note that Adorno believes that sensuality has been abused and that we must present it in a different way. However, if the sensual aspects of past works already conformed to a basic standard that worked, then it would follow that a radical deviation from such a standard would likely result in works lacking in sensuality. Adorno seems to chiefly be concerned with creating art that he perceives as not being concerned with personal enjoyment. If enjoyment is at least a part of a reflection of whether art is good, then this may explain why much of modern art is not only not enjoyed but may be truly bad art. (Adorno 37-39)

In his sixth lecture he used an important concept in describing how art must address the issues of a society at a given time. Each time period and its accompanying society has specific historico-philosophical conditions that the art must address. Adorno uses the example of nude sculptures of 4th-5th century BCE Athens, which he claims highlighted how labor suppressed the

² Kitsch: Objects, usually art, that appeals to popular, poor taste. (American)

human body through degrading it. The suppression that occurred in this specific historico-philosophical period was addressed through these nude sculptures. In the time period when Adorno was making this lecture (Western society in the late 1950s) he believed that only art with the perspective of the radically destroyed and damaged was worth paying attention to because that was the type of art that would address the historico-philosophical situation. We can see that while Adorno believes in objective aesthetics, he also thinks that art must specifically engage in the philosophical debates of their time. This is a major retention of the orthodox Marxist position, which sees art as needing to promote Marxist thought or in Adorno's case, Marxist ideals. (Adorno 54-56, 62)

In the seventh lecture Adorno brings up the role of rationalization in explaining why true art does not flourish in modern times. As societies advanced, they move toward rational processes rather than irrational processes. Since art has roots in ancient beliefs and practices such as using magic to influence the environment as well as using aesthetic logic rather than formal logic, it is shunned. Society, in its increasing rationalization, is unwilling to confront true art and attempts to suppress it. On one hand Adorno seems to be correct that rationalization is leading to the suppression of art. However, I would argue this largely takes the form of trying to suppress sensuality in art while he believes that sensuality is being used to undermine art. Though not rooted in formal logic, his condemnation of the sensuality found in low art for the masses is based on such art not promoting a higher understanding. Modern art, which attempts to promote the spiritual aspect over the sensual can be described as a push for the "rational" in an aesthetic sense. Even modern art that emphasizes chaos, destruction, and disorder is encouraging the observer to contemplate these things, not trying to appeal to their senses. Adorno makes the accurate observation that the upper classes often try to suppress shows of emotion, but modern art itself

restricts the expression of emotions that are less contemplative such as mild satisfaction or playfulness. Adorno states that modern art is promoting a different type of sensuality, but without presenting anything to appeal to our aesthetic desires modern art's sensuality is narrow at best and non-existent at worst. (Adorno 41, 70)

Adorno also expresses an orthodox Marxist viewpoint by expressing his dislike of idealization in art. Adorno believes that art should be expressed plainly and strive to perform the process of defamiliarization. Defamiliarization is the process of presenting familiar everyday things in a way where they seem foreign without altering those familiar things in anyway. Adorno does not call for realism per se but advocates for art to try and confront issues as they are rather than simply express ideals without the current historico-philosophical context. Of course, the aim towards a type of utopia is a trait of art that Adorno expresses throughout his lectures, but it should be tempered by addressing the current situation. This is all reflective of orthodox Marxist aesthetics, which believed that art should be expressing the needs of the proletariat and outline the goal of communism. (Adorno 30, 37, 78-79)

In the tenth lecture, Adorno describes material experiences in terms of taste. Recognizing the sensual and not the spiritual aspects of art is pre-aesthetic/culinary taste, which attracts someone to material experiences. The vice versa of culinary taste is recognizing the spiritual and not the sensual aspects of art which is the intellectualization of art in the negative sense. While the former can be considered a taste for low art, Adorno considers the latter to be bourgeoisie taste. As I have pointed out in my earlier criticisms, Adorno's own views of spiritual and sensual aspects are much closer to the bourgeoisie taste of only recognizing the spiritual aspect. Adorno tries to separate his approach as being one where the individual engages in art by "observation and experience of important works of art" and "through the experience of their own inner constitution".

In contrast, the bourgeoisie intellectualizes art after the experience. Yet this is a very vague separation as the question arises of does one tell whether someone is taking in art during or after the experience, let alone the question of why this distinction is significant. This is an instance of Adorno trying to distinguish himself from the bourgeoisie since it is clear that at least at face value his experience of art is indistinguishable from theirs. Despite being a Marxist, he shares much of the high taste that bourgeoisie does even if one does accept his explanation. In fact, if one is willing to show his distinctions to be false or insignificant, as I have thus far, you can say that he completely shares the high taste of the bourgeoisie in near totality. The only point of contention is his taste is concerned with being anti-capitalist and not just the bourgeoisie attitude of being against the mass production of art. (Adorno 104-105)

In the eleventh lecture we see Adorno praise a feature often considered a central aspect of modern art and its successors, ugliness. Adorno believes that ugliness is a necessary part of beauty. In addition to this, the sensual beauty of a work does not embody the nature of the work. Sensual beauty is an accidental side effect of true art and carries the idea of an art piece, not standing on its own as a self-sufficient aspect of the art. If one does treat sensual beauty as standing on its own this treatment will lead to culinary taste and a material experience of the art. Art is spiritualized, which means we should not treat it as a physical object, as pure sensuality, or else we will be unable to truly experience it. Adorno gives lip service to the sensual aspect of art, but here he shows that he obviously views sensuality as the lesser half of the sensual-spiritual duality. He even goes far as saying that the sensual aspect is accidental, unable to stand on its own as a part of art. As for the topic of ugliness, ugliness has always been an aspect of beauty. In more traditional forms of art where monsters are depicted there is still an element of beauty despite their ugly depiction. I believe when people critique the ugliness found in modern art, they are pointing to the

lack of beauty being implemented in the ugliness. Instead the ugliness is depicted straight, with no element of beauty being conveyed. For those who believe beauty is a central part of what makes good art, the depiction of ugliness alone is a fatal flaw. (Adorno 109-111)

In the twelfth lecture Adorno continues to build his position of promoting spirituality over sensuality in art by condemning enjoyment in art. Adorno states that the more genuine relationship to art is the less it is enjoyed. Adorno uses an example of musicians. Good musicians are so well-versed in their craft that they do not become easily impassioned during their performance. Instead, they restrain themselves from enjoying the music so that they focus on their technique. Due to this lack of enjoyment, Adorno believes that creating art is more fulfilling than enjoying it. I would agree with Adorno's assessment that when one is creating art or even simply performing a task well that they must restrain their enjoyment so that the task is performed well. However, Adorno conflates the role of the artist as being the same as the role of the observer. Even for the highly astute and analyzing observer, being impassioned and enjoying the art is a central part of the artistic experience. The artist restrains themselves so that the observer does not have to do so. Even for the artist, there is a certain enjoyment in restraint and staying focused so that the art is done well. While it may be a more restrained, less emotional enjoyment it is still some form of enjoyment. As for Adorno stating that creating art is superior to observing it, Adorno has already mentioned that the theorist, and thus the observer, play an important role in art. While there is overlap, generally the concerns of an artist will not be the same as the concerns of an observer. One could perhaps argue that the role of the artist is more involved, but I would say that the observer has an equal importance in the relationship. The observer serves the role of trying to analyze and explain the work that the artist has created. (Adorno 117-118)

Adorno goes on to connect enjoyment of art to the consumption of it, something that is far more widespread with the development of mass media. Adorno believes that the consumption of art is a negative activity due to its ties to capitalism and transactions. To consume art is to participate in its commodification. One does not need to enjoy art for it to have value and art is not a means but should exist for itself. While Adorno claims that the capitalism and transactions concerning art degrades it, he does not acknowledge the history of artists and their art have always needed some form of monetary compensation for support. Adorno's condemnation of capitalism is simply a condemnation of low art. He also ignores that the upper-class method of supporting art, patronage, has a much longer history and is also transactional in nature. We will explore this subject later in the thesis, as I believe it shows Adorno's own upper-class bias and high taste. I agree with Adorno that art should not be seen as a means and has its own inherent value without serving other purposes. However, Adorno seems to discount the role of enjoyment in appraising an art's inherent value. If we accept that humans have an aesthetic sense and at our best can determine the aesthetic value of art, then enjoyment can be used as a measurement to determine how good an artwork is. Of course, one would need to have a very developed taste for enjoyment to be an accurate measurement, but assuming that one has developed taste enjoyment becomes an important measure in determining an artwork's value. To put it in a negative sense, if an artwork is not enjoyed by anyone then it is highly likely that it is not good art. (Adorno 118-119)

There is also the acknowledgement of ethicism³ as a stance in assessing aesthetics. Adorno addresses this position by responding to the puritan's concerns. The puritan has a suspicion and disdain for art because often it will contain elements that the puritan will consider immoral or

³ Ethicism: A position on the relation between aesthetics and morality that states that a moral flaw in an artwork is also an aesthetic flaw and a moral virtue in an artwork is also an aesthetic virtue. The aesthetic quality of an artwork is directly tied to the morals it embodies. Those who adhere to this position are called ethicists. (Kieran 457-459)

promoting immorality. Adorno responds that art is a benefit, but it is a different type of benefit than normally found in other areas of life. Adorno himself can be described as a type of ethicist, since many of his aesthetic views are at least partially informed by his opposition to consumerism and capitalism. Ethicism is a major aspect of explaining not only the intersection of art and class, but also popular conceptions of what art should be, and the role it should play in human life. As we continue to go through the perspectives of different classes and thinkers it will become apparent how pervasive ethicism is in how people judge art. (Adorno 123)

Adorno admits in the fourteenth lecture that he supports there being less beauty in art than in the past, claiming that we should move away from just a utopia focus. A stronger focus on the spiritual aspect of art while lessening the role of beauty and utopia will help address the dissonance we are experiencing in our current reality. Despite its lessened importance, beauty still needs to be mentioned as a concept even if traditionalists overhype it. Adorno shows that he does not view beauty as the core of art and uses it to distinguish himself with those who hold more traditional aesthetic notions. This is another position that was likely inherited from the orthodox Marxist perspective and serves as a central point of contention in how the classes see art. High art has had an evolution of how beauty is treated, one that has led to a radical shift in how art is not only treated but judged as well. (Adorno 143-144)

One of the contentions with modern art is whether it even has any connection with the art preceding the 20th century. In Adorno's sixteenth lecture he clearly states that he believes that modern art is in the same tradition as the art that precedes it. In fact, he states that the great new works (20th century works) are great in large part because they are in the tradition and try to wrestle with that tradition rather than outright rejecting it. It is important to point out that Adorno uses the

example of Western concert music⁴ to illustrate his point, in particular the composer Schoenberg. While this thesis will generally be looking at the arts as a whole it is important to recognize that each form of art is fairly unique in terms of its approach and development. The tradition of Western concert music is probably the best example of a form of art that retains its obvious ties with the past even into the 20th century. To insert my own aesthetic judgement, while there are certainly plenty of examples of bad music as a result of modernist tendencies, music ultimately had an easier time still retaining a sense of beauty even if that beauty was not as straight forward. About artistic traditions, it is important to point out that the high arts have a much clearer, well-documented, and well-developed history than the low arts. While the rise of mass media allowed for low art to truly develop in the 20th century with even receiving influences from high art due to its increasing availability, this is entirely ignored by Adorno. It has already been mentioned, but this shows Adorno's bias towards high art as he doesn't even acknowledge that only in modern times have the proletariat have had a greater chance to make their own large contributions to the library of human art. He dismisses it as simply shallow consumerism without even contemplating that this art is largely produced by the proletariat. (Adorno 153)

One of the shortcomings we will encounter in this thesis is that the discussion of class and art will be limited to Western culture. Some of what we will be discussing can be applied to other cultures, but when discussing the traditions of high and low art and their developments it will be specific to the West. With this limitation in place the question arises of whether the Western thinkers we will be discussing acknowledge this limit in their aesthetic discussion? Adorno does

⁴ 'Western concert music' is what is commonly referred to as 'classical music'. This term has been borrowed from Robert Greenberg and will be used in this work for largely two reasons. First, to reduce confusion of this tradition of music as a whole with the specific Classical Period (around 1750-1820 CE). Second, to acknowledge that this is a specifically Western tradition and that other cultures have their own musical traditions. I want to avoid having being too Eurocentric in my approach while acknowledging the uniqueness of this definitively Western art form. (Greenberg)

weigh in on this issue. Adorno states that we cannot understand the great art of other cultures because we lack the cultural background. Continuing from the subject of understanding art, Adorno also states that we must know a wide variety of other concepts to understand the spiritual aspect of art. This is particularly an interesting position because it goes beyond the formalist⁵ approach of the raw structure that often is used to create and define good works of art. Using the music of Beethoven as an example, Adorno believes that even if you understand the music theory behind Beethoven's work if one does not understand the concept of freedom then they will only be able to take in the sensual aspect of his work. This is important because these sorts of outside concepts often are extremely debatable of whether they exist in a work, with music being a particularly good example of this because of its very abstract nature. While I am sympathetic to Adorno's view on this subject, especially since there are art forms where this is necessary such as literature, I am not sure if it is the basis of every work of art. Since he would consider the expression of these concepts the spiritual aspect, it would follow that the precise theory used to create the art is sensual and thus accidental to these concepts. I say that that the neither concepts nor theory are accidental, but that theory is the basis of art and that concepts are secondary to the nature of art. In this sense, I personally lean toward a more formalist understanding of art being the basis of art's core nature. (Adorno 154)

In the sixteenth lecture Adorno makes a direct connection between the problem of enjoying art and the overvaluation of beauty. While implied before, he reminds his audience that both attitudes are connected. Someone who only sees art as a method for enjoyment will also see beauty as the most important aspect of art and contributes to art's commodification. This perspective does

⁵ Formalism: Not to be confused with Adorno's use of the term, which dealt with art criteria. Formalism and formalist approach can largely be defined as looking at work through its material structure alone and not taking account other factors such as meaning, historical, social context, or other outside influences. This approach is often associated with literary and visual art criticism. (Dowling)

not acknowledge that enjoyment of the arts is far more nuanced than suggested. It links the enjoyment of art to an inherently shallow understanding of it, reflecting what Adorno believes is the shallow nature of mass art. Beauty, in order to be truly appreciated and understood, requires the observer to not only pay attention to it but analyze it as well. Someone may get enjoyment out of beauty while not truly understanding or even recognizing that their enjoyment comes from that beauty. In contrast, someone who truly understands the depth of the beauty they are observing also experiences enjoyment, but it is going to be a different type of enjoyment. The person who only understands beauty at a surface level, or often are not even experiencing beauty, are simply getting cheap emotional thrills. This type of experience is just treating art as something that is a way to bring about emotions and nothing more. Yet the person who truly understands beauty is getting an enjoyment based on a deeper understanding of why an art piece is valuable. Adorno conflates both positions while not acknowledging that one can have a deeper experience with art while keeping beauty as the core feature of it. (Adorno 156)

Adorno once again reminds the audience that beauty, while overvalued by the traditionalist, is necessary for art. A complete rejection of beauty will transform art into chaos and/or science, with it simply turning into a “formalist” structure that is neither sensual nor spiritual. He acknowledges that this can be somewhat paradoxical as one must not overvalue beauty but also not totally reject it. Beauty is not an ontological category despite the objective basis of aesthetics in general. Instead, beauty is in a constant state of flux, changing along with the historico-philosophical conditions. It is possible that one can debate Adorno’s position on beauty by agreeing that beauty can change but argue that his views on how beauty has changed is false. Alternatively, you could argue for beauty as an ontological category which is constant. In this position art is seen as the creation of new ways to express that beauty. Both positions can serve as

a path to other debates such as how do we define beauty if it is in flux as Adorno says. If we accept beauty as an ontological category, then we could ask whether art is a process of creation of new ways to express beauty or revelation of forms of beauty that already exist. We will not be going specifically in these follow-up questions, but we will be taking a stance of the nature of beauty later in the thesis. (Adorno 162)

In the seventeenth lecture Adorno tries to challenge the position of subjective aesthetics. Adorno believes subjective aesthetics states that we must use the observer's reactions to a work to know about the work itself. Adorno rejects this notion, stating that reactions to a work are often "random". Reactions to artworks which are based on taste are often surface level and do not reflect the true nature of a work. One of the defining traits of a significant work of art is that it is above taste and thus taste should not be the standard of which we judge artworks. As I mentioned before, while reactions do not determine the value or nature of a work, reactions from knowledgeable observers can reveal the nature of a work. Ultimately everyone has reactions toward art, so if we believe humans are able to make claims about art, we must accept that analyzing reactions to art are necessary to understanding it. Even Adorno's aesthetic views are essentially carefully thought out and contemplative reactions to the aesthetics he is exposed to. Adorno also mentions that those who base their taste on education and bourgeoisie norms view art as property, something that can be commodified and owned. It is important to note that Adorno brings up education and we will explore later how education plays a strong role in the relationship between art and class. (Adorno 167, 169-170, 172)

In the eighteenth lecture, Adorno condemns the democratization of art, using the United States as a prime example of this occurrence. In a democratic culture, aesthetic subjectivism is promoted through the value of anti-elitism. Despite this condemnation of elitism, we see in

America there are “experts” whose judgements are considered objective. These “experts” are not chosen due to their deep understanding of art, instead they are chosen based on their appeal to audiences, power structures, and other social factors. Having a culture that will argue against aesthetic standards due to anti-elitism will certainly condemn great works of art and praise terrible works of art based on social attitudes. Adorno mistakenly tries to draw a symbiotic relationship between anti-elitism and the presence of critics. Aesthetic subjectivism is entirely an attitude among the proletariat while critics are largely supported by the bourgeoisie. Adorno is trying to focus on issues with the taste of the proletariat (low taste) while also trying to place these issues on the bourgeoisie as well. Adorno occupies himself with criticizing the attitudes of the proletariat rather than the bourgeoisie, but instead of accepting this he tries to claim these attitudes are ultimately the fault of the bourgeoisie. Adorno overestimates the amount of control the bourgeoisie has on the taste of the proletariat and in fact the two operate largely independently in terms of taste. This leads him to the conclusion that both issues lead back directly to bourgeoisie when they are an instance of the conflicting values of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. (Adorno 178-180)

In the latter half of the eighteenth lecture Adorno makes a succinct summary of how capitalism is destroying our ability to perceive art as well as our spirituality. In current times our reactions to art is often due to societal influence, lack of understanding, and emotions rather than the art itself. Capitalism is destroying our ability to perceive art which results in fetishization. Capitalism and traditional norms have progressed so far in their suppression of the people that art is no longer a place for contemplation but instead is a dumping ground for emotions and passions. This is due to increasing rationalization of society that uses art as the only outlet for emotions and passions. This society not only destroys the spirituality of its people but makes those people defile

art, making them destroy what would otherwise be a possible path to truly connecting with their own spirituality. (Adorno 182-184)

Now in the nineteenth lecture Adorno does acknowledge an area where he believes that the bourgeoisie is treating art in a way that is superior to the working man. As he has mentioned before, Adorno talks about how art requires effort from the observer and cannot be understood intuitively. Since the working-class laymen sees effort and leisure as wholly separate, they are unable to understand art because they view it solely as leisure. In contrast, the bourgeoisie do put some level of effort into art even if its only for social gain. This is an important acknowledgement because while he criticizes both the bourgeoisie and the working class, the blame is ultimately put on the bourgeoisie. This is one of the only times he acknowledges the bourgeoisie as doing something better than the working class. (Adorno 186-187)

For Adorno, criticism of the modern arts come from the culture industry, who try to suppress the modern arts by appealing to popular sentiment. Adorno uses the example of modern music (Western concert) to illustrate how the modern arts reject popular sentiment. He believes that the dislike of modern music is because it does not fulfill the desires and expectations of the listener, instead fulfilling the music by its own standards. This can be seen in how modern music may make sense in terms of music theory but may seem confusing for someone who does not understand the theoretical background. When he explains this, he does not mention the notion that people may naturally be averse to this type of music, at least at first. The silence on mentioning this possible factor speaks volumes on what Adorno believes are significant factors in the formation of aesthetic taste. Adorno believes that any aesthetic sense that an individual possesses is either entirely or almost entirely based from environmental influence and upbringing. It is not that modern music's style goes against a natural bias most people have, but as he explains

afterwards it is due to their social environment suppressing their aesthetic sensibilities. (Adorno 188-193)

From this position, Adorno concludes that the modern arts display suffering that people are already enduring but cannot handle when the art shows it to them. People hate being exposed to real emotion and thus they have a vitriolic rejection of modern art. Since Adorno rejects that people can have any intuitive sense of art, he believes that the rejection of the modern arts are due to a spiritual failing. They have been corrupted by capitalism so thoroughly that they are unable to start the process of understanding true art. Adorno views modern art as a medicine that the people need to take but they refuse it despite their sickness. Not only does this result from his rejection of an intuitive artistic sense but his belief that people can be molded by their society to a great degree. It is not that the people may intuitively can sense something is wrong with much of modern art, but that they have been corrupted by the society they live in. I will be arguing that, while insufficient to fully understanding and appreciating art, people do in fact have an intrinsic aesthetic sense that extends to the arts. (Adorno 193-194)

In the twentieth lecture Adorno expresses his pessimism of the power of art alone changing the taste of the majority. He believes that the modern arts have no hope of surpassing the culture industry in terms of influence. He uses the comparison between a poor composer and a statistical research office. The poor composer only has aesthetic standards to appeal to the masses. In contrast, the statistical research office can collect enough data to artificially create a shallow, but psychological button-pushing pop song that will top the music charts. There are those who may consume high art, but they do so only to as a mark of education and do not understand high art. Adorno labels this group as semi-literate when it comes to art. All of this suggests that in order to fix the taste of the people there needs to be a larger cultural, economic, and political change within

the culture. Many blame the advancement of art, but it is actually the degradation of society that is the true problem. While Adorno's view is informed by his assumption that humans are almost completely malleable, he is correct that ideological factors can affect the taste of an individual. We see that even with Adorno himself that ideological influence on someone's taste can be prevalent but also have its limits. It would make sense that Adorno dislikes art supported by capitalist systems, yet he constantly tries to find a way to distinguish his high taste from others in the upper classes. Even ideology cannot completely shape an individual's taste and often people will either try and reconcile their taste with their ideology or have an ideology that already lines up with their taste. (Adorno 196-198)

Adorno's perspective on the arts is largely a natural evolution of the orthodox Marxist position. He does believe in that society as a whole is a larger concern than art and that art reflects the society. While not viewing art as a tool he does believe that true art plays a role in combatting whatever oppression is occurring in the specific time and space (historico-philosophical condition) the art is created. Yet we start to see some of the failings of the standard Marxist perspective on class and the arts. Adorno does very little to address the possible class implications of high taste in general, instead focusing on its perceived misapplication by the bourgeoisie. Adorno completely condemns low taste on grounds that it is largely capitalist but does not consider how these capitalist systems have given a voice to the lower classes. Adorno high taste was even perhaps more intolerant than some of his upper-class peers, as he rejected both jazz and film as possibly being high art even as they were slowly being accepted as such. The more traditional orthodox Marxist perspective will be discussed by Marcuse and while the orthodox perspective is more ideologically consistent it has an even less positive view of art's role in a society. Adorno's observations often do hold some truth as we can see the possible influence of his ideas on education and high taste as

social status markers in Bourdieu's perspective. Next, we will be moving on to Marcuse, who attempts to take a more unorthodox approach to Marxist aesthetics. (Adorno 196-197)

1.2 Marcuse: A Non-traditional Marxist view

We will be examining Hebert Marcuse's view on class and art not only because he is a Marxist, but because I believe his view is a strong position from the Marxist perspective. Marcuse criticized the traditional view in Marxist aesthetics and hoped to bridge the divide between Marxist thought and what he described as "Bourgeois art." Marcuse believes that art has a role in the world revolution but that it should not simply be a propaganda tool, a view seen in more traditional Marxist aesthetics. In a strange twist, Marcuse describes art as transcending class conflict⁶ and suggest its role will be one of reconciliation between the classes into a classless society.

Marcuse begins developing his position by first describing the orthodox position within Marxist aesthetics. Marcuse believes that for the Marxist, art is inherently looked at with skepticism. As the Marxist sees a world of intense struggle and oppression they will immediately ask 'Why should I care about art?'. The orthodox Marxist position is largely informed by the idea of the base and the superstructure⁷. Since the base is generally dominant, most of art's power and authenticity lie within its production. Thus, art as it is now is produced under a capitalist system and thus is propaganda for the capitalist system. This is due to superstructure serving as a reinforcement of the base. For art to be good and moral, its production must embody Marxist ideals

⁶ Class conflict: The struggle between the different social classes due to the economic situation in societies. The upper classes exploit the labor of the lower classes who attempt to resist such exploitation. Currently, the reigning system of economic exploitation is capitalism. (Crossman, "Sociological")

⁷ Base and Superstructure: A concept in Marxist theory where economic forces and cultural forces reinforce one another. The Base are the economic processes and their material production. This includes the means of production such as tools, factories, and raw materials as well as the relations of production such as formal labor roles, private property, and capital. The Base shapes and maintains the Superstructure, which encompasses everything outside the Base such as philosophy, science, and family. The Superstructure is essentially the ideology of the society and helps shape and maintain the Base. (Cole, "Base")

as well as promote those ideals. Thus, the orthodox Marxist stance on art is ethicist in nature. What makes art valuable is that its production is a result of Marxist systems of production and that it promotes Marxist ideology. (Marcuse ix, 1-2)

The Orthodox Marxist has a very straightforward answer to our two central questions for the thesis. For the Orthodox Marxist, art currently is used by the bourgeoisie as propaganda for the capitalist system and it should be used as propaganda for Marxist ideology. The Orthodox Marxist's concern for art is based in it being a major part of the superstructure, allowing it to have significant enforcement on the base. Marcuse's first response is a bold claim, he states that the orthodox position suffers from reification by destroying the transcendence of art into the material. The individual consciousness is destroyed for the class consciousness⁸. From this position arises the first issue of trying to reconcile Marxist ideology with Marcuse's view of art. Marxist ideology can largely be described as collectivist, promoting class consciousness over any individual circumstance. While the bourgeoisie acts as collective in the form of a class, capitalism is based largely on self-interest. For the Marxist, the bourgeoisie would be acting as a class due to aligned self-interest, not based on a future goal of equality for all. The proletariat is suppressed because they do not act as a collective because they do not recognize their aligned class interest. Marcuse will go on to justify this emphasis on individualism but on its face, it appears to run counter to the collectivist goals of Marxism. (Marcuse 3-4)

Marcuse argues that the orthodox approach towards art is not only inaccurate but sets out immoral goals for art. Marcuse believes art does have a political function but that the function lies within its aesthetic form, not explicitly in the political arena. Just because a piece of art is

⁸ Class consciousness: The awareness of one's own socio-economic class position and interests within the prevailing economic system. This awareness for the proletariat comes in the form of recognizing their exploitation, the need to collectivize with other members of the proletariat, and ultimately make efforts to change the current economic system. (Crossman, "Understanding")

“revolutionary” by its anti-capitalist production and promotion of Marxist ideology does not make the artwork high quality, authentic, or reveal a truth. Using 18th to 19th century literature as his example, these works are not revolutionary because it is overt propaganda but due to its “content having become form.” For art to be good and successful it must be subversive by transcending social concerns and reveal a different type of reality through its aesthetic form. When art is propaganda it is one-dimensional and optimistic. In contrast, good art is often filled with pessimism, which is much more relevant to the suffering we find ourselves in. (Marcuse ix-xiii, 5-6, 14)

The orthodox Marxist would be very unhappy to hear Marcuse’s promotion of the aesthetic form as art’s political function. The orthodox Marxist would ask “How can art that transcends social and class concerns be good for promoting world revolution? Doesn’t this allow for art to be produced by the bourgeoisie and yet still possibly be considered revolutionary?” In short, Marcuse’s response is yes. Orthodox Marxist aesthetics fails to explain why art from feudal societies can still be great. From the orthodox position, one must accept that no art created in feudal societies is good, a conclusion that Marcuse is unwilling to accept. Since art’s value is derived from its aesthetic form it cannot be limited by one class, not even the proletariat. Marcuse believes that the orthodox bias against the artist is the perception that artists appear to be an “elite” class. Artists are removed from the base, the material process of production, and work solely in the superstructure. Marcuse believes this is acceptable as the artist plays an important role of uplifting the consciousness of each individual. The artist’s origin, just like the authors of the socialist classics, does not limit the value of their work. (Marcuse 15-16, 18-19)

Marcuse states that he is using 18th and 19th century literature as his basis for talking about the arts. Marcuse’s examples of great literature include the works of Goethe, Schiller, Balzac, and

Zola. These works can easily be considered high art and are legitimized by the upper classes. They not only have an audience that is largely in the upper classes, but these works are mostly ignored by the lower classes. This puts Marcuse in an odd position of being a Marxist but considering what is good art to be exclusively or almost exclusively high art. Despite claiming to be a champion of the proletariat he only considers art promoted and accepted by the bourgeoisie to be good art. This provides the motivation for Marcuse to reconcile his Marxist beliefs with his love for high art. (Marcuse x)

Marcuse believes that art must play some role in the world revolution⁹ but recognizes that the goals of the orthodox position are ineffectual and will destroy the art he values. Not only does propaganda art tend to be bad but good art tends to not be propaganda. Marcuse decides to appropriate the seemingly apolitical aspects of art and claim these aspects of art are working for the world revolution. Marcuse then accuses the capitalist system of working against these less controversial aspects of art and thus being against human dignity and expression. Along with claiming that the aesthetic, non-political aspects of art serve a political role, Marcuse makes a justification of high art existing in a Marxist society. The two major problems with Marcuse's proposal is the accusation that the capitalist system is against human expression in art and claim of good art being exclusively (or near exclusively) high art. It is difficult to argue that the capitalist system is against human expression in art since it not only has not damaged the production of high art but allowed for more types of art to spread. As for the claim about high art, from a Marxist perspective it seems contradictory that only the art accepted by the bourgeoisie (the oppressors) is the type of art that can express the human condition and should be accepted by everyone as good.

⁹ World revolution: The concept of the rise of socialism and the ousting of the bourgeoisie being a process that will occur all over the world. (World)

You would expect that Marcuse at least accept both high and low art since the arts are supposed to transcend its class origins but that is not the case. (Marcuse 8-11)

Marcuse does not do much to address why he believes good art tends to be high art, but he does address the gap between the art he recognizes as legitimate and the proletariat. Marcuse states that art is supposed to express the human experience and that the human experience is not always related to the class struggle. Marxists adherent to the orthodox position view these ‘emotional’ aspects of art as a distraction from the class struggle. Marcuse says that art is necessary because it deals with metasocial forces that will always be present even when utopia is achieved. Marcuse references Lucien Goldmann’s idea that in the period of advanced capitalism the proletariat becomes integrated into the capitalist system. Since all classes are integrated into the system authentic cultural creations can appear from any class in society since the creations cannot be tied to any social group. This is due to the lack of a collective consciousness in the period of advanced capitalism. (Marcuse 24, 26-30)

This puts the artist in a unique position. Orthodox Marxists will advocate for the artists to create art that is the “voice of the people.” However, why should the artist be the voice of the proletariat if the proletariat is integrated into the capitalist system and does not care? Marcuse believes that if the artist has any hope of awakening the consciousness of the people, he must not make propaganda but art. Propaganda cannot speak to the hopes and dreams of the people, but art can. Artists are in fact outsiders to the proletariat because art is outside the political praxis¹⁰. As I mentioned before, Marcuse observes that Orthodox Marxists tend to resist self-reflection and individualism as a mark of bourgeoisie ideology and distracting from class consciousness. His response is that individualism is important and can help protect oneself in capitalist and fascist

¹⁰ Praxis: Practice, as opposed to theory. (Oxford)

societies. Individualism and self-reflection can prevent oneself from supporting these oppressive systems despite finding themselves stuck in them. This should be central to the Marxist's goals since society starts with the individual. (Marcuse 34-39)

Marcuse acknowledges that there is a separation to what he considers good art and the type of art the proletariat is interested in. Since Marcuse still want to keep his standards for judging art, he goes on to appeal to the possibility that we live are living in advanced capitalism as the consequences of living in such a system. However, despite his explanation there remains the same glaring question that was mentioned before. If authentic works of art can arise from anywhere within a society, advanced capitalist or not, then why is high art so consistently associated with good art for Marcuse? This question still lingers even after his acknowledgement of the proletariat's lack of interest in art such as Goethe. Marcuse does make a good defense of self-reflection and individualism, but it still runs counter to Marxist goals. Individualism would at best only be usable in a situation where you can find no allies in a capitalist or fascist society. At any point where you have a collective that agrees with Marxist goals, it would be discarded in favor of the end that is class consciousness. The end goals of a communist society do not seem to have any room to allow for Individualism since this utopia requires for people to do what is beneficial for the collective, not just self-interest alone.

Marcuse expresses belief that there are no areas within society that has not been absorbed by the establishment. Therefore, Marcuse rejects the idea that pornography and the obscene are nonconformist areas that can be used to fight against the establishment. Marcuse uses this fact to demonstrate that art can serve its purpose anywhere, even if the establishment controls every area of life. There is some discussion of art's role as a foil to reality in several ways. This include its ability to transgress moral norms and highlighting the need for true freedom. Marcuse takes a

staunch stance against what he calls the Marxist push for “anti-art.” Anti-art is described as both reality masquerading as art and ‘art’ that is without meaning. Since anti-art is just reality it is not a foil for reality and thus is self-defeating and inadequate. While art is mimesis of reality with transformation, anti-art is mimesis of reality without transformation. Without transformation, anti-art lacks the cognitive and cutting power of the aesthetic form. This all shows that anti-art is powerless, and its promotion will not help the Marxist cause. (Marcuse 40, 42-43, 46-47, 49-53)

Marcuse further shows he does not take an overtly ethicist stance concerning art in contrast with the orthodox position. There is no moral or artistic judgement made on pornography and the obscene, only that they are not isolated from the establishment’s reach. There is some explanation of Marcuse believes art should be, but it is not closely related to class. Marcuse’s conception of anti-art is a description of art that has the chief focus of being propaganda. The key factor is that propaganda has no concern beyond reality and works purely as a tool to achieve ends. There is no attention paid toward imagination or contemplation outside of ethical or ideological concerns. Anti-art is art first and foremost as propaganda and more broadly as a societal tool. We will see later how the Marxist’s promotion of anti-art is directly related to how different classes use art since the 20th century.

Marcuse states that art contains more truth than reality because art serves to demystify the institutions and relationships of reality. Lenin, who worked from the orthodox position, rejected the truth of art being above the law of revolutionary strategy. This rejection once again does no favors for the Marxist, as art should be used as a guide for what ideals to strive for. Marxists aesthetics also have centered around the rejection of one of art’s core features, beauty. Beauty is seen by the Marxist as snobbish and not reflecting the reality of the proletariat and the political struggle. Marcuse argues that beauty must be recognized and can be found in progressive

movements. Marcuse echoes Hume by stating that beauty persists through changes in taste, so it is eternal and unchanging. When things are viewed as a whole, they will show the presence or absence of beauty. This extends even into political systems, as Marcuse believes that Fascism can be criticized and attacked because as a whole it lacks beauty. Beauty is liberation, so any liberating movements and ideas must be beautiful. Art can make even suffering beautiful which is seen in tragedies. The sensuousness of beauty has both cognitive and emancipatory power. (Marcuse 54, 57-58, 62-66)

The ability of art to have beauty is why autonomous art has been denounced and attacked by morality and religion throughout history. Horst Bredekamp says this has often been through the systematic mobilization of the populace against the emancipation of art from religious ritual. The destruction of autonomous art is the consequence of what he calls “a petty bourgeois, anti-intellectualistic ideal of life.” Adorno believes this rejection of sensuousness can be found in the “petty bourgeois’ hatred of sex”, which is interesting since generally Adorno’s goal was to downplay sensuality in the arts. Marcuse concludes that art is the representation of the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual. Art and Marxist theory both envision radical futures that seem abstract now. Both serve a role in a better future and art must be allowed to autonomously do its part. To quote Marcuse directly, “Socialism does not and cannot liberate Eros from Thanatos¹¹.” (Marcuse 66-69, 71-72)

One of the questions that can be asked about art’s role is demystification. Marcuse says that art demystifies institutions and relationships, but would this extend to the utopian society

¹¹ This is a reference to Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical theories of the pleasure principle and the death drive. Eros represents the pleasure principle, which are the life-producing drives in humans such as the instinct to procreate. Thanatos represents the death drive, which are the death-producing drives in humans such as aggression. Freud discusses his theories concerning Eros and Thanatos in his 1920 essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. (Berry) (Cherry) (Freud)

Marxists strive for? Marcuse does mention that certain personal conflicts will always exist, but does that extend to institutional conflicts as well? I do not have a guess on what exactly Marcuse's position would be since his idea of a communist society at the very least does not mean it will be the end of personal, non-material challenges. Aside from that point is examining one of the most important aspects of this discussion as whole, beauty. The rejection of beauty is central to the conception of anti-art that Marcuse brings forward. For Marxism and other related ideologies, beauty presents a problem for the goal of equality. Beauty is inherently unequal because it is rare and not all-encompassing. Whether it be a physically beautiful individual or an artistic masterpiece, beauty is necessarily rare and not found in all things. If the Marxist wants to achieve total equality, with no opportunity for hierarchies forming based on inequality, beauty must be destroyed because it is unequal. If beauty can persist through changes in taste, then it has no room in the society the orthodox Marxist is trying to build. Marcuse obviously disagrees and makes arguments against this sort of position, but as we will see later this rejection of beauty in anti-art directly relates to class taste.

I think it is safe to agree with Marcuse that autonomous art has been suppressed for much of human history. Most art before the 20th century was supported and created for those in power. It was first made for religious authorities looking to spread their power such as the Catholic Church as well political authorities such as monarchs. As time went on this support extended to the upper class as a whole and eventually to the mass access to art found in the 20th century. This emancipation of art from central authorities such as religious bodies also meant a partial emancipation of art from morality and ethicism. It is interesting then to see those who hold an orthodox position, like Adorno, to decry the ethicism of other institutions. The Orthodox Marxist does not want autonomous art and only disagrees with what goal art should be used for. The ethicist

base that informed the restrictive nature of institutions like the Catholic Church also informs the Orthodox Marxist. Ultimately, Marcuse's ideas are largely sound but are wholly contradicted by the goals of Marxism. This is seen most plainly in Marcuse's conclusion, that promotion of the individual should be the goal. The type of society advocated by Marxism is wholly collectivist despite its absence of hierarchy. My stance is that Marcuse fails to reconcile autonomous art and the political goals of his ideology. Despite this, he brings forward many important points, especially regarding how people use the arts for other ends. We will explore how these ideological goals intersect with class as we move on to Bourdieu.

1.3 Bourdieu: A Sociological view

Bourdieu like many in the field of sociology was influenced by Marx. However, his approach not strictly a Marxist one and despite Marxist influence he attempts to form his view based on sociological practice. What results is a view that art is used as a tool for class distinction. While Bourdieu's work, *Distinction*, is informed by various data gathered from surveys conducted the views expressed are Bourdieu's own interpretation of said data. We will first go through what Bourdieu believes the data shows and then build upon it with my analysis of his views. I will focus on the first-edition introduction and part one of *Distinction*, "A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste".

For Bourdieu, cultural needs are a byproduct of education and upbringing. What attitudes any individual will have will be largely determined by the environment they were socialized in. In society we find that there is a hierarchy of tastes. Western concert music is valued more than rap, Ballet more than breakdancing, *War & Peace* over *Harry Potter*, and so on. If we accept that there is a hierarchy of arts in society, then the consumers of those arts also can be put into a hierarchy. This allows art to work very well as a class indicator. Those who have taste that aligns with high

art will be able to signal to others that they were raised in an environment that allowed for the development of that taste. In order to show high taste one must learn to decipher high art by having the “correct” interpretation of a work. This “correct” interpretation comes in the form of understanding how high art communicates its ideas (its “language” per se) as well as having socially accepted opinions concerning such art. Without the ‘cipher’ of high taste the consumer is lost in confusion and will be unable to understand high art. With the standards of high taste, a barrier that divides the hierarchy of consumers can remain stable. (Bourdieu xxiv-xxvi)

One of the foundations of high taste is the value of form over function. Art is not supposed to fulfill any practical function; it is supposed to be appreciated without the concern of how useful it is. As this idea is established the artist wants to be fully autonomous and the master of his work. The artist wants to be free from the judgement of others but this does not stop the classes from using the art for their own goals. It is also important to recognize that the artist themselves may have a class bias. Originally art referenced nature, but over time art began to reference art, which puts a stronger emphasis on knowing the history of a particular artform in order to fully understand the work. This allows high art to have an increasingly high barrier of understanding and has led to the increasing specification and detail of high taste. (Bourdieu xxvi-xxvii)

Those who have high taste will employ what Bourdieu called the “pure gaze”, a mode of aesthetic perception that is different to how people normally view and analyze the world. In modern times, high art and high taste are defined by its rejection of ‘human’ elements. ‘Human’ elements are elements in art that naturally appeal to people such as pleasing the senses. This ‘humanity’ is rejected in high art because it implies the idea of ‘function over form’ which is the antithesis of ‘form over function’. In contrast, low art and low taste is defined by practical use. The working class takes a more straightforward ethicist approach, believing that art should perform

the function of affirming ideas and not being neutral in its approach. This means that art should promote working-class morals or be used to produce certain emotions. High taste for the upper classes is possible because they can distance themselves from an attachment to necessities. This lack of focus on necessities for living is why high taste often involves combining aesthetics with ordinary activities. This can be seen when Bourdieu is documenting the reactions to a photo of an old woman's hands. For lower class individuals, who are concerned with survival and ordinary activities, they commented on the practical implications of having such worn out hands. More upper-class individuals focus on the artistic merit of the photo and abstract elements without making many comments about the practical implications of having hands like the ones displayed. (Bourdieu xvii-xxx, 36-38)

Difference in taste among the classes since the 20th century appears to revolve around abstract vs. practical enjoyment for the upper and lower classes respectively. Bourdieu talks about how taste is affected by education and upbringing but there are notable exceptions to this rule. Artists and fanatics of art will often depart from their upbringing and education to be involved arts outside of their class or cultural environment. An example would be a working-class man whose interest in music led him to Western concert music. Another example would be an upper-class American who becomes interested in traditional textures found in central Africa. These cases are uncommon, but they suggest that individuals such as these do not see art as simply a form of class expression but something that should be admired in of itself. Most people probably do not take an intense interest in the arts, but those who do will be less likely to be restricted by their class upbringing and judge the art based on other influencers on taste.

While ideas of the "correct" social opinions concerning art can easily be corrupted by class bias rather than properly developed taste, the idea of understanding how high art conveys its ideas

do not appear to be a simple product of attempted gatekeeping, at least for high art predating the 20th century. An understanding of Western music theory will allow for the listener to better understand the musical ideas conveyed in Bach. Even without a formal education in Western music theory, someone who has listened to Bach often will eventually pick up on how to understand and appreciate the music. It is expected that someone not exposed to Bach at all will be somewhat confused by the music. This leads to the question of whether the same confusion can apply to low art. If it does, that would suggest that low and high art are purely social distinctions not rooted in the quality of the art. I will argue this does not apply to the high art of 20th century onwards, which is associated with radically new tastes and standards.

High taste is said to be defined by 'form over function' however I do not believe this a pure instance of the concept. As we see mentioned, high taste in modernity is defined by the support for art that rejects 'human' elements such as beauty. This taste is against the universal standards that of the great masterpieces found in periods prior to the 20th century. In its place the new high taste of the 20th century promoted elements that were specifically non aesthetically pleasing in part due to it being less morally tainted. Here, we see a direct connection between high taste and the Marxist taste for anti-art. While the justification for anti-art taste may differ based on a purely bourgeoisie or Marxist lens the general pattern and results are the same. Adorno himself denigrated art that was trying to create human enjoyment, calling it products of the culture industry. Instead he specifically promoted art and an approach of art that deemphasized or rejected human desires. Since the publication of the works of Adorno, Marcuse, and Bourdieu we have seen an increasingly stronger connection between both upper class and Marxist ideas on art. The Marxists never actually promoted the arts loved by the proletariat, but they consistently promoted art that was upper-class in nature which also had an anti-capitalist message. Adorno condemned jazz before it was

legitimized by the upper classes despite its origins from a largely proletariat ethnic group, black Americans. I believe it is more likely that upper-class taste influenced Marxist taste before there was a reciprocal influence, but the exact development of this would be difficult to find out.

The fact that this anti-art high taste only arises in the 20th century can be the result of changing desires of artists, a deliberate change by the upper-class to maintain the exclusivity of high taste, or some combination of both. I would suggest that both contributed, but since artists can still have a class bias the latter had a stronger influence. Later, we will discuss how high artists contributed to this change in part due to their own class interests. This deliberate change in high taste was in response to the rise of mass communications and production in the 20th century. Before the 20th century, most forms of art were limited to the upper classes. Of course, the lower classes had access to some art, but it was on a very small scale. Most people were not able to go to music concerts or own a large landscape painting, being limited to only small, occasional instances of artistic exposure. However, with the advent of mass media in the 20th century everyone had access to what was previously high art for the upper-classes. The printing of books was more mass-produced than ever. People could now buy high quality reproductions of photos or paintings. Music that used to be restricted to the concert hall became available to everyone through vinyl records and CDs. This would threaten the exclusivity of high taste. While the past masterpieces are already high-art canon, future art pieces can have new standards that would otherwise not appeal to anyone. This new anti-art would allow high art to be used as a class distinction tool because its unappealing nature would repel anyone not raised in an upper-class environment.

One may assume that the working classes would have a more aesthetically minded and objective taste in art. Yet Bourdieu shows that just how the upper-classes use art as a tool for class distinction, the working classes use art as tool for ethical affirmation and emotional thrills. The

working classes take a “function over form” view, believing art should have direct and practical uses. Low taste involves a traditional ethicist approach with art being used to affirm the morals of working-class communities. Any art that does not affirm these morals will be rejected because it functionally does not promote the community’s values. This leaves little to no room for art that takes a neutral approach to ethical issues or may even explore positions counter to dominant ethical norms. Art is also seen as a tool for experiencing emotions rather than something that is valuable in of itself. If the upper-class has a faulty view “form over function”, the working class’ “function over form” is an outright rejection of the concept. Low taste would dictate that the structure of a musical piece is irrelevant, if it does not give the listener positive emotions then it is useless. Adorno categorized this attitude as material experience of art and considered it a negative result of consumer society. Yet, if look at the how the different classes treat art, this is largely an attitude adopted by the lower classes, not a universal feature of the society. This material experience approach does allow for working-class individuals to be more subjective in their analysis of what is good art. They will be more likely to accept the idea of “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” in terms of getting desired emotional reactions from art. They are more prone to accepting the notion that what is good art for one person might not be good for others.

Despite the varying tastes within societies the upper classes have consistently been able enforce the idea of the high-low art distinction despite being the minority. The question arises on how such a small population can convince the masses that the common man’s taste is low. The message is accepted to such a degree that many lower-class individuals will believe their own tastes to be objectively inferior to the tastes of the upper-class despite enjoyment of low art. Bourdieu believes that this distinction is created and maintained by ‘institutions of legitimization’. These are institutions in society that are accepted and decide what is deemed to be high art. One

of the most important of these institutions is the education system. The education system will actively promote high art while ignoring low art as not culturally relevant or valuable. This is happening all while culture completely ignores the relationship between taste and education. (Bourdieu 3)

At the time Bourdieu was writing the discussion of art was framed as a debate between 'left wing intellectuals' and 'right-wing intellectuals' within academia. Both sides ignored that debate on art and taste only included high art and completely ignored low art. This results in low art being denied the status of legitimacy and thus having no cultural value. There is a strong connection between taste and education level, with those who have high taste also having high education levels. In contrast, those with low taste have low levels of education. Bourdieu believes that taste, being a form of cultural capital, can be considered legitimate through validation by the education system. Bourdieu cites polls that show that higher education levels strongly correlate with higher knowledge of high art and higher levels of participation in high art activities such as going to the museum. One of the strongest pieces of evidence that supports Bourdieu's ideas is that at the time of writing he observed the beginning of the legitimization of film and jazz. He successfully predicted that these two forms of low art would be legitimized into high art with a major factor being their adoption into the education system. (Bourdieu 4-6, 8)

The question arises whether those with higher education levels truly have better taste due to their education or whether the upper classes use education as an institution to legitimize their own tastes. While fanatics and critics of certain forms of art will inevitably have more refined tastes than casual consumers, what forms of art that are considered legitimate at least is partially influenced by the upper-class wanting to legitimize themselves. Though the process was in its infancy during the time of Bourdieu's writing we now see that both film and jazz are both

considered high art. Perhaps the biggest factor in this change is the rise of Film studies and Jazz studies in institutions of higher learning. Art pieces that were previously considered low art were elevated to high art despite the art pieces remaining the same. We will focus on the legitimization of Jazz in particular. What allowed Jazz to rise from a low art to a high art? Looking at the case of Jazz will allow us to point on some key characteristics of high art.

The first common factor among high art is that it is generally old. This is not always the case as seen in forms of art that were considered high art from its inception. However, for low art to rise to high art usually a certain amount of time must pass. By the 1970s Jazz was no longer considered a new form of art and was seen as a more traditional form of music. This could not have been possible in say the 1920s when Jazz was extremely new. Another comparison that could be drawn to Jazz is the works of Shakespeare and how it took considerable amount of time for them to be raised to the status that they maintain in modern times. As art forms age they often become less threatening to the status quo and are more likely to be accepted by the upper-classes and established institutions.

The second common factor should be obvious at this point, high art has a largely upper-class audience. High art almost by definition cannot have a largely working-class audience. Jazz was considered a popular form of music early in its history and thus had a largely working-class audience. This is seen in its origins as Jazz was primarily started by black Americans who were considered second-class citizens in the early 20th century. However, by the 1970s Jazz was becoming less popular among the masses while gaining an increasingly upper-class audience. This leads directly into the third common factor, that high art has a limited audience and must not be popular among the masses. Only when Jazz declined in overall popularity that it started to go through the process of legitimization. Both the second and third factors are intertwined with high

art needing a mostly upper class and niche audience that allows for it to retain its valuable and exclusive level of high cultural capital.

The fourth common factor presents a bit of a conundrum for the orthodox Marxist. Due to its lack of popularity, a point recognized in the third factor, high art does not rely on the support and acceptance of the proletariat. Instead, high art is usually supported by non-capitalist or even anti-capitalist means. This is the fourth factor, that high art does not rely on capitalist means for its existence and promotion. Unlike low art, which must appeal to mass markets in order to have cultural influence, high art is able to get funding and cultural influence without having to appeal to mass markets. This is often in the form patronage and institutional support. In the case of institutional support, this can take the form of higher institutions of learning, museums, and even government endowments. Not only high art has the privilege of being supported by the financially affluent bourgeoisie but the bourgeoisie's control of institutions allow for them to use public funds as well. So even in a case where the proletariat has no interest in high art, their taxes will be used to support art that largely serves the taste of the upper classes.

In the case of Jazz, Jazz studies allows for the art form to be consistently funded through the education system even as it has low popularity among the masses. The conundrum for the orthodox Marxist is that art for the bourgeoisie is supported by largely non-capitalist systems. On the other hand, low art is supported by a capitalist system that at least allows for the proletariat to promote art that appeals to them. Even if the orthodox Marxist morally rejects to capitalism, at least in the case of art it currently serves the needs of the proletariat more than non-capitalist systems in society. The legitimization of Jazz involved the process of Jazz moving away from relying totally on a capitalist system.

These four factors in addition to some of the other observations mentioned can explain some of the major reasons Jazz has been institutionalized and how institutionalization takes place. The rise of Jazz studies was the biggest step that made way for other institutions to create their own programs such as National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Masters. This allowed for Jazz to finally be legitimized as a high art in the 1970s and 1980s. This can also serve as guide for seeing how other art forms that are currently low art could become institutionalized in the future and what barriers that may prevent that process from occurring. A current example would be video games, which I believe would have a difficult time becoming institutionalized for a variety of factors, one of the biggest being that the art form is extremely tied to capitalist systems. Bourdieu is correct in highlighting the importance of educational systems in the legitimization of art forms. The upper classes use the education to define what is high and therefore what is culturally valuable. Thus, an easy way to determine whether an art form is considered high art is to see whether it has a department in a public university.

Bourdieu believes that the education system is used largely as a tool for the bourgeoisie and not as an institution to truly find artistic masterpieces. Bourdieu discusses a concept called the 'Entitlement Effect', which is the phenomenon of cultural capital, in the form of taste, is inherited through familial upbringing since the schools do not make a strong effort to teach taste. Instead, schools simply define what is legitimate art and taste with no serious effort to spread high taste. Education and educational achievements serve as a way of identifying a student's class background and assigning them to an area in society accordingly. It is not enough or even very important that one has learned the sufficient scholastic knowledge and raw facts about art and aesthetics. Instead, general knowledge, taste, and the ability to appreciate legitimate aesthetics is rewarded. For example, if a young student in a working-class background is taking a music appreciation course

there will be little to no cultural capital in knowing that Bach's Mass in B minor (BMV 232) was completed in 1749. Instead, a student exposed to Western concert music will have significant cultural capital if they can display to others that they enjoy the piece even if they forgot the date of its completion. This is how the working classes can believe high taste is superior to their own even if they do not understand or enjoy high art. The education serves as a way of maintaining the legitimacy and exclusivity of high taste while framing the taste of the lower classes as illegitimate and inferior. It serves as a way for the lower classes to accept that they, along with their desires and opinions, have little to no value in society or culture. (Bourdieu 14-15, 17-18)

With the development of anti-art in the 20th century we find the lack of focus on purely aesthetics standards leads to almost anything that is "anti-human" being good art. With the adoption of anti-art as the main form of high art we observe several consequences. The intention of the artist becomes paramount in determining the value of the art itself since the focus turns away from reaching beauty or aesthetic admirability. This in conjunction with the high art traits already present before the 20th century makes art be seen even more as a tool than prior to the 20th century. Art is not valued for what it actually is but what is valued based on the person who produced, the mindset they were in, and its production process. Here we find another major point of connection between orthodox Marxist tastes and modern high art taste. (Bourdieu 22-23)

Bourdieu's ideas have allowed us to make some key observations about high and low art. High art has traditionally been defined by traits such as being old, having a limited and upper-class audience, being supported by noncapitalist forms of funding, and generally being more abstract. It has been used as a way of distinguishing classes and giving the bourgeoisie valuable cultural capital. Since the 20th century high art is also defined by being anti-art which has led it being seen more explicitly as an ideological tool that affirms their values rather than something that can

be innately appreciated. This development has also created a strong connection between high art and orthodox Marxist taste through the focus on making art 'anti-human', making any separation of the two tastes difficult to define. In contrast, low art has been defined as popular, generally more current, having a wide and lower-class audience, supported by capitalist forms of funding, and generally less abstract and more practical. Like high art it has also been used as a tool, in this case as an immediate way to pleasure the senses and affirming lower-class morals. While not seen as such for many artists and fanatics, Bourdieu has shown that for both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat art is seen chiefly as a tool. The changes in high art since the 20th century has pushed society to see art even more strongly as a tool than ever before. But should it be this way?

1.4 Summarizing the Marxist Perspectives

From these thinkers I can now give an answer to the question first presented. First, what is the relationship between class and art and how is art used by social classes? We can safely say that art is not used as capitalist propaganda directed by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie in fact has institutions of legitimization that allow them to ignore the profitability of high art. High art will be promoted as superior even if it is largely rejected in the market place. Bourdieu is correct in that art is used as form of class distinction for the upper classes. There may be an argument for high art being propaganda in more recent times, but such an argument only arises because of the connection between modern high art and Marxist influence. It certainly is not the capitalist propaganda the Marxists envisioned. For the proletariat, art is a method of affirming more straightforward ethical positions and providing various emotions. For both classes, art is seen more as a tool than something that should be appreciated for its own worth.

Second, what should be the relationship between art and class and how should art be used? The bourgeoisie, Marxist, and the proletariat all seem to agree that art should continue to be treated

as tool for various ends. All three take some type of ethicist approach in how art should be valued. Whether that approach is trying to rid the promotion of ‘human’ elements for the upper class and Marxists or trying to promote the basic morals that one finds in their working-class community. However, I do not believe this is what art’s role should be. Artists and fanatics of all classes have demonstrated that art can be appreciated without concern for social norms or benefits. Art can have various elements that involve direct dialogue with society but as a whole, art should not serve any external purpose. The value of art lies in its aesthetic expression and that should be seen as an end in of itself. Ethicism should be rejected as a way to judge art in favor of sophisticated aestheticism¹². This position acknowledges that ideologies can negatively affect art by promoting bad aesthetic practices, but a work’s moral character alone has no bearing on its aesthetic quality. Art should serve as an area where human imagination and creativity has no restrictions; a place where ideas can be aesthetically expressed without the limitation of morals or societal norms.

This allows us to move on to the second question that was proposed, what should the relationship between class and art be and how should it be treated in society? We have already stated that art should be valued for its intrinsic worth which means that class ideally should not be a factor in judging art. This leads to final part of the question; how should art be treated in society? If art should not be seen in terms of social goals, then what aesthetic goals should art try to achieve? What attitudes should change so that society views arts as ends rather than means? We will be discussing these questions in the next chapter by looking at two contrasting perspectives. The first perspective will be in direct opposition to the Marxist perspectives we have discussed so far while the second, while tangentially related to them, focuses on significantly different aspect the

¹² Sophisticated aestheticism: An artwork’s moral character can only affect its artistic value in an indirect manner. This indirect influence can only occur is it ruins or promotes a work’s aesthetically valuable features. (Kieran 453)

relationship of art and society. Both thinkers will expand on what they believe to be factors that lead to the rise of anti-art and what standards art should be adhering to.

CHAPTER 2. CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Scruton: A Defense of Beauty

Now we move to the question of whether there should be a way that art is treated. If we are to defend a position of art having inherent value as well as their being universal, intercultural standards for art we must show that sophisticated aestheticism is the correct position. There must be an argument to be made on why anti-art is bad art as well as tackling the more core issue on why art shouldn't be viewed as a means. Demonstrating that certain moral beliefs can drive the production of bad art would demonstrate that certain ideologies can impede the quality of an artwork. I will be arguing that art should not be treated as a tool and held to universal aesthetic standards. While the focus will be arguing against the anti-art that has arisen since the 20th century the arguments can also generally be applied to the problems with low-art attitudes as well.

The development of high art as anti-art in the 20th century has become an increasingly negative influence in the arts as time moves on. There are many ways we can critique the faults of creating art based on the value of 'anti-human', the value of making art that intentionally does not appeal to people's core values and desires. However, pointing out every specific transgression of anti-art would be seemingly endless. Instead, we will get to the core rejection found in the 'anti-human' ideology that drives anti-art. The promotion of anti-human' is a rejection of beauty. When I speak of beauty I am not simply talking about the idea of 'pretty' or 'cute' but an all-encompassing idea of good, appealing aesthetics. Beauty not only encompasses 'cute' or 'pretty' but also 'haunting' or 'painful'. We see anti-art's rejection of beauty as its core, defining trait. Whether that is rejection of the various conceptions of the idealized female form or the rejection of narratives that promote meaningful triumph over obstacles. If we can define and defend the value of beauty, we will have justified the value of good art and its standards against the 'anti-

human' ideology of anti-art. This is due to good art deriving itself from beauty and the achievement of beauty being the principle of which aesthetic standards rest themselves on.

There will also be an explanation of why an ethicist approach, something you see among both upper and lower classes, limits the possibility of beauty and thus good art. This will be an argument for Horst Bredekamp's emancipation of art from religious ritual and the rise of autonomous art being a good. The realm of beauty, which art should be and where masterpieces express, is valuable in part because it is not restrained by morality and allows for humans to explore the full breath of the human experience in safety. We will be examining Roger Scruton's ideas of beauty and his defense of it from the developments of high art since the 20th century. We will also explore Scruton's belief on the relationship between beauty and morality.

Scruton begins his work, *Beauty*, with three questions. First, is beauty vanishing? This question is in direct reference to high art's adoption of anti-art starting in the 20th century and questioning whether it is destroying beauty. Second, can something be beautiful because of its immorality? This is a question about the validity of ethicism. Finally, the last question is divided into two parts. Is there any point of studying our artistic and cultural heritage if its beauty has no rational grounds? Should we study it in a skeptical, critical, and destructive manner? This question asks whether beauty is rooted in rationality and what affect does that have on its value. The second part brings it in a larger scope, asking whether beauty has any value beyond something that people valued in the past. These questions form the core of what Scruton attempts to address in his book. (Scruton xi-xii)

He begins by mentioning an understanding of beauty that originates from Plato and Plotinus. This understanding of beauty views it as a part of a trio which form the basis of rationality. Rationality is derived from truth, goodness, and beauty. The question of why we should believe

something, want something, or have interested in something should be responded with these three values. We should believe in it because it is true. We should want it because it is good. We should have interest in it because it is beautiful. These values are ends that are immune to counter-argument because they make up our rational nature. Beauty is unique because unlike truth and goodness, which are in harmony, beauty can go against the other two values. A man may rape a woman due to her beauty or steal due to the beauty of a painting. A life of beauty is often a life against virtue. (Scruton 2-3)

Scruton begins his search of beauty by starting with six platitudes. Over the course of the work he revises some of them, but these are how the platitudes are originally presented.

- I. Beauty pleases us.
- II. One thing can be more beautiful than another.
- III. Beauty is always a reason for attending to the thing that possesses it.
- IV. Beauty is the subject-matter of judgement: the judgement of taste.
- V. The judgement of taste is about the beautiful object, not about the subject's state of mind. In describing an object as beautiful, I am describing it, not me.
- VI. Nevertheless, there are no second-hand judgements of beauty. There is no way that you can argue me into a judgement that I have not made for myself, nor can I become an expert in beauty, simply by studying what others have said about beautiful objects, and without experiencing and judging for myself. (Scruton 5)

In particular, the sixth platitude lines up with Bourdieu's ideas about one needing to have high taste in order to have the social capital associated with it. It is not enough to know facts about the art, one must truly believe the art is good. The idea that one cannot be argued into a judgement may on its face go against Bourdieu's observation that the lower classes internalize that their tastes

are inferior, but there may be a way to reconcile this. Since both the upper and lower classes largely view art as a tool, perhaps the acceptance of ideas of taste are only in a social sense. Since the lower classes freely admit they do not personally enjoy high art that can be an expression of their true, personal judgement on it. However, since art is seen as a means for social capital this personal expression of taste is downplayed in favor of respecting the established hierarchy of taste that is enforced socially.

Scruton acknowledges a paradox in judgement of taste that stems from the platitudes mentioned. There is the question of whether objects themselves are enjoyable or are we commenting on the nature and character of people? There can be debate on whether it is right or wrong to enjoy certain objects without ever making a judgement on the object directly, but this does not reflect our experience. We are in fact making judgements on the object and attempt to align our tastes with objects we believe achieve the standards of beauty. Scruton acknowledges that a judgement of taste can never be distilled into a deductive argument so we cannot make second-hand accounts of beauty. This leaves a question of how do we know that there is not only an intercultural but objective standard of beauty that is not rooted in individuals but objects? (Scruton 6-7)

I agree with Scruton that this does present a paradox since these arguments cannot be deductive by their nature. It is a bold claim to say that someone has a flawed sense of beauty when there is no argument that is entirely removed from personal experience, making it difficult to avoid a completely subjective standpoint. At first glance one may lean toward the notion that beauty and its standards lies entirely in the character of humans and that these notions arise from majority agreement. Yet, fanatics of any art genre or aesthetic will always be in the minority, yet we accept that these individuals have a more refined taste than the majority. How do we justify this? I believe

the key in justifying beauty as an objective matter is its relationship to rationality, which is much more clearly seen as an objective property.

Scruton tries to show the connection between beauty and rationality by looking towards the second platitude. If we accept the second platitude then it follows that there are objects that hold the minimal amount of beauty possible. People value the minimal beauty found in simple, mundane things that are present in our everyday lives. One might expect that humans desire endless masterpieces and objects of maximal beauty, but this is not the case. Beauty is found in the harmony of the great works and its simple neighbors. Scruton uses the example of great architecture. If we had a city filled with only great buildings there would be too much competition for our attention and the beauty of each is diminished. Scruton calls this situation aesthetic overload. In contrast, great architecture is at its best when its surrounded by lesser beauties that complement and do not compete with the great structure. The value of harmony suggests a connection between beauty and rationality. Scientific theories whose parts are more internally harmonious are more likely to be true. True mathematical equations inevitably have harmony as one of the traits of their truthfulness. The concept of harmony is rooted in rationality and its presence in beauty is just one area that points to beauty's objective nature. (Scruton 7-11)

The argument for beauty's objectivity leads Scruton to demonstrate why beauty is an end and not a means. Beauty, like goodness and truth, is defined by it being separate from usefulness. Beauty has intrinsic value that does not need justification for its presence. But what does it mean for beauty to have intrinsic value, separate from some other purpose? Scruton believes that we know what intrinsic value is a priori even if it is difficult to explain. Scruton attempts to demonstrate the existence and meaning of intrinsic value by describing what happens when we find something to be beautiful. When someone finds something to be beautiful, they have an

interest in the thing as an individual and not in its relationships to other things. The interest in the object spurs endless contemplation and there is no desire for it to serve a purpose. However, function may be a necessary part of determining whether certain objects are beautiful such as a knife, firearm, or a watch. It is important to point out that the examples that Scruton uses in the text are all physical and practical (knife, boot-pull, surgeon's scalpel, etc.). There are no "mind" examples used that would reduce what could potentially be beautiful objects into tools for pushing various ideologies or doctrines. (Scruton 14-18)

The conception of contemplating objects as ends with no substitutes is called disinterested interest and is an important aspect to how Kant describes the intrinsic value of beauty. This idea was drawn from Kant, who believed judgement of beauty was entirely disinterested unlike morality, which arises from an interest in reason. I would personally add that I do not see morality as stemming from an interest in reason. To use the value triangle proposed by Plato and Plotinus, morality ultimately stems from a desire for the good. Reason is thus used as a method for achieving the good. This shows two things, first is that reason is not necessarily rationality since reason is a process while rationality is a property. Second, that what is considered rational is not fully explained by Plato and Plotinus' value triangle. Truth is an objective value and we will soon demonstrate that beauty is also one as well. This leaves the good's status as an objective value questionable since it is rooted in desire. Returning to the text, there is seemingly a contradiction between disinterested interest and judgement of beauty since the latter is a pleasure, which suggests that pleasure is the root of the interest in beauty. In order to address this Scruton attempts to separate different types of pleasure (Scruton 24)

Pleasures are not all the same as the pleasure one takes from taking a drug is different from the pleasure of seeing your son do well on an exam. These pleasures are interested pleasures

because they arise from an underlying interest outside of the activity, event, or object itself. The pleasure from taking a drug is rooted in the desire to gain a certain physical feeling with the drug simply being a tool to facilitate that. If some other object could induce that same feeling than that would do just as well. The pleasure from seeing your son succeed on an exam is rooted in parental interest in your son's success. Other achievements your son makes could also produce and bring about that same pleasure. When one takes interest in an object they find beautiful there can be no substitute; only that object can fulfill that interest and pleasure. This interest in the object is innate because the interest and pleasure gained from the object is unique to that object alone, something that the preceding examples lack. The attention given to the beauty of an object has no underlying interests. Scruton states that the pleasure in beauty is curious: aiming to understand the beautiful object and to value what it finds. (Scruton 24-26)

Scruton concludes his first chapter by showing that the way we treat judgement of taste suggests a connection to objectivity. Judgment of taste is an appeal to the community of rational beings. It is not enough to have a taste, but we try to share this taste with others and attempt to convince others that our taste is the correct one. These judgements are not binding, but they are always presented as such. Judgement of taste and beauty are claims made about objectivity, even if they are incorrect. The way we make these claims suggest we are attempting to reach a consensus and that we cannot resist making it an objective matter. Perhaps this is why the lower classes so readily accept that the taste of the upper classes is superior, because it is an appeal to the social aspect of taste rather than an appeal to taste alone as it relates to beauty. The question arises whether just because we act this way, does that suggest these judgements are of an objective matter? (Scruton 26-27)

I believe while plausible, this argument is somewhat weak since just because we act this way does not mean it is rooted in truth. However, if we add another observation this argument gains some significant weight. Not only do we strive for consensus on taste, but among fanatics of various arts and aesthetics there is in fact surprising consensus. Composers like Bach and Mahler are considered universally great among fanatics of Western concert music. In another example, Jimi Hendrix and Metallica are likewise considered great among fanatics of rock music. Not only do we attempt to achieve consensus on taste and beauty but among those who have developed their taste the best consensus is often achieved to some extent. This suggests that this consensus is being achieved not through purely social factors, as true fanatics will judge an art or aesthetic for what it is intrinsically and not to gain social capital. Instead, the consensus must be achieved in part due to these works holding some level of objective beauty that can be observed by those who train themselves to see certain forms of it.

Scruton acknowledges that evolutionary psychology provides information that could explain why humans experience beauty but believes that the explanations are insufficient. Evolutionary psychologists talk about beauty in terms of it arising from sexual selection, however sexual selection does not require beauty. Many organisms that reproduce sexually cannot grasp beauty, yet we as humans are able to grasp it in many forms that extend beyond just sexual reproduction or even suitable environments. Beauty and the ability to perceive it is a necessity for humans, like many other cultural universals, even though it seems to not be necessary to survival. Scruton does recognize however that there is a connection between beauty and sexual desire, which brings the concept of disinterest into doubt. With this Scruton puts forth a 7th platitude: Beauty, in a person, prompts desire. (Scruton 29-33)

Plato had his own ideas of the relation between beauty and desire that were rooted in the Greek concept eros. Scruton believes that this relation starts with seeing the beauty of a person and then desire arises from that observation. For Plato, beauty and desire both arise from eros with beauty being the higher form of eros. Unlike desire, which is based in the need to unite with an object and makes copies of it from a physical level, beauty is based in doing this in relation to the mind and soul. Plato would view this as a higher form of eros since it is in the realm of the forms and closer to the perfect embodiments of the objects rather than their flawed physical imitators. Scruton will later echo a similar sentiment of beauty and love being based in the mind, such as romance and personality, rather than the body alone which is the basis of lust. (Scruton 34-35)

Scruton separates desire and beauty in the human form, with the former being based in possession while the latter is based in contemplation. While desire (sexual desire in this case) is based in possession one cannot possess someone else's beauty. This desire to possess is likened to the desire to consume. Sexual desire does not always involve the sexual act but when it does the desire does not end with the act's conclusion. Desire also shares a trait with beauty, in that the sexual desire is directed toward an individual person or object. One can have an attraction to more than one person or object, but each attraction is individual and cannot be broadly interchangeable like the desire for clean water when one is thirsty. So, while we still have a separation, beauty may in fact be a part of sexual desire since they both have a focus on the individual and the attention toward that individual is endless. (Scruton 36-39)

In order to distinguish beauty Scruton borrows Plato's idea and decides to introduce a new concept to further explain the faults of desire, obscenity. Taking inspiration from Plato's ideas on how desire and beauty relate to eros, Scruton defines obscenity as focus on only the body and the body part. This leads to the person being ignored. By removing concern for the person, the subject

is treated like an instrument destroying the person's embodiment. This idea is echoed by other ideologies that tackle the question of morality in concern with how we view others. In Marxism this can be found in the concept of reification and feminism talks at length about the immorality of sexual objectification. Scruton believes the need to reject obscenity demonstrates that beauty can be found in morality and that there is a connection between the good and the beautiful. This is clearly a case for ethicism. The orthodox Marxist may be adverse to beauty but they share with Scruton the sentiment that morality is a core part of how aesthetics and art should be judged. Scruton will go on to expand on this connection later, but I will point out that the concept of obscenity is irrelevant in the discussion of whether an object (or as Scruton may add, a person) is beautiful. What Scruton and other ethicists may see as obscene can be and often is another type of beauty. My position is that the body of a person is just one part of themselves and can be judged to be beautiful separate to other aspects of a person such as personality. (Scruton 39-42)

Scruton goes into more detail about obscenity later on, but after this point he tries to give some other examples of the connection between morality and beauty. The concept of the sacred is a cultural universal to separate certain events from normal, mundane reality and to exalt the unique perspective of the individual. Children and the concept of virginity can be considered sacred in some way and that sacredness is derived from being untouched and/or off-limits to desire. For Scruton this shows that beauty can be found in the sacred. Plato states that beauty is both an invitation and a call to renounce desire. This leads to a revision of the 7th platitude: It is a non-accidental feature of human beauty that it prompts desire. Just as we find beauty in the sacred, we find beauty in morality at large and should realize there is a connection between the good and beauty. Therefore, it is important to have a concept of obscenity and an ethicist stance toward how art is judged according to Scruton. (Scruton 43-46)

Scruton's definition of the sacred is accurate as people naturally desire to separate certain objects and events as above normal life into a 'clean' environment. There is also a connection between the sacred and beauty as we often see the arts being implemented heavily in sacred events and even being deemed sacred themselves. However, I do not believe that the sacred itself is a source of beauty. Beauty can be found in the architecture of a mosque, the poetry found in King James Bible, and the gospel music originating from Southern black-American churches. In all of these cases beauty lies in the arts, not the sacred itself. The arts, which already contain beauty, can be deemed sacred but the sacred alone does not contain beauty. There may be an intellectual and emotional connection with the sacred that does not involve the arts. This can include examples Scruton gave such as children and virginity, but I believe this has more to do with experiencing a feeling of the good rather than experiencing beauty itself. This is not only extremely harmful to Scruton's position of beauty also being the good but to the ethicist position as a whole. If the good alone does not necessarily contain beauty, then it will be extremely difficult to argue that beauty must contain the good since there would need to be an instance where both are necessarily intertwined. There are no examples we can find in beauty that necessitates this to be the case. We have already seen the Marxist orthodox position be used as a possible basis to support anti-art, the rejection of beauty. So far, by trying to intertwine the good and beauty Scruton has denied the beauty of human body in isolation as well.

Scruton tries to separate desire and beauty in some way with the concept of obscenity in order to try and implement his concept of the good inside of beauty. Scruton's good in this situation is one that is shared among most ethicists, such as Marxists and feminists (though the conclusions they take from this vary drastically). That is the idea of human dignity. The dignity of an individual or in many cases a class will be lost when one views the human body in isolation. Viewing the

human body in this way is a rejection of the other aspects of the person during this contemplation. There is a widespread feeling of a need to protect human dignity against this type of desire to possess or contemplate that comes from experiencing this form of beauty. I believe this arises because even among radicals they will still share many common desires and fears. People naturally want to feel like they are caring for their fellow humans or at least those in their tribe. Like Scruton they mix the feelings of good and beautiful so that the perceived good of human dignity is seen as beautiful. Likewise, any situation where there is a lack of dignity for a person is not only seen as bad, but ugly and thus the concept of obscenity arises.

Yet the concept of obscenity not only rejects a form of beauty, but also rejects the fact that objectification and a lack of full dignity is a part of everyday life. It is impossible for us to constantly recognize the full personhood of everyone or even most people we come across. We do not think about the entire personality and life history of the random waiter, hotel clerk, or construction worker. Instead we view them as the equivalent of “that thing that gets this job done.” Likewise, they do not look at those around them in a deep way that takes in everyone’s full personhood. Of course, we consciously recognize these people are fellow humans, but it will not be in the same way one may see their parent or sibling as a human. Objectification is an aspect of everyday life and there is no reason why it cannot be recognized in certain forms of beauty as well.

The topic of obscenity shows a connection between Scruton, an advocate for traditional high art, and the way even the lower classes view the arts. Both Scruton and those who hold low taste both believe that art should affirm the morals they believe a community should have. Even among advocates for modern high art and onwards believe art should be in service of a type of ideology and thus some type of morality. It could be said that those of low taste may hold ethicist views closer to those of traditional high taste rather than the starker contrast between those who

hold modern high taste. Scruton does say that he is arguing for beauty to be viewed as an end, the core of my position. Yet Scruton's attempt to promote a necessary connection between morality and beauty makes him fall short of the idea of beauty as an end. These are two separate spheres and any attempt by the ethicist to make beauty abide by moral standards only restricts beauty, and if beauty is restricted by the good it is ultimately just a tool for the good.

Scruton makes other arguments for the objectivity of beauty, ones that are quite strong. One problem with arguing for the objectivity of beauty is that most people across classes treat art as a social tool rather than appreciating its beauty. Undeveloped or poor taste is rampant across most if not all societies and the population of fanatics is small. Earl of Shaftesbury believed that taste was universal to all humans and rational beings necessarily have the capacity to make aesthetic judgements. This idea was recognized and followed by Kant, who defended it by explaining how good taste could be universal even with a lack of serious interest in arts among the population. Kant's response is that the arts are secondary to nature in aesthetics. Most people are relatively poor judges of art, but everyone can judge and equally engage in nature no matter the culture. This makes sense as most of the debate over good taste in art is unique due to art being a human creation. The question of good taste does not appear to apply much to nature. This shows that when taking away the direct 'human' element, everyone seems to possess good taste towards nature. This is a very strong case for the objectivity of beauty because not only is this unity in taste intercultural, but it is also based in observing a realm that is the result of the state of how things truly are outside of human intervention. (Scruton 49-50)

Scruton acknowledges the Marxist criticism of the concept of taste being universal, which for many Marxists expanded into the claim of beauty not being universal as well. Marxists have criticized the concept of disinterested interest as a bourgeoisie notion that is only possible in

comfort. The notion of disinterested interest ignores the harsh reality of production and consumption that is the basis of human life. The base is mystified so that people are unable to identify it and only look towards the superstructure. Knowing all this it can only be concluded that art as an end is a lie perpetuated by a capitalist system that uses people and things as means. Based on what we have gathered about how both the upper and lower classes treat the arts it appears that neither group fully accepts to incorporate disinterested interest in practice. They may treat the objects as not having substitutes, but they certainly do not treat them as ends like the fanatic does. We have already addressed the problems of the Marxist view of aesthetics through not only the orthodox Marxist, but Adorno's Hegelian objectivism, and the attempted reconciliation of Marcuse. Scruton recognizes that in order to truly rebuke the Marxist view we must show that aesthetics is not simply an ideology or a tool and that they have truth and philosophical foundation. Even Bourdieu, who in large part does give accurate observations of how most people treat art, is not the end of aesthetics. The widespread agreement about the beauty of nature across groups show that there is more to taste and beauty than social capital. (Scruton 52-53)

Scruton points out that the issues that arise from how art is treated is not limited to any specific social order. While even Adorno and Marcuse talk about the how capitalist and fascist systems actively suppress true art and beauty, Scruton points out these issues have been prevalent in all societies and cultures. The distinction between means and ends or instrumental and contemplative attitudes arise from societies that even predate feudalism. I would also add that many of the issues that Adorno complains about affect both the bourgeoisie and proletariat, with both being caught in a game of social capital when it comes to the arts. Scruton challenges the Marxist by the asking what the alternative to the 'bourgeois ideology' version of aesthetic interest is. Bourdieu suggests that disinterested interest is a part of the bourgeoisie tastes, but the taste of

the bourgeoisie seem entirely interested in class distinction and 'anti-human' ideology. Certainly, fanatics who do truly engage in the arts as ends seem to take part in some form of disinterested interest. Adorno does not even deny disinterested interest as the mode of aesthetic contemplation and simply claim that people are dulled to not use it due to the capitalist system. Marxists often gloss over the fact that natural beauty is still appreciated even those who grasp little of the beauty in the arts. This would suggest that social structures cannot simply mold people to completely degrade or change their sense of beauty. (Scruton 53-54)

Kant explains that appreciation of natural beauty is inherent regardless of society because nature does not require background knowledge like art does. Art is also based on nature and the beauty we see in the arts is derived and inspired by natural beauty. However, there is the question of how do we separate natural beauty from the arts when humans have had a profound impact on their environment? Scruton has several responses of this, one is that nature is known for its separateness from humans. Even with human influence nature develops on its own and is not completely reliant on total human intervention. A field of crops is tended to, but the crops ultimately grow on their own; left to their own processes most of the time. It should also be noted that landscapes changing often are a byproduct of the daily activities and concerns of humans, not due to the intentional desire to make a beautiful landscape. The ability to experience the beauty of natural beauty is a priori and will always be much more clear cut than judgements of art. (Scruton 54, 56-60)

The prevalence of taste is prevalent in everyday life. As everyone can appreciate natural beauty this extends to the desire for aesthetic quality in everyday life. We have mentioned that certain landscapes such as gardens are a sort of in-between of nature and art. This concern for beauty in the environment extends to even totally human creations such as architecture. We have

a desire to make functional things such as architecture appeal to our rational nature. There is more to everyday items than just utility as we actively make certain design decisions and judgements that have no bearing on whether the items will work properly. The public nature of everyday life leads to the debate of whether aesthetics can be kept solely to the individual. This creates a situation of politics and social attitudes having a direct effect on aesthetics even in a society where art is fully emancipated. When one makes aesthetic decisions for the outside of their home or business it affects not only themselves but the aesthetic quality of the environment of those around them. Scruton states that social agreement can settle design disputes. He points to style and fashion, two aesthetic categories that are based on social knowledge, familiarity, consensus, and approval. (Scruton 68-73, 75-78)

This presents a rare problem for even the sophisticated aesthete as there is a direct conflict between the good and the beautiful. Here we have the good, in this case democratic ideals, possibly affecting the proliferation of beauty in an environment. Even Scruton must acknowledge this problem as he mentions that democratic ideals do not excuse the destruction of beauty. Scruton's argument is made from an ethicist stance, using the intertwining of the good and beauty so there is seemingly no overall conflict. But for the sophisticated aesthete, who sees no direct link between the good and beauty, the question moves to whether the people should decide for themselves whether they should enforce their taste, whether good or bad, on an individual whose aesthetic choices affect everyone. The focus of this thesis is how society treats art and how should society treat art. There is still the question of how we should bring about the "should". We can establish what good art and aesthetics is but moving to establish them in a society starts to lead to a moral question.

Establishing various areas that show the objectivity of beauty such as rationality and nature we can move on to how this applies to art. We have been asked the question of ‘what is art?’ and with high art’s adoption of anti-art in the 20th century the answer seems to be “anything”. Scruton tries giving an answer that counters this relativist stance that has been largely accepted within society. Of course, as we have already established this is how we will defend good art, a successful defense of beauty will naturally be a defense of good art. Scruton claims that we ultimately have three reactions to art. Art is deemed either to be uplifting, demeaning, or forgettable. We form our taste based on the first two reactions since obviously we do not even remember art from the third category. As mentioned before, taste is often discussed in a way where we try to determine what we ‘ought’ to enjoy rather than just a statement of what we do currently enjoy. We are starting to see the destructive consequences when we see bad art increasingly promoted and accepted in society. Scruton believes, and I would agree with this statement, that bad art leads to uninspired and empty societies. (Scruton 84-85)

Benedetto Croce and his disciple R.G. Collingwood stated that true art drives interest in the art itself, not in our reactions to it like entertainment does. I agree with the general sentiment of the statement and it highlights one of the flaws with low taste. The working classes only see art as entertainment that produces reactions with no interest in the art itself. Scruton points out that Croce and Collingwood’s framing of the situation is not perfect since we can both value and be entertained by masterpieces. He does take the point that true art should do more than just entertain, which I think was the core sentiment of what Croce and Collingwood put forward. (Scruton 85-86)

Scruton then puts forward one of his provocative conceptions of art, and that is the distinction of what he calls imagination and fantasy. Imagination is unreality that is pondered while

fantasy is unreality that is acted out. True art appeals to the imagination while bad art uses fantasy. Fantasy is described as imaginary objects that leave nothing to the imagination. Fantasy pollutes our world and is promoted in photographs, cinema, and television. These mediums are generally used to try and bring unrealities into our lives and have them acted out in the real world. Fantasy is bad because by leaving nothing to the imagination it drives us to act out these desires rather than focus on a moral reality. Scruton's argument seems to be that there should be a degree of separation between art and reality and that separation is violated by newer forms of media that has arisen since the Industrial Revolution. Art should be restricted in what it can depict by because it imparts morals onto a society and just as people will be inspired to do good things by art, they can also be inspired to do bad things. Scruton believes that the immorality depicted in art as well as the realism (one could also use the word "vividness") offered by new media leads to bad art. (Scruton 86-90)

We have already discussed in general the flaws of trying to tie the good to beauty, so I will focus on the role of art's influence on people. Scruton's imagination-fantasy distinction is a way to explain and justify heavy restrictions on what is considered good art, which needlessly cut out many forms of beauty. But there is also the issue of how far does imagination-fantasy distinction go? Do we not address certain evils even if they are condemned within the story? What about different cultures that may produce art with a different idea of the good from others? The restrictions justified by the imagination-fantasy distinction limit good art to such an extent that it merely becomes propaganda. Art can only depict and tacitly promote certain forms of beauty that are deemed to be the morals we want to act out.

This stance ignores one of the main strengths of art and beauty that has been brought up before, its occupation of an area outside the bounds of morality. Art is outside these bounds precisely because it can depict unrealities that we would not or are unable to perform. This allows

us to explore the beauty of various experiences in safety. Yes, art can at times influence those who are exposed to it, but so can philosophical argument and we do not bar people from making certain arguments (or at least if we are concerned with truth we shouldn't). Art is not a magical force that can subtly brainwash anyone who encounters it into a moral position. Those who enjoy art that take positions which would be considered immoral in reality almost never try to act out these positions. The distinction between imagination and fantasy is ultimately a false one because when we experience art, we intrinsically know that it is unreality and is not to be taken as a guide to action. If this were not the case, then society would have been filled with Don Quixotes long before now.

Scruton's concern of the newer forms of media being more susceptible to promoting bad art leads him to question the relationship between content and form. Scruton asks, "How can you separate the content from its form?" Scruton, as we can expect from his imagination-fantasy distinction, argues that art's communication is inseparable from its form and cannot be translated into other forms or ordinary language. He uses Cleanth Brooks' 'heresy of paraphrase' to illustrate his point. 'Heresy of paraphrase' is the idea that a poem cannot be paraphrased and express the same meaning. Even a poem, which uses language as its form, cannot be translated in anyway without losing some of its meaning. One can maybe help explain some aspects of the poem in different, easier to understand terms, but the true meaning of the poem is directly tied to the specific linguistic structure it uses to construct a unique message. (Scruton 91, 93-94)

Scruton also believes that while meaning itself does not need to be beautiful, beauty must have meaning. This view seems tied to his ethicist stance since it would follow that true art should have meaning if it is also supposed to embody good morals. Even if one does not accept ethicism it can be easy to see the appeal of such of a view. Many pieces of art have certain meanings that

can be widely agreed on. Yet, there seems to be many beautiful things that do not have any underlying meaning. What is the meaning of rugged, snow-capped mountain or a lake in a forest at night? Even many pieces of art do not appear to have any underlying meaning. I would argue that beauty does not need to necessarily carry any meaning as there are many beautiful things that carry no message at all. That does not mean that beautiful things do not hold any value. If we accept beauty as a core value and an end, then there is no need to justify beautiful objects as needing to have some ulterior message or purpose. (Scruton 99)

This leads to the question of how Scruton goes about determining the meaning of any beautiful thing. He brings up how a piece of art can be a representation or an expression. A representation is art that is trying to directly represent something that is or has occurred in reality. An expression is art that does not directly reference reality and whose meaning is self-contained. Representational art can be easily determined whether it has meaning because it either represents something meaningless or because it fails to convey anything meaningful about its subject-matter. How to find the meaning in expressional art is much more difficult to determine. Scruton states there are two possible responses to the question of meaning within expressional art. The first being transitive, which asks directly “what is this expressing?” The second being intransitive, which forbids asking that question and spurs the audience to find the expression on their own. Scruton believes that an intransitive approach is the correct approach to finding the meaning with an expressional work. Scruton also added that the artist and the audience can differ on what emotion, or some other feature, is conveyed in a work. So, it can be deduced from this the meaning of a work is a part of art that is not subject to these types of interpretations and that people can determine the objective meaning of an expressional piece if there is one. (Scruton 96-97, 99)

Scruton turns to Friedrich von Schiller about determining the value of art. Schiller states that art allows us to enjoy objects as they are through play and pretend. This play and pretend process, which is brought about by imagination, allows us to reconcile both reason and our senses which often tear us into different directions in our everyday lives. This fulfills a need for order and meaning which is achieved through beauty. Scruton adds to Schiller's thoughts by pointing out that beauty is found in truth and that the mark of a masterpiece is that it can reveal truths which cannot be expressed through philosophical language. I have discussed why beauty does not need to hold meaning but I agree that beauty is tied to truth. If beauty is an objective value in the world then it will follow that beauty does express some truth about the world as well just by virtue of its existence. If truth is defined by what exists and is rational then beauty expresses truth in some capacity. A masterpiece may involve fictional objects but by possessing beauty it will express things that are true. Emotions, experiences, desires; these are all things that exist and are thus true. So, looking at the three values expressed by Plato and Plotinus, beauty has a direct connection to truth unlike the good. (Scruton 107-109)

Scruton goes on to try and directly attack the position I take for the second part of this thesis on how art should be treated. My position is largely embodied by Théophile Gautier's *l'art pour l'art*, or "art for art's sake". It is best to quote Scruton directly in explaining Gautier's position...

"During the nineteenth century there arose the movement of 'art for art's sake': *l'art pour l'art*. The words are those of Théophile Gautier, who believed that if art is to be valued for its own sake then it must be detached from all purposes, including those of the moral life. A work of art that moralizes, that strives to improve its audience, that descends from the pinnacle of pure beauty to take up some social or didactic cause, offends against the autonomy of the aesthetic experience, exchanging intrinsic for instrumental values and losing whatever claim it might have had to beauty." (Scruton 109-110)

This position as presented goes slightly farther than my stance, but only because of the masterpieces we observe that somewhat walk the line on this rule. Ideologies and moral systems often degrade the beauty of an art piece though this is not always the case. There are many masterpieces throughout history that has had social, political, and moral messages. The key is that even in these situations, these messages are secondary to the beauty of the work. The message comes only after establishing the beauty of the work and is subservient to that beauty. Perhaps a piece of art can be inspired by and have the message of communist beliefs, but it must eschew any implementation of anti-beauty traits that may be inspired by the ideology. Masterpieces with various messages can provide unique variety to the landscape of beauty but it is not necessary. Beauty should always be the first concern. While the passage describing *l'art pour l'art* is not a hard rule, it is something that generally should be strived for.

Scruton's response to this position is to separate moral art from simple propaganda. Art as propaganda suffers due to it being untruthful. Art's moral character arises not from moralizing but by its own unique methods. Art that fails due to moral messaging either has a false message or delivers the message in an immoral manner, such as moralizing or grandstanding. The problem with Scruton's response is that it is based on the underlying idea that art should have good moral character in order to be beautiful. Just as great art can have a message that Scruton believes to be moral there is great art that is great precisely because it indulges in ideas that may be immoral if performed in reality. Art dealing with things such as horror or revenge often have their greatness directly tied to key traits such as these. Scruton does seem to recognize that art can be bad due to heavy moral messaging but does not want to accept that there can be great art that goes against his morals. In this respect he is similar to both Adorno and Marcuse, who also believed that great art was directly connected to their own moral views. (Scruton 109-111)

Earlier we discussed the problem of how we could implement maximal beauty in a society while still abiding by certain moral principles. This problem is most notable when concerning the aesthetics of public spaces. Scruton notes that in a democratic culture people believe it is presumptuous to claim you have better taste than your neighbor. It is considered offensive to look down on another's taste because taste is intimately bound with our personal life and moral identity. Here we highlight one of the reasons why judgement of taste is talked about subtly or not at all within society. Taste is used by most as a display of social capital, so judging one's taste is often directly judging one's education and class. If a well-educated individual who liked western concert music went to someone who was less-educated and berated their taste for hip-hop, the latter individual would likely see the well-educated individual as a snob and an elitist. This is a point is noted by Adorno, who shares similar views of democratic culture being detrimental to the arts by promoting aesthetic subjectivism through anti-elitism. Here we have a situation where taste is often integrally tied with the individual and this extends beyond just class. Even if you take an interest in an art genre based solely on an aesthetic and not a social level, communities often form around that taste. An attack on someone's taste can easily be an attack on an important part of who they are. As for moral identity, this is simply not the case. As we have shown, moral beliefs can affect the taste of an individual, but this is only one way. You can gather very little information on someone's moral beliefs from their taste since aesthetics are removed from morality. One can take great interest in a story about a murderer and his or her victims without condoning murder. The most you can gather is that based on someone's taste they may lack an ethicist view of art. This is very broad and does little in determining the moral identity of a person. (Scruton 112)

Since judgement of taste is rooted in the desire for consensus it could be deduced be that we desire our aesthetics to conform to a community. Scruton sees this as pointing to aesthetics

being in large part a social matter that intrinsically involves the community. In trying to create an aesthetic consensus within the community there is the question of whether change in taste is due to rationality or due to emotional connections? Scruton believes that reasoning can change taste and thus by appealing to rationality we can achieve aesthetic consensus. I would argue that while there is a social aspect of judgement of taste, the desire for consensus is based on seeking what is truly beautiful rather than just fitting in with the group. Perhaps with common people there is more concern with reaching a consensus regardless of whether it is based on beauty, but I do not believe this is the case for fanatics. Fanatics' allegiance is to the art first and are willing to disregard social factors if it means reaching an accurate consensus. I would say that the social aspect of judgement of taste, if those involved are truly interested in beauty, is a side-effect. As for prompting change in taste, fanatics show that taste can be changed through rationality. The issue arises that even fanatics are only fanatics in specific art genres. Unless you are truly invested in an art form you likely are significantly influenced by emotional connections such as upbringing and peers. Not only this but having an ethicist stance, which most people do, clouds the taste of individuals with factors that have nothing to do with beauty. (Scruton 113-115, 117-118)

Scruton believes that in order to separate arguments about taste on whether they are serious and thoughtful we must determine what makes an argument critical. He defines critical arguments as any argument that aims to change the aesthetic perception of the audience. I would also add that the argument would have to be based in rationality, since one could easily try to change the audience's aesthetic perception by appealing to factors outside of aesthetics. An example would be to say that European art is superior because Europeans are the best, so it follows European art is the best as well. An argument like this certainly is not critical in any meaningful way that has to do with aesthetics. (Scruton 118)

An argument that can be made against Scruton is that creating an aesthetic consensus based on rationality is not possible because of the existence of so many standards. This can be seen in the differences in aesthetic expression across different cultures. Not only do cultures have different artistic traditions but these traditions evolve over time, with many pieces of art being considered masterpieces precisely because they break the rules of their own tradition. Scruton responds by saying there are intercultural universals in the arts rooted in our nature and rational interests. He is correct in that not only can humans appreciate nature universally but many pieces of art around the world share common traits and themes. For example, even if one were to reject specific theories such as the Monomyth¹³ it can be observed that there are general artistic trends found in many cultures. Tropes such as the damsel-in-distress or parts of the Monomyth can be found in various cultures prior to any significant cultural exchange with one another. This does show that despite different traditions and standards there is some commonality that humans share concerning the conceptions of beauty. (Scruton 118-119)

However, the objection is a serious one and brings up some serious questions. Even if we accept that there are intercultural and objective standards of beauty how can we go about comparing different traditions? Are certain artistic traditions closer to the objective standard of beauty than others? If we say that different genres of art cannot be compared, then what is stopping inferior art from persisting long enough to declare itself a tradition? If a culture has an artistic tradition that is superior to others is that culture as a whole superior? These are extremely difficult answers since even the role of fanatic only extends to specific genres of art. It would be difficult to determine whether western concert music, Hindustani music, or Gagaku (雅楽) is superior since

¹³ Monomyth: A theory that posits that there is a single, common heroic narrative that can be found among the literary traditions of many cultures. (Monomyth)

they have widely different standards, and each have their own fanatics. Perhaps we can say they are all equal and different, but we still would have to determine what traditions do not meet the standard of a good artistic tradition. While we can safely say there is an objective standard of beauty, the variety of artistic traditions show that it can be difficult to pinpoint precisely what that standard is without bias to certain traditions.

Scruton provides a possible answer to this conundrum emphasizing the persuasive nature of judging aesthetics. The goal is not to force someone to like a piece of art but to get them to see the value of it. Scruton even acknowledges that a particular view on the value of an art piece may not be universally available to all cultures, but this does not disprove beauty's objectivity. Scruton likens this point by comparing it to color...

“The objection that aesthetic reasons are purely persuasive simply reiterates the point, that aesthetic judgement is rooted in subjective experience. So is the judgement of colour. And is it not an objective fact that red things are red, blue things blue?” (Scruton 120)

In this case cultural barriers or strong biases could be a form of color blindness. We may be able to see the true value of some traditions and not others. Thus, we can see that Scruton takes an identical position to Adorno on this matter. Even accepting this point we still have the problem of determining which traditions have value. Yes, like color blindness we may only can appreciate certain traditions, but that can easily lead to those claiming only they can see the value in certain traditions while others cannot. How can we determine whether they are correct? It can easily slip into subjective territory as we would need some explanation of where objectivity ends and personal bias begins. (Scruton 119-120)

For the topic of rules within traditions, Scruton states that rules are neither necessary nor sufficient for beauty. Rules do however serve as a good starting point to the destination of beauty.

This view is easily supported by the history of art itself and the process of rules being broken and changed. If rules were unbreakable in the pursuit of beauty then art would never change. Beauty is not a call to conformity. Scruton also borrows from Hume's Standard of Taste but differs on the role judges play in judgement of beauty. He believes that the judge determines the standard of beauty and that standard is rooted in the goodness of the judge. Here, we see the contradiction of Scruton stating that beauty is the end while claiming it is entirely reliant on the good. Rather than even an arbitrary, unexplained connection to the good, like Marcuse attempts to argue, he states that the good must be used to establish beauty. (Scruton 121-123)

Chapter 7 is one of the most interesting in establishing Scruton's ethicist views as he attempts to describe the division between erotic art and pornography. We have already discussed Scruton's concepts of obscenity and the imagination-fantasy distinction. The responses I gave to those concepts and the issue of objectification in art apply to this chapter as well. I still would like to explain Scruton's view on the division of erotic art and pornography because many of his standards are ones that are held by most people who tend to be averse to objectification. His requirements for a work to be erotic art and not pornography is shared by those with wildly different ideologies. While ultimately these requirements are based on faulty standards being pushed onto beauty, it is important to see how people see objectification as immoral and thus, by ethicist standards, cannot be beautiful.

Scruton wants to establish standards on how beauty as an object of desire can be represented in art as an object of contemplation. Like we have mentioned before, Scruton's standards are based in retaining the dignity of the subject. This is the basis of two features that Scruton strongly emphasizes. The first feature being the focus on the face of a subject. In erotic art, the face is a strong focus because it is the central physical feature of human individuality. As

humans, we identify the face as the most unique physical aspect as a human being and the part that physically expresses that person's humanity the most. We principally look at someone's face to gather the possible emotions and thoughts of a person. While erotic art focuses on the face, pornography focuses on the body with lesser to no concern of the individual's thoughts and emotions. (Scruton 124-125)

The second feature is the attitude of the subject depicted. The subject should be depicted as having no interest in sexuality, instead showing self-confidence and setting clear boundaries for the viewer. The subject does not perform any action that signals to the viewer that they are giving themselves to satiate the viewer's sexual pleasure or desire. The air of self-confidence the subject exudes should be as if the subject were conducting themselves as if they were clothed. It is only happenstance that the subject is nude. The failure to meet this standard leads to pornography, which objectifies the subject by presenting them as giving themselves toward the viewer with lesser to no indication of the subject's own higher goals. (Scruton 128-130)

Both of these features serve to not draw the viewer into lust (sexual objectification) by focusing on highlighting the individual. Erotic art is art that shows an interest in the embodied individual and not the body. This is based in the principle that we must always treat humans, who are free beings, as ends rather than means. Erotic art is built on imagination rather than fantasy and maintaining this dignity in art is necessary because the physical body is a part of the whole self. A lack of full attention to the individual in favor of focusing on the body disrespects individual, not only as a whole but also his or her various parts. Scruton's views on erotic art is the strongest example of putting his ethicist views into practice as these standards would not exist if one didn't think morality and beauty were intertwined. What is interesting is that while the distinction between erotic art and pornography is arbitrary, art that meets Scruton's standards does not seem

to be erotic art at all. What you are left with is simply art with nude subjects, but nude subjects are not by definition erotic. Whether you call this category of art erotic art or pornography, the defining feature is to provoke some level of lust within the user. Erotic art/pornography not only provokes lust in the viewer, but the viewer also can simultaneously contemplate the beauty of the work as well. (Scruton 133-138)

Scruton goes on to discuss the rise of anti-art within society since the 20th century and agrees with my view that it is a negative development. However, Scruton does not agree that the core problem with anti-art is its defining traits of being “anti-human” and opposed to beauty. Instead, his conclusion is reflective of his conservative ethicist stance. Scruton does open by accurately stating the attitudes that has led to the development of anti-art. Beauty in contemporary society has been written off as too high-minded and ugliness has been promoted to be more relevant. The first point about high-mindedness calls back to the position of the orthodox Marxist, who views beauty as inherently unequal and irrelevant to the economic needs of the proletariat. The latter point on the promotion of ugliness alludes to the adoption of anti-art into high art which forces its presence on society, regardless of whether it is accepted by the masses. It is also important to bring up that due to anti-art’s now established presence, we are starting to see its influence even in low art in more recent times. (Scruton 140)

Scruton does not lay the blame of anti-art on the early members of modernism. Modern art was rooted in the idea of constant progression, linked to the idea that human nature is constantly progressing. Art should always be progressing with human nature, constantly breaking from the past to keep with the times. Modern artists, unlike their successors and critics, were trying to be in the tradition of the orthodoxy, not break away from it. One of the artists that Scruton mentions which represents this mission is Schoenberg, who started off with a Late Romantic style before

moving to atonality and then twelve-tone technique. Schoenberg did not see his development as a composer as rebelling against the Western concert tradition, but a natural progression of that tradition. This once again gives Scruton a point of agreement with Adorno, showing that it is not necessary for a conservative to deny this. It is also telling that like Adorno, he uses Western concert music as the best of this, even referencing Schoenberg as Adorno does. (Scruton 141-143)

I would agree that it would be wrong to condemn all of modernism as anti-art, especially some of its very early forms. Yet it is interesting to note that modernists believed that human nature was constantly changing, something I would argue against. Adorno himself believed that the changing nature of humans is what made the traditional standards in art become kitsch because of their commodification by consumerist society. This is the opposite of Scruton's belief on kitsch, which he thinks is rooted in the modern developments of the 20th century, not exploiting past standards. While societies and social practices have progressed, human nature has largely stayed the same since at least the rise of agriculture. Looking past even the findings of fields such as evolutionary psychology, the stability of human nature is why we can look at art from far in the past and can relate and connect with them. With a movement being inspired by a false notion, it likely was a contributing factor long-term to the development of anti-art. In the next section we will discuss some of the consequences that false beliefs and ideologies had on the development of modernism. (Scruton 141-143)

Scruton's premiere example of anti-art is Calixto Bieito's 2004 production of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. The opera singspiel has a central theme of chastity, where Konstanze is separated from her fiancé Belmonte and taken into the harem of the Pasha Selim. Pasha ultimately lets Konstanze reunite with Belmonte because he is moved by Konstanze's chastity and faithfulness to her fiancé. Bieito's production of the opera has the setting take place in a Berlin

brothel, with Pasha as a pimp and Konstanze as one of the prostitutes. Scruton condemns the work as lacking any beauty and not in line with the original. Scruton states that the words and music speak of love and compassion but Bieito's production is filled with gratuitous sex and violence. For Scruton, the problem with Bieito's production is the use of sex and violence and the lack of morality promoted unlike in the original work. (Scruton 144)

Now I have not seen Bieito's production, but to say that sex and violence alone is the source of the work's ugliness is far too simplistic. Does the opera still stay true to the message of the original work? If so then the opera at least still retains the core aspects of the original production, including the theme of chastity. If not, then Bieito's production fails because it strays so far from what the original work is supposed to be at its core. Bieito's work seem to represent sex and violence in a crude and unattractive manner. The problem isn't that sex and violence is present, but that they are not portrayed in a beautiful way. Here we see that Scruton is so concerned about what he sees as the immorality of Bieito's production that he overlooks a much simpler explanation of why Bieito's production is faulty. The simple answer is that it lacks beauty. One does not need to appeal to morality to come to this conclusion, because there are countless works of art that grotesquely depict sex and violence in an aesthetically appealing way. Even things that are supposed to be scary or unappealing, like some sort of monster, have aesthetic standards that meet some form of beauty. Maybe that form of beauty is not attractive and tries to bring some negative emotion in the audience, but certainly people can make the distinction between a 'good' grotesque monster and a 'bad' one. (Musicals) (werktreue)

Scruton believes that the fulfillment beauty gives to people is rooted in our desire to rise above our "fallen" or sinful condition. Beauty allows for us to strive closer to the ideal of the good. As mentioned before, Scruton believes beauty is a part of the sacred so the increasing rejection of

beauty in society is ultimately a rejection of morality. Anti-art is a form of desecration, which is a defense against the sacred and a way to escape judgement. The desecration of the sacred leads directly to the desecration of beauty. This calls back to the idea that rejecting beauty is ultimately a rejection of standards that it entails in order to live free of standards. The rejection of beauty is reflective of a larger rejection of morals in our society and the postmodern culture we live in is described by Scruton as a loveless culture. This last point is particularly illuminating because it demonstrates the confusion between beauty and the good quite well. Postmodern culture is becoming an increasingly ugly culture disturbed by the standards that beauty sets. While it can be easy to confuse the two in the sense that they are both negative for a culture, beauty does not hold any morality as a value. The question of what kind of culture we want to live in is not always a question of morality but is a question of quality of life. It is not necessarily immoral to live in an ugly culture, but it certainly degrades people and the quality of their lives. (Scruton 145, 147-148)

As also mentioned earlier, Scruton highlights again how a democratic culture can lead people to deny the standards that beauty establishes. Beauty is what it is, no matter how many people would want it to be different. In terms of art, beauty becomes the burden of one's own culture. While perhaps a bit of a traditionalist notion, I would agree that the art that is a part of our cultural heritage is a burden. We should work to preserve and appreciate the artistic traditions we inherit or else we ultimately degrade ourselves. Scruton describes desecration as arising from pleasure. He describes this by alluding to pornography and other works he would classify as using fantasy. These forms of pleasure are "addictions" which are "shorter" and require less effort than moral, wholesome forms of enjoyment. Desecration, or what I would describe as the rejection of beauty, does not derive from a desire of pleasure. Maybe the pleasure of fulfilling certain ideological standards or avoiding the struggle of attaining beauty, but not the pleasure Scruton is

thinking of. Pleasure as he is thinking of it, the type derived from fantasy, is pleasure that is derived from beauty. As for fantasy being an easy fix for pleasure, that is totally based on accepting that this “easy” way is wrong. Using erotic art/pornography as an example, like a tool it arguably has a practical use, inducing sexual excitement. However, also like a tool that does not prevent it from being art and exuding beauty. (Scruton 153-155)

In summary, Scruton makes some strong arguments for the objectivity of beauty. He seems to realize something is wrong in the arts, but his ethicism and conception of the good leads him to condemn both anti-art as well as art that has beauty, but which he disagrees with on a moral level. In a broad sense, Scruton seems to reject the emancipation of art from religion. I do not believe he necessarily want a central authority like the church to control art, but he does want art to be restricted by a certain ideological code. When he describes the problem of anti-art, he roots it ultimately in a moral failing rather than an aesthetic one. In this sense he is closer to Adorno than Marcuse in that he takes a more explicit ethicist approach by establishing beauty as being entirely derivative of morality. This is in contrast with Marcuse’s approach who did not try to add his ideological views into beauty but simply claim beauty itself worked for his views. Scruton admits at the end of his work that beauty cannot be defined, but one can find evidence of an objective “rightness” that shows its existence. Scruton believes that this is enough to justify beauty as an objective feature of our world, a belief that I share with him. (Scruton 162-164)

2.2 Steiner: The Gender Dynamic

We discussed in the section 1.1 about how music likely has been the smallest offender in development of the arts in the 20th century. While both high art music and low art music have had instances of rejecting beauty, each category also has contributed many great works which will live on as long as humans exist. If music is the smallest offender, then I can probably deduce that the

visual arts, especially high visual art, has been the worst offender against beauty. Out of all the artistic forms, no form has so utterly embraced the new anti-art standard of high art more readily and strongly than the visual arts. Perhaps the closest competitor would be high literature, but it still would be a considerable gap in terms of egregiousness. So, for our last thinker it would be fitting that Wendy Steiner will be looking at the visual arts as her main focus with significant focus in literature just as Adorno leaned toward musical examples.

While mentioned before a few times throughout this thesis and hinted at in Adorno's example in *Aesthetics*, we have not discussed in depth an ideology that holds a strong relationship with Marxist thought. In fact, I would argue that it is an ideology that ultimately has had a stronger influence overall in society than Marxism, and that would be feminism. Feminism in its more orthodox/traditional variety, as we have mentioned before, has very similar reasons to opposing beauty as the orthodox Marxist does. With all the other thinkers discussed thus far putting the relationship between sexuality and morality as the center of their ethicist thought it should be no surprise that feminism has taken a special interest in beauty and the arts. It is important to emphasize that feminism and Marxism, while having a relationship, are separate ideologies. However, their relationship is extremely strong, with both ideologies being concerned with challenging a class of oppressors and how we can rid of the oppressor-oppressed dynamic we see within human society. (Adorno 186)

Marxists thinkers such as the Frankfurt School and Feminist thinkers during the 20th century tried and successfully combined both ideologies into a more multi-faceted view of the world. The Frankfurt School applied the economic focus of orthodox Marxism with the cultural factors that relate to the economics of a society. The bourgeoisie was no longer just those who own the means of production economically, but they determined gender roles, racial stereotypes, and

other cultural ideas to maintain their overall power. Class struggle was not just based on economics or gender, it was a combination of these factors and more. It is why in contemporary times many feminists are also Marxists and vice versa. To go back to the subject of beauty, just as the orthodox Marxist sees beauty as inherently unequal so it must be suppressed, the orthodox feminist also condemns beauty based on its unequal nature. From the feminist perspective, beauty has been a way to rank women throughout history by birth alone. Even if one tries to live a healthy lifestyle to reach the maximum potential beauty of their physical figure, beauty is mostly determined completely by nature and relatively little can be done to raise one's natural-born beauty. Women, who have historically had their value largely determined by their beauty with little attention to other aspects about themselves, ultimately were denied full humanity and dignity. This natural fear of people being reduced to their bodies and being denied dignity has informed the ethicism of every thinker discussed in this thesis. This is shown in the strong similarities between the views of the orthodox feminist and Scruton on the lusting for the body despite Scruton being in opposition to feminism. The sexual beauty of the body has been condemned by not only beauty's opponents but even those who largely defend beauty. (Corradetti) (Cole, "Frankfurt") (Scruton 136)

In Steiner's book *Venus in Exile* she takes a role similar to Marcuse in relation to Marxism. She will attempt to try to defend beauty as a good in an effort to reconcile it with feminism. Her focus is predictably the female subject's role in how beauty is viewed and what beauty's relationship should be for women. She begins by laying out her goals in Proem, starting with Modernism and thus high art's rejection of the long-standing accepted standards preceding the 20th century. This rejection of aesthetic standards coincided with the rejection of the rewards of aesthetic experience, an aesthetic experience that is a result of art that follows these traditional standards of beauty. Rewards from this experience such as pleasure, insight, and empathy were

condemned and abandoned. The woman always occupied a very peculiar position in the arts and despite the drastic changes that occurred in the 20th century their position remained a peculiar one. For most of history, not only in the West but beyond, women were not artists yet they served not only as one of the chief artistic subjects but as a representation of artistic beauty. In the 20th century, the woman as a representation of artistic beauty was completely rejected as women were neither depicted nor celebrated for their beauty. (Steiner xv-xvii)

As the West entered the 20th century beauty was seen as an oppressive force for not only women but men as well. Beauty was a method of biologically and culturally enslaving humanity. This enslavement arises from “Belle Epoque”, the phenomenon of the fair maiden creating both hierarchy and competition by her presence. For men, all of them want to possess her, so they fight each other in a tournament-style mating system to determine who has power to do so. For women, they become jealous of her superior rank and do everything they can to undermine her. The result is inequality, something that both the modernists and feminists despised. Yet there was a divergence between some of the other aspects that make the “Belle Epoque” problematic. The modernists viewed “Belle Epoque” as an absurd overvaluation of women while feminists condemned it for promoting divisiveness and patriarchal values. Despite their different concerns with “Belle Epoque”, both modernists and feminists settled on creating a new beauty myth to replace it. This new beauty myth states that beauty destroys good women by making them the victim of both financial and sexual interests. The gradual intellectual alliance formed between feminists and Marxists allowed for them to agree on the ideal of female beauty being used for financial exploitation of the populace. However, Steiner will argue that for much of the former half of the 20th century despite the modernists being motivated in large part by misogyny, the feminists agreed to their new ideas of beauty for their own reasons. (Steiner xix-xx)

Steiner wants to put forth a new conception of beauty where beauty is not an ontological property but a kind of communication. This idea of beauty as communication is a rejection of the sentiment that grounding beauty in the objective is of chief importance, a rejection that Steiner readily acknowledges. While I will still defend the notion of beauty being an objective value, we will see that at the very least Steiner shows that beauty can also be used as a form of connection between individuals and objects. Steiner believes one reason many thinkers have either rejected or downplayed beauty as a kind of communication is the natural fear of dignity being lost in this communication. The common perception is that when the perceiver (the “self” as Steiner refers to it) judges the object (the “other”) it is commonly seen as a show of dominance by the perceiver. This either results in a loss of dignity for those who are either fully or partially represented by the object. To use Scruton’s view, a man who looks at a pornographic depiction of a woman reduces women to bodies and harms the dignity of women. Steiner believes that this is not the default view people should have when thinking about interaction through beauty. The interaction between the perceiver and the object is not a one-way street of showing dominance over the object and those it represents. Instead, the perceiver and the object have a mutual effect on each other. (Steiner xx-xxi)

Steiner’s idea of beauty as communication is the foundation of a new vision of beauty, a new beauty myth. Steiner’s beauty myth is based in the traditional Greek myth of Psyche and Cupid. The Psyche-Cupid myth serves not only as an allegory to how the Greeks viewed beauty, with Psyche serving as the self and Cupid serving as the beautiful other, but is in direct opposition to Kant’s conception of the sublime. Kant’s sublime is the basis of high modernism, a concept that when adopted leads to no recognition of the self in the other and no attempt to connect to the other because the self feels unworthy. The lack of connection ultimately results in a lack of sympathy

for the other and the experience of artistic beauty being one of alienation. Steiner hopes that she can help restore beauty as an experience of empathy and equality. Like the other thinkers we have discussed, Steiner believes art has a role in morality. (Steiner xxii-xxv)

As we have mentioned before, feminism and Marxism gradually developed an intellectual alliance during the 20th century that completely solidified by the century's end. However, during the late 19th and former half of the 20th century these two ideologies were almost completely separate. Male thinkers of all stripes held views of women that would be extremely traditional by today's standards, which is unsurprising considering the social views that were common through human history up to this point. While male Marxists already held some feminist ideas from the beginning, these traditional views can be applied to them as well. If this traditionalism on women applied to Marxists, then it certainly applied to modernists. Despite consisting of either Marxists or individuals highly influenced by Marxist thought, modernists held an extremely negative view of women. In fact, modernists went far beyond the traditional views of women and condemned even female beauty and femininity, aspects of women that were traditionally praised in some form.

Acknowledging this, we can begin discussing the first chapter of Steiner's work. She begins by establishing that 20th century avant-garde was rooted in two major things. First, the Enlightenment notion of the sublime that was articulated by Kant. Second, an increasing level of disgust among a certain portion of the middle and upper classes against the bourgeoisie and women that developed during the 19th century. The modernists and their predecessors did not believe that women were capable of disinterested interest as put forth by Kant. While women can possess beauty, they only see it as a tool to get social status such as respectability, financial support, and children through marriage. Due to this, modernists grouped women with the bourgeoisie, with femininity being considered a bourgeoisie trait. This shows that even before Adorno, Marcuse, or

Bourdieu the idea of the upper-class not appreciating true art and the process of thinkers and artists trying to separate themselves from the upper-classes was already occurring in the 19th century. The observations of Bourdieu were already suspected by many thinkers before him but were mixed in with the other ideas these thinkers held. In the case of the modernists, it is true that many women did and continue to use beauty as a tool for social status. However, this behavior is not limited to only women and the bourgeoisie but most laymen in society. Most people are not the fanatics that are less prone to seeing art as a mere social tool. Not to mention that activity does entail that someone lacks the ability to appreciate beauty. This consistent blind spot of not recognizing that one's own social and ethical ideas influences how art is viewed and used also did not begin with the thinkers we have discussed. As we see here, this lack of self-reflection extends back to at least the 19th century and the opposition to the bourgeoisie was a key factor in supporting the rise of anti-art as high art in the 20th-century. (Steiner 1-2)

Steiner presents Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* as an accurate prediction of the negative consequences of the modernist adoption of the sublime as an artistic standard. Shelley's *Frankenstein* showed that an adoption of the sublime leads to a rejection of beauty's connectivity in favor of isolation. In the novel, Frankenstein withdraws from his family in favor of creating the monster only for him to become isolated from the monster as well. The destruction the monster brings about is a result of Frankenstein not connecting with and taking responsibility for his family and the monster. Just like Frankenstein, the modernist creates his art which is a monster devoid of warmth and beauty. The modernist then suffers for rejecting his creation and any possible connection with it, leading to the destruction of the modernist. This interpretation of Shelley's work forms the core of Steiner's criticism of the sublime, which serves as the philosophical basis of modernism. (Steiner 2-3, 5)

In order to distinguish the sublime and the beautiful, Kant uses the example of the Alps and polar ice caps. This example was already mentioned when we discussed Scruton. When a person experiences the sublime they separate themselves from their desires and gain the ability to appreciate chaos without fear. In this case, the chaos of the Alps and polar ice caps. Shelley nor Steiner believed that it is possible to experience this chaos in a state of control and ultimately it degrades the humanity of the perceiver who dwells in experiencing this chaos. Sublimity denies the connective power of beauty in an effort to rise above being human in order to reach an objective view. This leads to a lack of connection between the creator or perceiver and the creation. To transcend being human is to lose one's humanity. With the influence of Kant's sublime and a desire to create and experience objectivity in art the modernists cast aside the human aspect of art in favor of making anti-human art. Since the modernists were already in high art circles and themselves members of upper-class society, this standard spread until it encompassed the entirety of high taste for new art. Beauty can be a positive force on the audience of art but the sublime's denial of the connectivity of beauty leaves them in a rage that leads to evil and destruction, just like Frankenstein's monster. (Steiner 5-6, 8-9)

The sublime denies beauty in its entirety, but Steiner believes the effect of this attitude on human beauty particularly harmed women in the 20th century. Like 20th century "glamour", the sublime creates a terrible situation where society tells women to be beautiful to get love and yet at best only adoration is provided, not connection. Women are caught in a cultural contradiction where they are expected to be beautiful while the culture is trying to destroy beauty. Kant's quest for trying to show beauty as an objective property lead to his aesthetics separating taste from gratification. This justification for the sublime informed not only the promotion of the anti-human in modernists such as Adorno, but even influenced those who did not fully adopt Kant's ideas such

as Scruton. Shelley believes this separation of taste and gratification severs the communication of beauty. Steiner's acceptance of Shelley's view can be seen in her promotion of the Psyche-Cupid Myth. (Steiner 10-11)

Shelley's 'feminine' aesthetics is problematic for modernists not only because it is the antithesis of Kant's aesthetics, but also because it promotes values that are associated with the perceived inferior mentality of women. Shelley believes that beauty should be a pleasure, an important form of comfort, and way of bringing together family and loved ones. Shelley's conception of beauty defined by the traits of sentimentality, seductiveness, and domesticity is very human and sensual focused. For the modernists, this idea of beauty only serves as more evidence that femininity is innately bourgeois. Its promotion of human desires rather than a focus on art outside of such subjectivity is everything the modernists detested. Shelley believes the desire for absolute freedom from human desire promoted by Kant results in the denial of love, family, and pleasure. I would add to Steiner's analysis that we can see a distinction between the 'masculine' aesthetics of Kant and the 'feminine' aesthetics of Shelley. The desire for freedom has traditionally been associated as a masculine desire as men played the role of exploring the environment. The desire for safety on the other hand has traditionally been associated as a feminine desire since women were more susceptible toward outside dangers due to generally being physically weaker than men. This is in addition to women being tasked with watching over young children. (Steiner 12-13)

Steiner states that despite the 'feminine' beautiful and the 'masculine' sublime is purported to be equal by Kant this does not reflect the tone of his ideas. The undertone in Kant is that the sublime is the uncompromised experience of beauty, unmixed with the subjectivity of charm. Modernists recognized this undertone and adopted the sublime as the true, pure, and masculine

way of experiencing the arts. Steiner believes this evidence shows that Kantian ethics played a role in the dehumanization of women. As mentioned before, when there is a denial of the connective power of beauty then perceivers of art will turn to evil and destruction fueled by alienation. Once the modernists, in their denial of human desire's role in beauty, believe that a beautiful woman cannot be attained they think that she must be destroyed. (Steiner 15-17)

It is important to reiterate how far the modernists went in stripping women of basically all their value. Even compared to the men of the time with traditionalist views, who saw women as having very limited value, even they at least acknowledged they had some value such as physical beauty and motherhood. To use a quote by Schopenhauer picked by Steiner...

“In Europe the lady, strictly so-called, is a being should not exist at all; she should be either a housewife or a girl who hopes to become one; and she should be brought up, not to be arrogant, but to be thrifty and submissive...even Lord Bryon says: *Thought of the state of women under the Ancient Greeks-convenient enough. Present state, a remnant of the barbarism of the chivalric and the feudal ages-artificial and unnatural. They ought to mind home-and be well fed and clothed-but not mixed in society. Well educated, too, in religion-but to read neither poetry nor politics-nothing but books of piety and cookery. Music-drawing-dancing-also a little gardening and ploughing now and then. I have seen them mending the roads in Epirus with good success. Why not, as well as haymaking and milking?*” (Steiner 23-24)

Certainly, Shelley would be against such a restrictive role for women, but even seeing the polar contrast between Schopenhauer and Shelley we cannot deny they would at least agree on women and femininity having some positive attributes. Both praise domesticity and motherhood, though of course Shelley wanted to raise the position of women to be one of higher respect and a stronger role in society than Schopenhauer did. Contrast this with the modernist who condemns all of femininity, leaving not even the few roles of beauty and domesticity that even the most rigid of traditionalists were willing give at the time. The modernists truly lived up to label of misogynists, believing women to be completely useless in human society and advancement.

Steiner brings up a point by Peter Gay that can help explain why the modernists and Marxists seem to be in the contradictory position of condemning the bourgeoisie while they themselves operate in upper-class circles or even being upper-class themselves. In the case of Marxists and for many modernists they claim to fight for the proletariat as they attack and condemn the middle and lower classes as unenlightened and foolish supporters of a corrupt system. Peter Gay points out for much of Western history the artists (and I think it is safe to include thinkers in this as well) were fully integrated in society, making material that could be enjoyed and examined by the bourgeoisie. This was not lost on orthodox Marxists, who Marcuse mentioned as having the belief that artists make up an “elite” class separated from material process of production. This all changed during the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, where artists turned their back on society, attacking the bourgeoisie and middle classes despite retaining bourgeoisie traits. This rejection of society led to the contradictory positions that are still prevalent today and can be summed up by Gustave Flaubert, “one should live like a bourgeoisie and think like a demi-god.” (Steiner 18-21)

The artist and intellectual class viewed themselves as neither bourgeoisie nor the masses and that they occupied a unique position outside the societal structure. Even Marcuse supported this belief thinking it was the inevitable result of capitalism encompassing all areas of life. They were not living in proletariat poverty, poverty that was a result of ignorance and shallow thinking. They were living in bohemian poverty which was a result of the suffering artist’s higher consciousness about the reality of the world he lives in. To the artist class, the bourgeoisie and the masses could be lumped together as the audience of their work and the artist class had great disdain for the unenlightened nature of their audience. This attitude has continued into contemporary times among many intellectuals and high artists. (Steiner 18-21)

Early protofeminists were also concerned about the role of women, but unlike male thinkers this concern arose from dissatisfaction of women's role in society. Thus, a significant portion of their work tried to explain why women were in the position they found themselves. Mary Wollstonecraft, Shelley's mother, took a position that was more aligned with the position of the modernists than that of her daughter. Like the modernists, Wollstonecraft had a poor view of beauty and the idea of romantic love, believing that the promotion of these ideals was the source of women's subjugation. The promotion of female beauty as the defining trait of womanhood turned women into social inferiors. This societal message of female beauty made women slaves to their sensations, making them focus on love, sensuality, and the passions in a quest of maximizing their beauty. As women internalized this focus on beauty and sensations this kept them out of important concerns in a society. Wollstonecraft blamed the societal promotion of romantic love, the ideal found in fairy tales, medieval quest romances, and the Courtly Love tradition that kept women focused on sensation and thus keeping them ignorant and powerless. With this kind of perspective increasing in popularity as time progressed, it is no surprise that by the rise of the modernism and feminism their adherents were more than happy to attack the ideals of beauty and romance. Despite Shelley's warning, feminists would adopt the sublime that she objected to on the grounds of its rejection of femininity. (Steiner 22-23)

In Chapter 2, Steiner continues with some of the consequences of the modernists' adoption of the anti-human sublime. The modernists' adoption of Kant's sublime continued a long tradition of fear surrounding beauty's sexual aspect. This is the natural fear that we have mentioned multiple times before, where the power of beauty is associated with sexual fetishism. Women's prominence as a subject in art has much ado with the strong parallels between female beauty and artistic beauty. Both have pleasure as a core aspect of their nature, where the viewer takes pleasure in looking at

a woman and the woman takes pleasure in being seen as beautiful by the viewer. This relationship of the viewer taking pleasure in a woman's beauty is easily transferable to art, where the viewer takes pleasure in an artwork's beauty. (Steiner 32, 35)

The modernists eliminated the female subject in a rejection of bourgeois values such as chivalric romance and pleasure-seeking. Steiner references Henry James to describe the process of this change in the role of the female subject in art. The 20th century shift in the portrayal of women was from a Virgin to a Dynamo. Prior to the 20th century the woman in art was defined by a Christian worldview of love and chastity. By the arrival of the 20th century the woman in art was defined by a worldview of "mechanistic atheism in which nature is a system of pitiless forces harnessed by the Promethean engineer." This depiction of women as a Dynamo often was an allusion in art since women were almost never totally depicted. Thinkers and artists such as Ricciardo Canudo and Guillaume Apollinaire wanted to eliminate the woman from art because they embodied sensuality and charm. In its place modernists replaced the beauty of the woman with the beauty of form. Making the beauty of form the focus of art allowed for them to try to appreciate the cerebral, objective, and metaphysical. They viewed it as a rejection of the shoddy imitation of the body for an appreciation of the true forms talked about in Plato's works. (Steiner 35-38, 40, 46)

These developments away from sensuality in high art is contrasted by the low art of the 20th century. With the rise of mass communication and higher living standards of the masses came an explosion of notable art outside the high art circles. This low art not only embraced women as subjects of art but made their depiction more sexually explicit than ever. Low art of the 20th century still embraced the relationship between women and the ornament as high art circles shunned this relationship. The origin of denouncing the ornament, like many other modernist ideas, originated

from Kant. The ornament is an object that exists to add beauty to a larger whole and whose function is to please. Women have traditionally taken the role of the ornament, with pleasing often being defined as a feminine trait. The usage of ornaments is the ideology of charm and women have used their status as ornaments to gain leverage and power throughout history. The ornamental is also fashionable by its nature and is not universal, going against Kant's goal of beauty being grounded in the objective. Kant separates charm from beauty, both beautiful and sublime varieties. The men who recognized this use of charm by women usually reacted with distrust and anger which served as the basis of the modernists' extreme attack on femininity. (Steiner 55-56, 58, 60-61)

While feminists in the early 20th century promoted the rejection of the ideology of charm hoping that women would break out of the role as pleasers there still remained feminists who took up the stance of Mary Shelley. Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth* depicts the fall of a woman who refuses to participate in charm in order to try and reach a romantic ideal. The conclusion of the heroine's journey is striking, with Wharton depicting her late in life free from domesticity but at the cost being dehumanized. Zelda Fitzgerald comes to a similar conclusion in her columns and novels, stating that traditional feminine traits and their use through charm as being intrinsic to women and having value. Not only must women use charm to survive but the rejection of charm and the female beauty that fuels it will lead to not only a miserable existence for women but men as well. For Fitzgerald, the practice of women taking on the role of ornaments was the only beauty left in the desert of the modern world. The perspectives of Shelley, Wharton, and Fitzgerald are likely to seem peculiar in comparison to the those of contemporary fourth-wave feminists. I would argue that this is because the core of modernist thought survives to this day, though stripped of its misogynistic justifications. For Steiner, the rejection of Shelley and her intellectual descendants by male modernists would prove to be extremely destructive. (Steiner 65, 68-71)

In Chapter 3 Steiner discusses the very mixed relationship modernists had with the idea of the woman being a prostitute, an idea that originated in 19th century ideals of what a 'lady' should be. As we have mentioned before, more traditionalist thinkers of the 19th century such as Schopenhauer were opposed to the concept of the 'lady' as it inevitably gave more societal weight and respect to women that was not present before. Yet, this was the 19th century, and traditional ideas still survived in this expansion of 'lady' from medieval noblewomen to more women across class lines. The idea of a lady or a woman was that they were a societal construction, that a female can exist but they must be reared into being a woman. This societal construction of a woman was viewed as men civilizing women and making them overcome their innately dark nature. The conception of the 'lady' was just the next step in this idea of men forming females into women. This is one reason why there has been such an association between women and art. Just as art is created and shaped from raw materials by their creator, women are created and shaped from the female body into a woman. (Steiner 76-77)

This is where the problem of the prostitute comes in. Despite prostitutes having lower social status and not living up to the 'lady' standards of the day, their presence in Western society was strong. Not only did men obviously solicit their services but in the world of art most models for high art were prostitutes. As prostitutes were increasingly depicted in society more openly and women slowly gained more freedom in society there was a challenge to the separation of female and woman. Charles Bernheimer stated that as men realized that they would not easily be able to differentiate between a proper lady and a prostitute in public life they attempted to find ways to prevent women from all turning into prostitutes. This fear of women regressing into females grew during the 19th century as artists continued to explore the subject of prostitutes in their work. Prostitutes were seen as a type of garbage that needed to be cleaned up or contained. This attitude

of trying to separate prostitutes from respectable society grew in intensity till it reached the extremist conclusion of the modernists. (Steiner 78-84)

The modernists destroyed any distinction between prostitutes and proper ladies, pointing out that even proper ladies expect compensation for their affection through marriage. The modernists welcomed the female subject in art becoming synonymous with the prostitute since prostitutes were seen as anti-bourgeoisie. The modernist conception of the prostitute was a woman willing to offer their services to anyone for a price, regardless of class background. At the same time however, modernists viewed women as inherently sensual beings, so they desired to quarantine from art. This strange contradiction of wanting to celebrate prostitution while also condemning it as trash that must be omitted eventually resulted in the omission of the female subject all together in favor of the form. It is worthy to note that men are subject to coming-of-age tasks and rituals that signify that they have become true men in society. The modernists and their precursors did not spend as much attention on this dual nature of individuals needing to be shaped into their proper gender roles, instead focusing their concerns on women. The subject of prostitution in modernism shows that the new high art of the 20th century was not founded on a consistent basis. With such clear contradictions serving as the basis on what art should be, it should be no surprise that high art of the 20th century is defined by chaos and inconsistency fueled by the class and ideological interests of those involved rather than a clear, purely aesthetic basis. (Steiner 75-76, 81-84, 90)

Steiner mentions how shock, horror, disgust, and lack of sympathy are not only accepted in the nihilistic sublime standard but are used to make its adherents seem better than the laypeople. This can perhaps best be seen in the high taste perspective on pornography. Pornography has been accepted as high art during the 20th century such as the works of Robert Mapplethorpe but are

simultaneously denied as being pornography. Steiner points to a strange process where high art circles will observe a piece of pornography, consider it trash, and then elevate it to high art, ultimately denying it is pornography in the first place. Steiner relays this in her experience of giving talks about the Mapplethorpe trial and the importance of freedom of expression. Yet she notes at the time this work was written she was getting responses from the audience that claimed that Mapplethorpe's work was clearly art and that she needed to use "real porn" as an example to make her point. I would add that here we see the distinctions between high and low art that were discussed in Bourdieu coming to fruition. If the pornography is made with the support of patronage and institutional support such as government grants then it is art. If the pornography is made with the intention of commercial sale and for the work to be supported by market demand and profit then it is just pornography, not true art. With the introduction of modernist standards into high art another crucial factor is whether the work is expressly meant to titillate. If Mapplethorpe creates an image of a man having his rectum being penetrated by someone's arm, but its not expressly meant to sexually excite the perceiver, then it is art. If that same situation was created but with one of the chief purposes being to sexually excite the viewer, then it is pornography. It has been accepted among high art circles that true art must be anti-human and lack any element of trying to stimulate the audience sensually. (Steiner 95-110)

I would add a final feature that separates high and low art, and that is the claim of the upper classes. Ultimately, even with all the other factors, Steiner points out that ultimately an artwork is high art if the upper classes deem it to be high art. It is a disappointing realization that not only art is treated simply as a social marker but what the social markers are considered is completely arbitrary. Steiner makes a distinction between romance and pornography believing that the two have natures that reflects the distinction between how society views male and female. Romance is

associated with Catholicism, feudalism, monarchy, elitism, and conservatism. In contrast, Pornography is associated with atheism, mercantilism, capitalism, republicanism, democratic egalitarianism, and liberal freedoms. With Romance being seen as a woman's genre and Pornography being for men, it is interesting to see that ideas associated with Romance were the ideals supported by Western society for most of its history. I would argue that despite women being barred from being artists for much of Western history that there was some level of respect for women that the respected genre of art was associated with them. As for men, the traditionally negative traits associated with a 'man's' genre likewise reveals that even though society elevated men as the dominant sex they still held men's nature with at least some level of suspicion. (Steiner 107)

Despite the distinction between Romance and Pornography, Steiner suggests that such a distinction is not very clear and shows that there needs to be at least some level of acceptance of pornography. Pornography is already accepted in some limited aspect among both high art circles and wider society, but it is only considered something worthy of respect when its status as pornography is denied. It is why I stated before in this thesis how the distinction between erotic art and pornography is meaningless. The distinction is not only vague, tied more to societal perception and views on morality rather than purely aesthetic traits, but also relies on the assumption that pornography either cannot be art or can only be bad art. My stance is that pornography cannot only be art, but good art. If one does not accept the premise that sensuality in art should be limited and that beauty can be expressed in bodily pleasures there is no reason to not treat pornography (or erotic art, the label can change but it denotes the same thing) as any other genre of the arts, with both its trash and its masterpieces. I think the open acceptance of pornography as an art genre, however one ranks the different genres of art if one wishes to do so,

is one of the important steps in trying to rid of the practice of using art as a tool for class distinction rather than appreciating it for its inherent value. Some could argue that music is a higher form of art than sculpture, but they would not deny that sculpture is not deserving of at least some amount of respect.

Steiner is much more cautious in accepting pornography as being in the same pantheon as other genres of art. While Steiner defends pornography's right to exist and to not be censored, she believes that pornography dehumanizes people with the focus being on their bodies. Pornography also goes against her conception of beauty and art chiefly being forms of communication. The nature of pornography is one where there is little interest in communication, instead presenting itself as an object. This perception of art as an unreactive object is the exact sort of perception that gave rise to the worst aspects of the avant-garde, especially its focus on the form. Steiner does conclude the chapter by stating that despite all of this pornography does deal in things such as desire which she believes is necessary for art. Steiner accepts pornography's right to exist but she hopes that in the future it will eventually not exist due to each individual's personal decision to not participate in it. Steiner's objections to pornography are similar to the other ethicist objections to highly sexual art that other thinkers have presented. All of these objections have expressed the natural fear of losing dignity. I object to her overall goal of trying to frame beauty as primarily a form of communication because it often can be analyzed and appreciated in isolation from human factors such as social ideas. Communication is a byproduct of art and it certainly plays a role in how we as humans interact with both art and the beauty it presents. However, as I still hold to the belief that beauty is an objective value the idea of beauty being primarily a form of communication seems misguided. The modernists went wrong in many areas but seeing art as primarily materialistic objects is not one of them. Their failures lie in areas such as not accepting human

traits and sensuality as being an expression of beauty, not in their acceptance of beauty being objective and reaching beyond human society. A rejection of beauty's objective status only gives a different path to the same chaos brought about by the modernists. (Steiner 106-110)

Chapter 4 focuses on the rise of postmodernism in the 1960s and 1970s as a reaction to not only modernism's rejection of ornamentation but also its acceptance by the bourgeoisie. For example, Abstract Expressionism was so accepted by the bourgeoisie and ruling class that the CIA funded Abstract Expressionist art in order to promote American culture in opposition to the Soviet Union. This acceptance by the bourgeoisie greatly upset high artists even though the bourgeoisie never rejected their modernist push to any substantial degree. If the bourgeoisie accepted modernism in the 1920s then they certainly normalized it by 1962 when Norman Rockwell made his painting *The Connoisseur*. The avant-garde modernists attempted to move to conceptual art, completely ridding of the modernist focus on formalism. Yet many artists remained unsatisfied with conceptualism alone and this focus on its expansion led to postmodernism. In a returning embrace of ornamentation, artists embraced artistic styles of the past as well as sampling low art, which never drifted far from the core traditional standards of beauty. However, the damage to high art was already done as modernist influence can still be seen in postmodern works. The postmodernists always sampled these old styles and 20th century low art with the intention of parody and irony, never believing these works held merit outside of being used as commentary on modern society. The postmodernists lamented the lack of acceptance of ornamentation by modernists, but they themselves never reembraced ornaments as being deeply aesthetically meaningful. Postmodernism was simply a change from a surface appreciation of primitivism for the former half of the 20th century to graffiti of the latter half of the 20th century. (Steiner 111-125)

While postmodernists didn't truly embrace beauty in absence of irony and parody, their use of the ornamental at least opened the possibility of a true, honest embrace of female beauty. That is, if the increase of female agency did not prevent this possibility at the same time postmodernism also arose. As Western society was entering the latter half of the 20th century all of the concerns that have we have mentioned throughout this work, the reduction of women to their bodies, reification, etc. started to gain wider social attention and concern. Feminists pointed out the misogyny of the modernists but retained almost all other aspects of the modernist view of art. The male modernist goal of ridding beauty and thus women who were intrinsically tied to it largely moved over to the feminist goal of ridding beauty because it is an unfair standard placed on women. The feminists also had plenty of targets for their criticism as low art continued to be made according to the traditional beauty standards that existed before modernism. Steiner describes the position of feminists quite succinctly.

“At this time, feminism denounced the beauty contest for dehumanizing women. ...The intrinsic unfairness of the distribution of beauty among the female population, the entailment of passivity in the role of the “to-be-observed,” and the equation of value with mere surface led feminists to consider beauty a tool to keep women subservient to men and competitive toward each other. The feminist leader Gloria Steinem, whose beauty made her a media darling, was an object of suspicion and unease within the women's movement regardless of her best political efforts.” (Steiner 126-127)

Of course, this echoes what I said before about the rejection of beauty being based in part to its unequal nature, showing one of the connective threads that helped draw feminism and Marxism closer together. Steiner believes that this position has become standard within feminism because of beauty being used as a tool for fascism, objectification, and oppression in the past. Steiner, in line with the other ethicists we have discussed, hopes that beauty and thus the arts can be used for moral uplift, in this case the empowerment of women. She hopes female beauty can be a way for

women to communicate their autonomy as well as increasing compassion between people. (Steiner 126-131)

Chapter 5 discusses how Pierre Bonnard's use of domesticity in his art highlights the positive aspects of its presence as well as high art's adoption of Outsider Art. I want to focus specifically on Outsider Art and how it is another instance of institutionalization of a previous low art into high art. Outsider Art is defined as art that was not developed and created in high art circles but subsequently received the attention of high art circles. The appeal of this art for high art circles was its "outsider" status, being created by artists who were often self-taught and/or were racial or ethnic minorities. Steiner notes that Outsider Art is vaguely defined, with various artists meeting the requirements of the traits given to outsider artists. To quote Steiner...

"More troubling there is not a single criterion of "outsiderness" that cannot be found in "inside" artists. Van Gogh was mentally unstable. Joseph Cornell was self-taught. Caravaggio was a criminal. El Greco was a visionary. Chagall's paintings are as full of fanciful folk elements as any Outsider Artist's, and high artists from Duchamp to Rauschenberg have made art out of scraps and refuse." (Steiner 186)

While it could be argued that the rise of Outsider Art that started in the 1980s was an embrace of the low art of the masses, I would argue it was another instance of institutionalizing only certain forms of low art that did not have mass appeal. Just as jazz was institutionalized only when its popularity with the masses waned or postmodernism's use of popular art only with the intention of sarcasm or irony, Outsider Art was low art that was not popular with the masses and thus were safe targets for institutionalization. The art of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Sam Doyle began as low art for all the masses to see but they certainly did not become big, commercially successful artists before being picked up and promoted by the world of high art. So, while Outsider Art introduced artists from backgrounds that were not historically prominent in Western high art it allowed for

class distinctions to remain stable as only low art that was not widely recognized by the masses was eligible for acceptance. (Steiner 170-190)

Chapter 6 and Conclusion bring the work to end with Steiner having a mildly optimistic vision of the future with beauty once again returning in a manner that highlights the positive nature of femininity. In Steiner's goal, the depiction of women in art will be one that fully humanizes them so that it communicates the humanity of women in real life. This humanization will spread so that each individual can express their own beauty, finally realizing beauty not as a property restricted to traditional or modernist standards but a mode of communication. Sadly, 18 years on from when *Venus in Exile* was first published, the anti-beauty sentiment is not only still going strong but has become even more embedded in Western culture. It has reached a state where it has started to affect even low art that has resulted in a fierce debate about what role beauty should have in the arts. The debate over whether beauty should be promoted in our arts can largely be divided over political and class lines but at its core remains an aesthetic debate. Generally speaking, those who are upper class and/or have views strongly influenced by Marxist or feminist thought will likely believe that beauty has been overvalued and should take a backseat in our culture. Those who belong to the lower classes and have views that are more distanced from Marxist or feminist thought will likely push for traditional beauty having a strong presence. While of course things are never black and white, with Steiner and Marcuse being good examples of this, their own words show this stark divide. Unfortunately, for the time being aesthetic debate will be largely linked with class conflict and that only draws away from what Steiner and Shelley see is the root of the issue, the question of whether we should accept or reject Kantian sublime. (Steiner 191-193, 216-241)

CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSION & FURTHER TOPICS

I have shown not only the effect Marxist perspectives have had on the relationship between class and art but that their explanation of this relation is sorely lacking. The upper-class bias of many Marxist thinkers as well as their ideology has blinded them from seeing certain patterns in class-art relations. While I do not personally subscribe to any of the ideologies discussed in this thesis, I wanted to emphasize how these ideologies relate to aesthetic views and the merits and faults each of these perspectives have. I tried to focus as little on any overall opposition I have toward these ideologies and instead focus purely on how they inform views on aesthetics, whether positive or negative. What is perhaps most surprising is how despite the ideological and philosophical differences between the thinkers we have discussed all of them subscribed to some form of ethicism, often with major points of overlap and agreement between all. This shows that not only ethicism is the standard position of the layman, rich or poor, but it is the standard position even among intellectuals. The faults that each of these aesthetic perspectives have are either directly the result of an ideological position or is justified through ideology. This shows what my position of sophisticated aestheticism suggests, that ideologies can have an indirect effect on art by promoting standards that run counter to pure aesthetic standards.

The current situation and what has been the case for Western history thus far is that art is a tool for class distinction and a vehicle for the promotion of various ideologies. My hope is that we can eventually move to art being valued for its beauty and intrinsic aesthetic worth rather than as a tool for a social agenda. I would even go as far to say that while beauty and art has auxiliary benefits aside from its intrinsic worth that those benefits should never be valued over its intrinsic worth. While it is a lofty goal, especially since most people do not take a fanatical interest in any

of the arts, with the rise of living standards and leisure time in the West hopefully this will lead to an opportunity for the layman to develop his taste in the arts. A layman having a more developed taste, whether bourgeoisie or proletariat, will inevitably lead to not only a higher appreciation of the arts but a higher standard of aesthetics in order for art to be accepted and recognized.

The subject of this thesis was quite narrow and there several issues that can explored as a follow-up to this work. One issue is the failures of low art, especially in 20th and 21st centuries. Since low art has largely received little attention by intellectuals, in part due to their class bias, this means that this thesis was largely pushed toward a focus on analyzing and critiquing high art. When low art was mentioned it was usually with the undertone that it has the potential to be just as worthwhile as high art. The process of institutionalization shows that the split between high and low art is determined largely by the social agenda of the upper classes. However, this does not mean that low art is free of criticism. To use Philip Tagg's conception, in musicology there has been a divide of art music, folk music, and popular music. Art music can be defined as high art music and in the West that usually means the Western concert music tradition. Folk music is the traditional music of a culture, essentially the low art music before mass communications. Finally, popular music is the low art music that arose in the 20th century and is associated with its reliance on open markets such rock, hip-hop, country, and formerly jazz. While we are talking about music, this can apply to other older genres of art with long traditions. There is a question of whether the transition from folk music to popular music among the lower class was a net positive or negative aesthetically. Also, even fanatics of low art will admit that the charges from the upper-classes of it being shallow, aesthetically unappealing, and appealing to the lowest common denominator of the populace has some truth to it. Low art is popular and largely attempts to appeal to the masses which means there will be plenty of low art that will, as Adorno put it, promote psychological

button-pushing pop songs rather than pop songs with actual high aesthetic merit. Particularly in the 21st century there has been increasing criticism of the popular music industry promoting music that is homogenous and of low aesthetic value compared to the past, especially in Top 40. While low art has been unfairly condemned and ignored, like high art it too has some major faults that have become more apparent in the 21st-century. (Gracyk) (Matson) (Serrà)

This leaves us back to one of the questions that loom over this thesis, is high art better than low art? I would say I have half-answered this question. It is clear that especially since the 20th-century that there is nothing inherent in high art that makes it superior than low art. Most of what traditionally separates high and low art has nothing with aesthetic qualities and those that do, such as high art generally leaning toward the abstract, seems to serve the purpose of creating stronger class distinction rather than those aesthetic qualities being innately superior. This is before taking into account the trend of high art becoming anti-art in the 20th century, completely rejecting beauty and embracing bad aesthetic standards. Low art on the other hand still largely conformed to traditional aesthetic standards that predate the 20th century. So why does the question still loom over our heads when the distinction between high and low art do not have any relation to aesthetic quality?

Well, there is still the deeper question embedded in the former question, and that is are certain genres of art superior to others? Is Western concert music superior to rap? Adorno and Scruton both seem to answer this question by saying that people are confined only to be able to rank genres of art within their own culture. This is an unsatisfying answer though and is increasingly insufficient as people grow up significantly exposed to arts from multiple cultures. Even my own comments about fanatics, that they are limited to only making close to objective judgements on the views genres of art they are knowledgeable in, does not dismiss the idea that

certain genres of art are superior to others. All it does is suggest that we are unable to answer this question, which while more consistent with our increasingly globalized and interconnected world than Adorno and Scruton's stance still leads to the same dissatisfaction. We know that not all genres of art are equal or else we would allow for anyone who haphazardly creates a new genre to have as much credibility as established traditions. Yet, as mentioned in Section 2.1, how far this goes is yet to be determined and needs more discussion since neither Adorno, Scruton, nor myself have given a definitive answer on the issue.

Another issue mentioned throughout the thesis is the Eurocentric nature of the discussion. The focus on Western culture does mean that this discussion only focuses on a very small part of the larger picture of human culture. Especially in our increasingly globalized world where some of the biggest contributors to human culture are not from the West but Far East Asia it is important to analyze how art and class interact in these cultures. What influence does the West have on other cultures? We have seen cultures from around the world adopt Western musical instruments and notation as well as the spread of Western concert music. Is this a sign of certain cultures like the West being superior, at least in an aesthetic sense? As mass communication continues to bring cultures into more intimate contact these types of questions must be addressed as we study not just the effect of class on the arts but broader issues concerning art and culture.

This was mentioned when Scruton brought up the issue of aesthetic sensibilities in public spaces, but there is the question of how one can implement a political system that promotes beauty and good aesthetics. Even for someone who believes that there is a strong distinction between the arts and ethical issues, this is an issue where both must be addressed. On one hand you have the principle of freedom, which denotes that people have the complete right of self-expression. On the other hand, this freedom could lead to a less beautiful or aesthetically rich society. This sacrifice

of aesthetic richness and purity for individual freedom was brought up by both Adorno and Scruton under the theme of “the democratization of art.” It seems obvious that people should have the complete freedom to express and experiment with the arts in private spaces but public spaces are where this issue becomes unavoidable. The bad taste of one individual can negatively affect the beauty and quality of life of the entire community, but is it worth sacrificing individual freedom to create a more beautiful society? This would seem the next question in how society should treat the arts.

As can be seen with developments such as the institutionalization of jazz and the proliferation of Western Concert musical style in film and video game soundtracks, high art and low art do not exist in a vacuum and have both influenced each other. For much of the 20th century, low art was suppressed and censored according to the conservative aesthetic standards that were more in line with someone such as Scruton. Yet, in the 21st century we have seen a marked shift due to changes in societal influence along with anti-art having had over 100 years to establish itself. Not only has anti-art have had an increasing influence on low art but calls for censorship are now done in the name of anti-art standards and the ideologies that support such standards. This censorship is not only limited to Western art that still embraces sensuality, but also foreign art that do not conform to Western anti-art standards. This has been most pronounced in areas such as film, comics, popular fiction, and video games. It is an ongoing cultural debate that should be the focus of more cultural analysis.

If we are going to having an ethicist position and accept Pornography as art, as I believe we should, then a frank discussion of it is in order. This is especially needed now as pornography becomes an increasing part of our society. The 21st century has been unique in that pornographic or sexually explicit art has developed quicker now than any other point in human history. In the

West following the medieval period pornography was quite limited compared to present-day, with works perhaps containing sexually explicit elements rather than that element being the main focus. This is expected since art was largely the domain of the upper-class and was almost often on public display. This meant art was limited by the morality of the rulers and public perception. What follows is the increased spread of the printing press and the start of the emancipation of art from religious ritual. The increasing availability to print and distribute books not only slowly loosened the grip of the authorities on art but allowed for such works to be enjoyed in privacy. This can be seen in the rise of erotic fiction such as *Fanny Hill* or *The Lustful Turk*. With the rise of mass communications in the 20th century this expanded the ability to distribute new forms of pornography such as film or photos in higher quality than before. These mass communication technologies increased the privacy granted to individuals until culminating in the late 20th century with the internet. (Steiner 102-106)

The internet allowed for individuals to create and spread pornography digitally or have it physically shipped to them without ever even leaving the home. Pornography now currently can take the form of literature, illustrations, photos, and film at not only a higher quality than before but with privacy that was unimaginable in the past. An example of pornography's increasing role is looking at the worldwide popularity of ero-manga, or Japanese erotic comics. Just as Japan has become the primary force in animation, comics, and has historically been the biggest influence in video games this extends to their pornographic counterparts. In the case of ero-manga, the rise of their importance in the realm of the otaku fandom/subculture (fans of popular art from Japan) as well as pornography in general has reached so far that popular ero-manga artists are often on par with non-pornographic artists in terms of status. If pornography is gradually starting to reach a

more open and larger position in society it should be given much more attention, especially since it has already had a history of being under looked in the past due to its private nature.

In conclusion, class has been one of the strongest if not the strongest non-aesthetic influence on the arts. Sadly, this has resulted in the arts being subservient to class interests and various ideologies. Not only this, but since the 20th century despite the increase in artistic variety the arts have been under increasing influence of class interests and ideologies that threaten to completely rid of art's central trait, beauty. In the 21st century and beyond we are at a crossroads. We can either make an active effort to use the increase in the layman's leisure time to promote good, developed taste or risk art becoming aesthetically empty propaganda with no trace of beauty. My hope in discussing the history and current situation involving class and the arts is to bring awareness to the simultaneous danger and opportunity that awaits us. Hopefully, in the far future we will not have art be relegated to callous propaganda but finally getting the respect it deserves as one of the most valuable products of human culture.

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