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Editorial

Contemporary philosophical definitions of “art” or “creativity,” which refer to a variety of human practices arising between antiquity and this day, seem to encounter two major obstacles: *anachronism* (institutional definitions and aesthetic definitions) and the indeterminacy of what was *actually* constitutive as the motivation behind such activity (e.g. Levinson’s “intentional” definition). This situation reflects a general methodological problem with *art* that appears whenever we use this term, namely the elusive character of its subject. However, regardless of whether we take ancient Greek poetry, or Tuscan and Venetian painting, or theatre of the Siglo de Oro, or Victorian arts and crafts, or North American sculpture and architecture, or music anywhere, every form of “creative” production has usually declared a source – one that would legitimize, first of all, a qualitative value of its produced artifacts or performed activities and, secondly, their role as models to be followed by other activities, through mimesis or induction.

As one will easily recall, early Twentieth-Century artists accentuated the implosion of the privileged position of the art of their time by tearing it away from its presumed relation with those superior points of reference that the legitimizing, inspiring agents had assumed. Thus a hundred years ago, the arts broke away from the concealed powers that their authors and commissioners had used in the Nineteenth Century to impose and secure their own social positions. Apparently, art became autotelic, self-aware, and free from what was not art – free to serve a pedagogical purpose that was to be its own.

Done and dusted. Or was it? The main question that we asked philosophers and aestheticians for this issue (i.e., if contemporary self-sufficient, post-conceptual, socially engaged art recognises what sort of inspiration is standing at its origin or, if it finds none, how it can explain its transgressiveness) seems hardly to have echoed among those thinkers who proclaim a pedagogical mission of the new arts geared toward liberating unenlightened audiences from undesirable norms, prejudices, and references. While the pedagogical mission exposes contemporary artists’ clearly transcendental position, performing artists, immersive artists, and theorists of engagement art and of other arts successful at dismantling people’s commonplace views in the name of *amelioration* have not responded to the posed question.

On the contrary, the problem of art’s *inspiration* is mostly addressed here by thinkers who see that artists rather follow pre-existing reality and join it in re-instituting it in their works, and not the other way around. Perhaps surprisingly in this context, it is Rorty’s imperative to aestheticise philosophy that brought about an analysis of Bergson’s ontology, which is the subject of Randall Auxier’s article and reverberates through José Miranda Justo’s work – the former one devoted to the founding constitution of *image* in the perceptual flux and the latter one focused on the experience of the *singularity* and *universality* of the creative act. Romantic *imagination* that awakens or misleads artists struggling with balancing its evolving structures and a post-traumatic *dreaming* which, being a harvest of collective memories, can become a source of individual

emanation are presented in contributions from Maarten Doorman and Mara Miller, respectively. The concept of *kenosis* as a specific attitude is explored by Derek Whitehead in the thought of Meister Eckhart and Martin Heidegger, for the sake of determining the cognitive conditions that enable creation. A retrospective of the concept of *cosmopolitanism* as a driving factor for creative activity is presented by Ștefan-Sebastian Maftai in the context of the Romanian avant-garde movement expressed in the *Contimporanul* journal.

The presented articles seem to be not questioning art as a peculiar type of human activity that not only forces the artist to invent and learn new means of expression but also moves beyond the cognitive mechanisms accessible through his or her reflective powers. *The original unknown* which through the creative process is allowed by the artist to reveal itself in or through an artistic form makes this form evoke particular, definite, though not single, interpretations. The more difficult to pin down the source of the creative act, the more accurate the interpretations. This seems to be juxtaposed to another *unknown*, namely one that followers of the contemporary movement place at the other end of the creative act – in its interpretation, which in the case of their art remains indefinite and rather too widely open.

Although this seems to be a predominant note that plays throughout the texts presented below, the editor is certain that a more careful reader will also find in them if not responses, then other significant philosophical questions about the art of our day.

Bogna J. Obidzińska

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