What value can be attached to a concept of mystery and has it a place in contemporary Western culture?

Anne Harkin-Petersen

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ABSTRACT

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The idea for this thesis arose from a chain of reactions first set in motion by a particular experience. In keeping with the contemporary need to deconstruct every phenomenon it seemed important to analyse this experience in the hope of a satisfactory explanation. The experience referred to is the aesthetic experience provoked by works of art. The plan for the thesis involved trying to establish whether the aesthetic experience is unique and individual, or whether it is one that is experienced universally. Each question that arises in the course of this exploration promotes a dialectical reaction. I rely on the history of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline to supply the answers. This study concentrates on the efforts by philosophers and critical theorists to understand the tensions between the empirical and the emotional, the individual and the universal responses to the sociological, political and material conditions that prevail and are expressed through the medium of art. What I found is that the history of aesthetics is full of contradictory evidence and cannot provide a dogmatic solution to the questions posed. In fact what is indicated is that the mystery that attaches to the aesthetic experience is one that can also apply to the spiritual or transcendent experience. The aim of this thesis is to support the contribution of visual art in the spiritual well being of human development and supports the uniqueness of the evaluation and aesthetic judgement by the individual of a work of art. I suggest that mystery will continue to be of value in the holistic development of human beings and this mystery can be expressed through visual art. Furthermore, this thesis might suggest that what could be looked at is whether a work of art may be redemptive in its affect and offset the current decline in affective religious practice.

Contents

List of Plates

Plate 14 *Hannibal Crossing the Alps*, Oil on Canvas, 146 x 237.5 cm, Verse:
'While the fierce archer of the downward year
Stains Italy's blanch'd barrier with storms'
James Mallord WilliamTurner, 1812, Tate Britain, London

Plate 15 *The Dance of Life*, Oil on Canvas, 123.75 x 187.5 cm, Edvard Munch,1899-1900, National Gallery, Oslo

Plate 16 *Wanderer Above the Mist,* Casper David Friedrich, Oil on Canvas, 174.8 x 94.8 cm, Casper David Friedrich, 1818, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany

Plate 17 *The Gleaners*, Oil on Canvas, 83.8 x 111cm Jean Francois Millet, 1857 Musee d'Orsay, Paris

Plate 18 *Liberty Leading the People*, Oil on canvas, 259 x 330 cm, Eugene Delacroix , 1830, Louvre Museum, Paris.

Plate 19 *The Third Class Carriage*, Oil on Canvas, 65.4 x 90.2 cm, Honore Daumier, 1863-1865, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Plate 20 *Canons in Action*, Oil on Canvas, 50 x 60 cm, Gino Severino, 1915 Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany

Plate 21 *Freudian Diagram of Psyche*

Plate 22 *Semi nude Girl Reclining* Gouache, watercolor,and pencil heightening on paper, 45.9 x 31.1 cm Egon Schiele, 1911, Graphische Sammlung,Albertina, Vienna

Plate 23 *Apparition of face and fruit-bowl on a beach*,Oil on Canvas 114.2 x 143.7 cm, Salvador Dali, 1938, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut

Plate 24 *Corps de Dame,* Oil on board 117 x 90 cm, Jean Dubuffet 1950 Louisana Modern Art Museum, Denmark

Plate 25 *Untitled*, Oil on canvas, 125.5 x 100.5 cm, Asger Jorn, 1943-44 Collection, Louisana Modern Art Museum, Denmark

Plate 26 *Around the Circle*, Oil and enamel on Canvas, 97 x 146 cm
Wassily Kandinsky, 1940
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Plate 27 *A Bigger Splash*, Acrylic on Canvas, 243.8 x 243.8 cm,
David Hockney, 1967,
Tate Gallery, London

Plate 28 *Shadowy Carvings of an Ancient Execution, Good Friday,* Oil on Board,
120 x 90 cm, Tony O'Malley, 1992, St. Mary's, Callan, Co. Kilkenny

Introduction:

The Tate Modern has one room set aside for nine paintings by twentieth century painter Mark Rothko. The first impressions on entering are that this room bears no resemblance to any other in the gallery. Little by little, it becomes clear what makes it different. In the first instance, the lighting is understated. There is no harsh illumination of the paintings on the walls. There is no stark demand by the lighting to draw attention to the work. Like the steady advance of a chromatic scale the body adjusts to the containment of the space. Initial apprehension is replaced with tranquillity. Gradually, and gently, an awareness of the paintings intrudes upon the perceptive senses. Slowly it enters the psyche how huge these paintings are. Their size alone momentarily halts the comprehensive process and the paintings demand respect. The size of each painting is considerable and while three have the same measurements, with the vertical side being the longest, two others are identical, but with greater length in the horizontal direction; another two are equal in vertical length to the first three mentioned, but the horizontal lengths do not conform to one another. The remaining two paintings have different measurements. All in all, it must be understood that only some element of conformity can be found as regards size. Therefore these are not presented as a series. The subtlety of each painting is unique.

To demonstrate the content of these paintings it may be helpful to examine one in detail. **Plate 1,** simply titled, Black on Maroon, measures 266.7 x 457.2 cm, is a rectangular oil painting on canvas. The colours, in this particular instance are of maroon and black. They merge in and out of one another, in unequal measure along the borders of the painting. Where one colour begins, and the other ends, is not clearly defined. What could be described as two cloudy maroon panels, pillars, or figures of unequal width but corresponding depth, appear to hover above, or present themselves as somehow external to the black background, which itself, seems to float out from a bed of maroon. The brushstrokes imply a haphazard approach that might result in confusion but no such effect is felt. Dynamism coexists with an induction to calm. The effect is enigmatic.

The room is not empty, so the viewer is alerted to the fact that there is something intriguing about this space. What enters the viewer's mind is an awareness of the

inclination to stay, to find out, what it is about these paintings that others find so fascinating. What it is about these particular works that places them in such a prestigious setting, and, what is it about them that attracts and holds such attention. Can a link be made with some other occurrence where an awareness of shared experience invites participation? What does this say about the intention of a work of art? Has the role of art a wider value than either its monetary or sensory value? The viewer is alerted to a sense of communal intrigue that these paintings obviously radiate.

With no intrusive change of rhythm, contradictions begin to challenge the understanding. Despite their large size the impact is non- threatening. The palette, for all nine paintings, is limited to black, maroon and red. But these colours exude a pulsation that is spellbinding, rather like the persistent rhythm of a Bach prelude. The invitation to become involved is proffered and accepted. By now, accustomed to the dim atmosphere, the viewer becomes aware that these canvases contain little or no overt representation or recognizable symbol. They are simplicity itself, it seems. Bands of oil colour of various depths and widths, in maroon and black and red, sometimes horizontal, sometimes vertical. Yet their affect is anything but simple. The challenges continue.

The experience is one where the viewer may become lost in reverie, from deep within excitement stirs, and fires the imagination. The oppositions remain. The experience is overwhelming, and unforgettable, soothing and exhilarating. The seductive invitation to linger, and participate, grows stronger while, all the while, the viewer is being drawn step by step, into an enthralled trance. The ritual, between the viewer and the paintings, rises and falls, like the rhythm of a dance. A dance, that reaches to a crescendo of joy and excitement, and falls to the depths of contemplation and reverie. The incorporation of the viewer is complete.

Reluctantly, and with conscious effort, the viewer leaves the space. The euphoric feeling is carefully deposited to the safekeeping of the memory. But it refuses to lie dormant. The initial reaction, to hold this remarkable experience within the safety of the individual mind, is superseded by the desire to share the experience with others. But, the problem that the viewer encounters is, that such an experience defies logic. Logic demands that an explanation for all phenomena ought to be possible. Where can the

viewer seek an explanation? Is there any connection to be made between this and any other known experience?

The questions tumble over one another in an effort to identify what exactly about these works of art has induced such a reaction. Can all works of art activate such a response in the viewer? Does the responsibility to produce this affect depend on the artist alone? Reason dictates that such experiences must have been recorded previously. What can be learnt from history? Can everyone enjoy this experience? If, a work of art, can induce such a transcendental experience, surely then it must form an important constituent to essential considerations regarding human development. Can such an experience have any relevance in a society that is driven by empirical and material imperatives?

An inducement to reverie could be considered an essential component of the experience of the Rothko paintings. In this case, the paintings act as a catalyst that encourages an experience, which may be analogous with the experience of mystery. It would seem reasonable therefore that, the history of art, might be the first and obvious source to discover what criteria are necessary to invoke such a response. Aesthetics, the philosophical branch of art history, should elicit the best information. Uncovering, within the history of art, a record of similarly described experiences, ought to validate their authenticity. While establishing the historical validation of the aesthetic experience, a natural evolution might be the possibility of links with other known experiences. Traditionally, a reverential experience is induced by a deeply ritualistic or spiritual moment.

The anticipation of this journey is exciting, and promises all the elements of adventure and curiosity, a search through time, wondering what will be uncovered along the way. It remains to be seen whether such a decision will provide satisfactory answers to the questions posited.

Chapter I: Circumstantial evidence in support of the aesthetic experience:

A suggestion of a puzzling or mysterious factor is introduced through the experience of the Rothko images. In order to establish a base from which to progress, it is important to look at the documented evidence of how, the idea of mystery infiltrates and impinges upon the history of human growth. The following investigation should establish the growth and development of aesthetic theory. It should also clarify, the divergent approaches by philosophy to an understanding of mystery, from ancient times to the present day.

Each person may have a particular idea of what the word mystery conjures up. Mystery has several connotations, such as apprehension, anticipation, excitement, dread, curiosity, endlessness, and transcendence. These features can be linked with the means that are used to express mystery, e.g. myth, magic, religion, ritual, allegory and symbol[1]. Perhaps a simple definition could be that mystery is what is partly understandable but never completely understood.

As a painter, this expedition can be equated with the beginning of a new work of art, which usually requires a concept, deep contemplation in and around this concept, then having already sought out certain tools with which to operate, beginning the work. What invariably happens is, that the work itself acquires an impetus of its own, which may or may not follow strictly along the lines of what was the original objective, but does offer wonderful surprises and excitement along the way. What immediately springs to mind is adventure, a seeking out of information, a journey undertaken in order to arrive at a culminating point, but in reality, arriving at a signpost to another destination. The history of aesthetics is analogous with this journey and therefore constitutes an adventure, which will undoubtedly produce several exciting paths for exploration.

Concern surrounding the aesthetic poses an intriguing conundrum, for both the scholar, and any person who affords time to a contemplative attitude to the mystery of life. As aesthetic theory is uncovered it will, hopefully, become clear, from all the research, how

many theories are tabled, and how debate vacillates from one position to another. However, despite the emergence of different criteria, hopefully it will become obvious that one constant remains, and that is, that philosophers and critical theorists still find the question of aesthetics a fascinating one.

For the purposes of this essay it is not possible to research every philosopher whose work has had serious impact upon the development of aesthetic thought, however, those whose work is considered as being of tremendous importance includes, from Ancient times Plato (427-347 BC), Aristotle (384-322BC) and Plotinus (205-70BC). From the Middle Ages, Augustine (354-430), and Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274). From the Renaissance Marcilio Ficino(1433-1499) and the philosophy of Neo Platonism together with such theorists as Leone Battista Alberti (1404-1472) Albrecht Durer (1471-1528) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).[2]

For a philosophy of the period known as the Enlightenment, the theories of such protagonists as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) are considered. Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Theodor Adorno,(1903-1969) Georg Lucaks (1885-1971),Soren Kierkegaard (1815-1859)Friedrich Nietsche (1844-1900) Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) Albert Camus (1913-1960) Clement Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) and critics Roger Fry (1866-1934), Clive Bell (1881-1964), from the Modern era. Roland Barthes(1915-1980), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jean Francois Lyotard (1924-1998), Umberto Eco (1932-), Jean Baudrillard (1929-), Jurgen Habermas (1929-), Edward Said (1935-2003) and Hal Foster from the Postmodern period.

Perhaps it is helpful to be reminded at this point, what the term '*aesthetics*', as given in the Dictionary of Philosophy, means

> '*the study of what is immediately pleasing to our visual or auditory perception or to our imagination; the study of the nature of beauty; also, the theory of taste and criticism in the creative and performing arts*'[3]

Some other terms that may require clarification are, '*a priori*', from what is earlier; or prior to the formulation of, '*ontology*' the branch of metaphysics that deals with the enquiry into the theory of Being in the capacity of Being; '*metaphysics*' the theory that deals with first principles especially of being and knowing, concerned with that which lies beyond nature, e.g. the existence of God; '*epistemology*' theory of knowledge especially the critical study of its validity, methods and scope; '*teleology*' theory which describes in terms of purposes e.g. the evidence of purpose or design in the universe and especially that this provides proof of the existence of a Designer; '*theology*' inquiry into the teachings and practices of religious doctrine or practices; '*transcendent*' beyond the limits of any world experience.

Aesthetics is first considered to constitute a legitimate branch of philosophy by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762). Between 1750 and 1758 he published *Aesthetica*, the first text solely focused on formulating a comprehensive theory of aesthetics, including a theory of perception. But the subject of beauty and its constituent parts certainly occupied an important role for the ancient Greeks, as delineated by Monroe Beardsley in his history of aesthetics. As Beardsley points out, debates about art go back further than Plato (427-347BC) but it would appear, that the latter formulated questions about art and its merits more concisely than his predecessors.[4]

Development of a natural science and a natural philosophy give some indication of the beginning of both an aesthetic, and a critical theory as explored by Homer, Hesiod (750 BC) and the Pythagorians (c 582-507).[5] But it is in Platonian philosophy that the formulation of certain important questions may be found. Homer (c.700 BC), and his contemporaries, record their interest in the relationship between creation of the world, the artist's creative power, and the mystery attached to both, long before Plato (427-347 BC), according to Beardsley. They also make concerted attempts to answer questions relating to aesthetic theory and metaphysical concerns.

In the first instance, Plato finds it extremely puzzling why the arts of music and drama should exist at all. Broadly speaking, Plato's position as regards intelligent productive work, to which category the arts belong, involves a plan therefore all production is imitation. Consequently art is imitation[6].

One of the main thrusts of Platonian philosophy is the principle of Ideal Form. **Plate 2,** (Classical Greek sculpture showing ideal proportion). Again, according to Beardsley, Ideal Forms, or an Ideal Form of Beauty '*exists, or subsists, in a realm distinct from the empirical world*'[7] Plato believes that all Form is in the mind *a priori*. Whatever representation or imitation can stimulate the intellect to recall Ideal Form, acts as an instrument to reunite the human with the divine or transcendental nature for which it ultimately yearns.[8]

If we are to take Plato's position that everyone is born with an *a priori* knowledge of Form, it should follow that criteria set out by Plato to stimulate the viewer should be sufficient to transcend the individual. By adopting Plato's understanding of representation, as being only important in so far as it imitates Form, it would seem logical that the most beneficial way for representation is to progress from the purely sensuous to a more ontological understanding. This understanding would then lead to an eventual transcendental or out of this world experience through the image presented, taking the concept of Ideal Form as being the basis of the representation.

It is understandable therefore, how a pupil of the Plato Academy contributes to the effort to solve basic questions surrounding phenomena. According to Beardsley, this key figure in the history of classical aesthetics is Aristotle (384-322). A substantive portion of Aristotle's study relies on logic. His interest involves the working out in sequential thought how ultimate realities are constituted. Through logical debate, Aristotle acknowledges the imitative aspect of the arts, and recognises it to be natural to humankind. Aristotle distinguishes and celebrates man's ability to reason. While acknowledging man is intelligent, and acknowledging that man believes a deity to be the prime mover and creator, Aristotle considers that man's salvation is due in a large part to his being able to reason out why, in other words, for what purpose man is created. He formulates his conclusions by systematically working through four types of explanation or causes, material, formal, productive agent, and the end for which something is made.[9] Aristotle questions Plato's position concerning Ideal Forms and suggests that Form may be the soul.[10] The concept of soul has implications that are far more inclusive than the concept of Ideal Form. Ideal Form implies containment or a cognitive grasp of concrete substance that is not usually attributed to the concept of soul. Soul implies an expanse of spirit that has potential to expand into wider all

encompassing parameters. Therefore, soul has a much richer concept than that of Ideal Form.

Because Aristotles' philosophy is more grounded in human discourse, it seems reasonable to make the assumption that, his position affords visual art an inclusive and universal role. It remains to be seen, whether one theory more than another, can be judged to be more accessible, more easily understood, and capable of imparting more knowledge, or, whether a combination of both, might provide a more rounded outlook.

Many philosophers, at this time, are concerned with making sense out of metaphysics. Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality and is concerned with such questions as the existence of God.[11] One such individual is Plotinus (205-70 BC), who extends Platonism in the third century. He widens the parameters of the understanding of representation, and opens up the possibility of abstract concepts when he states

> *'the soul takes joy in recognizing its own nature objectified, and in thus becoming conscious of its own participation in divinity'*[12]

Not only, does Plotinus believe in the metaphysical perfection of artistic ideas, he also asserts, the artist, through his interior vision, manifests a particular understanding that embraces the fundamental principles of nature.[13] As a Neo-Platonist, Plotinus' avers sign is no longer only a straightforward signifier; it takes on an unsolved quality.

Here we have three different approaches to mystery as expressed by the Classical Scholars; Plato espouses the *a priori* rationale of Ideal Form; Artistotle concerns himself with the end for which man is created; and Plotinus' believes in the perfection of artistic ideas. All three approaches relate to the mystery of the relationship between human beings and a creator. All three also question, from an aesthetic or art theory standpoint, how this relationship can best be expressed in visual terms.

Beardsley claims, aesthetic research by Plotinus bridges the gap between the Classicists and the early Christian scholars.[14] It is reliably established by art historians, that allegory and symbol are widely used in the Middle Ages[15]. Allegory can be understood as a story, which also can convey a deeper meaning, in addition to its apparent meaning. Symbol, can have two meanings; it can be an object or shape taken to represent something else, or an authoritative statement of religious faith.[16] Beardsley indicates there is no great evidence to support the notion that specific attention is paid to an aesthetical theory *per se*.

War and Monasticism, are predominant features of reality in Europe in the Middle Ages. The reaction, to both conditions, is an awakening of the imagination, which develops bodies of symbols to communicate ideas. Because symbol, can enlighten in a way that mere representation may not be able to, Umberto Eco points out, how symbols are employed so they *'could make intelligible those doctrines which proved irksome in their more abstract form'*[17]

Eco explains, that the Medieval theory of art is a theory made up of the capabilities of the human being to design, and the relation between that capability and how nature itself brings together the elements of design[18]. In other words, a theory of art exists that is based upon design and production. Accordingly, art is more concerned with construction than expression.[19] So, art is constructed in such a way, that the use of allegory and symbol will express a moral or spiritual value, or exemplary idea that can be easily grasped. This exemplary idea is clear, and not complicated by the possibility of an emotive or subjective response.

This state of affairs benefits both the lay and the academic. The unsophisticated convert their beliefs into images, and the theorists construct their theories to the ordinary man. As E. H. Gombrich points out no text is quite as particular as an image can be.[20] And so art can be perceived to retain its' traditional didactic role, and that is to display truths in a cognitive manner to a general audience.

Beardsley, does point out how Christian influence promotes the idea of metaphysical symbolism. Metaphysical symbolism is understood to be Gods' hand in everything. Therefore, it is taken for granted that, God is the creator of the universe. Consequently,

one of the main anxieties of the Middle Ages is, to work out how God can be explained, and what is mans' relationship with God. These issues have important consequences for works of art, a theory of art, and aesthetics. Umberto Eco's 'Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages' offers a good guide to the aesthetic climate of this period.

But, medieval theorists still rely on Platonian philosophy and Christian theology, to develop their aesthetic theories. In the context of Medieval art, signs are derived from a religious base, and symbol is looked upon as *'the mysterious language of the divine.'*[21]

Eco mentions 'The Book of Wisdom' from the 'Old Testament'. This text appears to act as a handbook from which the Medievals take direction. The implication is everything is looked at and measured by triads of reference from the Old Testament. One such triad, Eco identifies as, '*that which determines, that which proportions, and that which distinguishes*'[22] Allowing that all understanding of the world is directed by God, it follows, the triad of unity, truth and goodness is applied to all existence. As outlined by Eco, Medieval thought does not consider a huge chasm exists between the natural and the supernatural worlds. Instead, it considers both states to be integrated. Nature, is a kind of alphabet through which God speaks to humankind; reveals the order in things; the blessings of the supernatural; how to conduct oneself in the midst of this divine order; and, how to win heaven. Things in themselves might inspire distrust but, things are more than they seem, they are recognised as signs. Hope is restored because the world is Gods' discourse to man.[23] The use of signs is employed, in the Medieval quest, to unravel the mystery. Another adaptation by the Medievals, to a Christian viewpoint, would appear to be Artistoles' rational of causes. The universe being considered the material cause, God the Father, the efficient cause; the Son, the organising principle; and the Holy Spirit, the end cause of aesthetic harmony.[24]

St. Augustine (354-430), is one, among many Christian scholars, who promotes Christian ideals, others include John Scotus Eriugena, (810-877) Hugh St. Victor (1006-1141), John of Salisbury (1115-1180) St. Bonaventure (1221-1274), and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Eriugena, for instance, propagates the Christian dimension to all aspects of symbol and allegory.

But, by the thirteenth century, a study of the psychology of vision builds up. All work is designed with aesthetic perception in mind, and, according to Eco, artists not only consider, but also understand, at what level the receptivity of their work might be gauged.[25] This, perhaps, throws some light on why Aquinas understands the act of seeing as, not only one of recognition of a certain object, but also of an understanding of the implications of the object.

> *'For Aquinas aesthetic knowledge has the same kind of complexity as intellectual knowledge, because it has the same object, namely, the substantial reality of something informed by an entelechy'*[26]

Augustine is the first great Christian philosopher, and a key figure in the progression of a metaphysical theory.[27] Augustine's, great emphasis on the importance of number, helps focus the minds of the philosophers on the more practical and empirical sciences[28]. A theory of light that develops in the Middle Ages is adapted and used to symbolise Christian principles. God as light enters the Christian tradition through Augustine.[29] It is a good example of the use of symbol. The principle of light is one of the main metaphors explored for metaphysical and redemptive properties at this point in history. **Plate 3**

St. Thomas Aquinas' gift to the history of aesthetics, relates, in a particular way, to the question of beauty. As pointed out by Eco, Aquinas makes a significant contribution to the explanation of the role of allegory. He adopts a position that is both logical and practical. He brings a rational view to the question of phenomena. Aquinas points out, that if spiritual realities are grasped in a rational manner, they are much more comprehensible and understandable to the human mind.[30] John Scotus Eriugena is another notable contributor, to the ongoing dilemma of making sense of the world. As Eco points out, Eriugena's interest focuses on the formulation of metaphysical symbolism. He maintains, that universal allegory, the world as a divine work of art, possesses moral, allegorical and anagogical meanings, in addition to the literal meaning, and declares

> *'The face of eternity shines through the things of earth, and we may therefore regard them as a species of metaphor'*[31]

Gombrich points out, Aquinas also believes in the use of metaphor to facilitate understanding. Metaphor is found in symbols, and once accepted by the viewing community, it is irreversible[32]. Not only does this understanding affect thinking, it also has the influence of expanding interpretation. Normally, things are interpreted in terms of cause and effect, this is now extended and things are looked at, not only as causal connections, but also as a web of meanings and ends. As Eco explains,

> '*the formation of symbols was artistic. To decipher them was to experience them aesthetically. It was a type of aesthetic expression in which the Medievals took great pleasure deciphering puzzles, in spotting the daring analogy, in feeling that they were involved in daring and discovery*' [33]

But, according to Eco, the concern of Medieval taste is not partial to the autonomy of art, nor to the autonomy of nature, the concern is more comprehensive, and involves

> '*an apprehension of all of the relations, imaginative and supernatural, subsisting between the contemplated object and a cosmos which opened onto the transcendent. It meant discerning in the concrete object an ontological reflection of, and participation in, the being and the power of God*'[34]

A point to be remembered, the Middle Ages is the link between Classicism and the Renaissance. To summarize, here is a period when the germ of the concept of feeling as applicable to visual art is sown. Consequently, tensions surface between the traditional concepts of art, and the beginnings of an acknowledgement of sensory perception that relates to subjectivity in art.

As already stated, art in the Middle Ages is concerned with construction. A theory of art then is based on knowledge and production. There is a great reliance on the classical tradition of Plato and Aristotle. Their ideologies, and those of Plotinus, are adapted and given a Christian authority. Christian values are influenced by the wisdom of the Classical scholars and a gradual development emerges in a theory of art. Eco refers to the deliberations of John of Salisbury (1115-1180). These include the didactic role of art, with nature acting as an agent of God. [35] Nature provides the means from which art can be devised. It is not difficult to understand that visual art is used as a means to

educate, and influence, in a time where scholarship is the privilege of the few. Aquinas affirms that nature is the prime source of form. Consequently art is only produced from the substance that is already there. But Aquinas sustains the idea that concrete existence should only be *'interpreted in the light of the metaphysics of divine participation'*[36] Where the Platonian believes that all knowledge is *a priori* and comes from above, e.g. light comes from above, Aquinas follows more in the line of Aristotle's logic. His point of view is that clarity comes from below, from the heart of things.[37] Bonaventure's position is, that art operates on nature, and presupposes existing things. So, it is evident that the questioning of the relationship between God, nature and the human being, heralds a fundamental change in aesthetic theory. Clear-cut traditional rules of engagement with visual art can be seen to be undergoing expansion.

Traditionally, nature and art are judged on how they represent the supernatural allegorically. God is perceived to be omnipresent in nature. Therefore the consideration of any aspect of nature accepts the presence of God therein. Moreover, social history affirms, that Medievals have the ability to grasp certain analogies, interpret signs and emblems, which tradition determines. So, the Medievals can then translate images into their spiritual equivalents.[38] What can be firmly acknowledged is, the propensity in the Middle Ages to understand the world through symbol and allegory[39].

As part of the new approach to understanding; how to reconcile traditional theory with the empirical and scientific experience of the world; the theorists of the Middle Ages face the problem of where the exemplary idea comes from. Eco explains, in the Middle Ages, there is a consciousness that technical and manual skills are required for art, and, artistic elements can also be found in technical skills. Eco traces the beginnings of the concept of the imagination to the Greeks. Sequentially the notions of expansion are laid down and start to germinate. Someone like Plotinus, who believes that the artistic idea possesses the highest metaphysical perfection, views the imaginative ideas of the artist as noble. Augustine believes the mind can add or subtract from its memorable experiences. If the latter is true, in fact, it is possible for the artist to produce an image that does not fit any recognisable form in nature. Aquinas makes his contribution to the quest, by taking the position that the image exists in the artist's mind, and consists of a marriage between form and matter.[40] Aquinas leans towards Aristotle's position, which

does not take into account the spontaneity or subjectivity of the artist. At this point in time no thought is given to pleasurable responses that might be induced by a work of art.

In the earlier Middle Ages aesthetic values are expressed in stylised formulae that can be applied to life. Traditionally, no margin for speculation is considered. The exemplary idea is made known through recognised use of allegory and symbol. The lines are firmly drawn; these are applied in the light of the divine. With the expansion of education, travel and intercultural relations, art takes on a new direction. The stylised formulae take on social values. [41] Doubtlessly it is the influence of the mystics that sow the seeds of subjectivity and feeling into the fertile ground of the imagination. In the first instance, Christian theologians and philosophers introduce possible avenues that can be explored, that might suggest alternatives to the current aesthetic theories e.g. the Platonian idea of Ideal form. The mystics open up the debate still further through forwarding a notion of contemplation and subsequently embracing Francisan spirituality. As pointed out by Eco, Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), noted Medieval mystic, expands on the Platonian theory of form. While acknowledging that '*the forms of every created object exist first in the mind of God*'[42] he believes, that human beings should focus on the form of the reality that they wish to represent to such an extent that they identify with it. So, the image that is produced not alone contains the exemplary idea within it, but also becomes the exemplary idea. Eco attributes Eckhart with the following statement '*an image is an emanation from the depths, in silence excluding everything exterior*'[43]

As already explained, tensions arise in the Middle Ages between the traditional God centred universe, and, how human beings are actually experiencing the world. Regardless of the experience and scientific advances Medievals '*still saw the world with the eyes of God*'[44]. The contradictions naturally produce difficulties as to how exemplary ideas could best be communicated, and, how mystery fits in with the dawning secularisation.

As we have seen, the seed of secularisation is sown in the Middle Ages. The subsequent period, from 1400-1600, is generally accepted as a period when science and scientific research take significant steps forward in advancing explanations for various

phenomena. Therefore, it is understandable that the eyes of the world adjust to a more earthbound focus and eschew the heaven-centred focus of the preceding centuries. Human beings become the centre of attention, and accordingly everything is measured by how people live in the world. This period is aptly called the Renaissance that generally translates to re-birth, a new approach to old questions.

As indicated by Beardsley, humanist ideals advance during the Renaissance. Humanism can be understood as the propagation of an ideal that promotes the full development of the individual, rejecting religious asceticism and narrow scholasticism.[45] Products of this newly acquired sensory awareness are, that more attention is drawn to the individual, and individual feelings, on matters pertaining to the transcendent, are given less emphasis.[46] Consequently, the authoritarian and church based culture of the Middle Ages bows to a more secular Middle Class society.

The ideals of humanism are enhanced by the study of the Classics. Opening up Classical values contributes to the adoption of Neo-Platonism in the sixteenth century. Intellectuals declare in favour of thought and investigation. Beardsley makes reference to Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). Ficino's translation of Plato, Aristotle, and St. Augustine extends the aesthetic narrative.[47] Visual art acquires a new and unique status. One result is a renewed interest in the portrayal of the human body. **Plate 4**

Whereas, it is not possible to highlight various aesthetic theories as proposed by Renaissance philosophers; nor indeed is it possible to rely on one source of reference to illustrate the evolution of a remarkable aesthetic theory that can be applied to this period in history between 1400 and 1600; it is possible, to extrapolate an important link in the historical chain. The Renaissance produces three outstanding theorists. Their research continues the quest for answers, to assist artists, on how to communicate the mysteries of the universe in a practical and visual manner. **Plate 5** These theorists are, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), Albrect Durer (1471-1528), and Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1590).[48] By careful and empirical enquiry the work produced by these three has profound affects on the development of art and by definition on aesthetics. Their discoveries are adopted and achieve a prominent role during the Renaissance.[49]

Most fifteenth century paintings are religious in content but both church and state recognise the role of art in society and exploit art for their own ends. As already pointed out, traditionally art fulfils a didactic role. The church feels, in presenting the mystery of the Incarnation and the lives of the saints with secular overtones, they can, firstly, maintain their position as instructor of the people, secondly, make it simpler to identify with it and thirdly, paintings are considered to excite feelings of devotion. Several formulae are employed to this end, one being the exploitation of sacred images or stories from scripture and placing the protagonists in a secular scene; this latter concession acknowledges the dawning of a humanist dimension. **Plate 6**

Nevertheless, as Beardsley suggests, because of high demand from the church, the princes and the merchants, the role of the artist changes in the fifteenth century. But, art gradually gains independence both from the world of faith and the world of practical affairs. Artists become more independent, with a new freedom, to interpret the world from their own point of view. Closer observation of the physical world has the affect of making people more aware of the particulars of their surroundings.[50] As more people are educated demands for guidelines to establish reasonable criteria for a good work of art naturally arise.[51] . This is a noteworthy consequence that appears out of a more sophisticated policy of social integration. Art is no longer only considered a craft as it is perceived in the Middle Ages '*Art was a knowledge of the rules for making things*' [52] So, the foundation is laid for the change in status of the artist, from that of the craftsman, to that of the genius. This change of status has its incubation in the Renaissance but flourishes in the period of the Enlightenment. A development, such as this, is a vast improvement upon the position of the artist in the Middle Ages, who frequently receives no public acknowledgement of his work. [53]

It is essential to retain the concept of this transfer from a heavenly centre of focus to an earthly centre of focus. As far as visual art is concerned, this hypothesis is greatly assisted by the advances in the study of perspective. One point perspective or linear perspective is introduced and explained by the noted theorist, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472). As already stated, in the Middle Ages pictures were constructed in such a way that the central focus was aimed directly towards a celestial or deist objective. This was achieved through using a triangular type of composition with the head of the deity or virgin at the apex. However with the introduction of linear perspective the eyes of

the observer are brought to focus on the horizon or *terra firma*. **Plate 7** displays the move from religious to secular concerns. Historical research demonstrates that humanism challenged the meaning attached to existence by the theological leaders of the Middle Ages *'and declared, timidly at first, and then more boldly, in favour of interpreting life in purely mundane or human terms'*[54]

The visual arts become increasingly concerned with portraying human nature rather than nature *per se*[55]. Albrecht Durer and Leonardo da Vinci contribute in no small way to the technical aspect of painting a true representation.[56] **Plate 8**

However, it is important to keep in mind that, hand in hand with humanist objectives, allegory and symbol are still being manipulated to symbolise the divine aspect of creation. E. H. Gombrich points out, Christianity takes its cue from the Platonic standpoint, that the world of the senses is only a pale reflection of the real world of the spirit, and, so, Christianity justifies the use of symbol. [57] . An aspect of symbol that should not be over-looked is the difference between conventional symbols and essential symbols. Convention can be learned whereas the essence of something is intuitive and depends upon the intellect and imagination. Gombrich explains

> '*Where symbols are believed not to be conventional but essential, their interpretation in itself must be left to interpretation and intuition*'[58]

This understanding of symbol is a progression on the Medieval understanding of symbol, that is based solely on convention. So an essential symbol, involves presenting the mind with a puzzle, which requires a rising above and beyond what is represented, so that one may endeavour to arrive at the implied meaning of an exemplary idea.[59] Gombrich explains that it is in the paradoxical nature attached to the understanding of an image that one can typify mystery. Further, he explains, that the image of mystery will encourage the mind in its ascent to the intelligible world – the Ideal world of Platonian thought, in other words the transcendent.[60].

Gradually, symbol and allegory assume a more expansive intention. Their use is not confined to a purely Christian interpretation. In other words, strong attempts are made to demystify, or to put human language on, what is considered up to this point to have

no solution, or, to be explicable only in a divine, other- worldly, or transcendent context. Rather than draw attention to the divisionary aspect of heaven and earth, symbol and allegory are applied to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. With symbol and allegory it is incumbent upon the viewer to work out or ponder what mystery is actually unfolding before his eyes. The image then, takes on the attribute of magic in the Renaissance.[61] As we have seen, according to Eco, the Medievals were already excited by this challenge. Hauser also points out, that the scientific and humanist developments of the Renaissance affect art and its practice by drawing attention to the viewer's power to discriminate.

> '*Taste lies in the conformity between discriminations demanded by a painting and skills of discrimination possessed by the beholder*'[62]

Attention has already been drawn to the development of the magnitude of imagination that slowly begins to materialize in the Middle Ages. With the advance of humanism, and the emergence of such eminent thinkers as, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), John Locke (1632-1704), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), and Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), the powers, and associated powers of the imagination, occupy a high position in the debates of the day.[63] Norman Hanson makes a strong case for superiority of intuitive power, when he comments, '*Even as a source of ideas, the imagination was felt to be quicker and bolder in perception than plodding reason*'[64]

Cartesian enterprise alludes to the four faculties of the mind involved in cognition, these are, understanding, imagination, sense and memory. Descartes '*allows that the imagination may be of some help to the understanding.*[65]' This position calls to mind the Aristotelian rationale of causes, material, efficient, organising and end and subsequently their Christian interpretation, the universe, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The stand, taken by Descartes regarding the imagination, vacillates between the passive image forming capability, and the semi active power of recombination.[66] This is a rather limited view of the power of the imagination. Here is a position reminiscent of the attitude taken by Aquinas. Aquinas believes in the importance of metaphor to bring about a better understanding of Scripture, but he attributes a purely literal meaning to

art. He claims, '*the form introduced into matter by the artist was accidental rather than substantial form*[67]'

However, underlying the philosophy of Plato and Artistotle; despite the advancement of humanist and Cartesian philosophy of '*I think, therefore I am*'; it is important to remember, the firm belief that God is the principle conductor of all creation, remains strong. As Norman Hanson points out, the prevailing disposition is

> '*Above all we will observe as an infallible rule that what God has revealed is incomparably more certain than all the rest*'[68]

But as Beardsley points out, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), attributes a far more active and significant role to the imagination. His empirical study is primarily concerned with the psychological processes that are involved in art. He considers the imagination is not confined to the *'laws of matter'*.[69] Imagination has the power to break up the laws of nature and reassemble them or in fact to unite other features that are not naturally united.[70] Through his interest in the source and function of the imagination, Bacon suggests the possibility, that the imagination could be, 'a *special active power in its own right*'[71]

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), takes Bacon's challenge, and puts forward the theory that, any concept must first be born in part or in completion through '*the organs of sense*'[72]. He suggests that all images arise spontaneously, and have nothing to do with inspiration or divine interference. His philosophy also takes into account the notion of good judgement. He differentiates between sensual reaction to an image and a coherent judgement. Hobbes, ties in the powers of the imagination with the power to arouse passion, but also considers what arouses the mind has superior consequences for the human being.[73]

John Locke (1632-1704), emphasises the freedom of the mind to work on the ideas of sensation and reflection so as '*to produce all the complex ideas that we have*'[74] Locke, advances the theory that ideas are not isolated, ideas depend on one another and, through combination, present a united front. According to Hanson, Locke discredits the Cartesian concept of innate ideas.[75] Locke mainly concerns himself with language. He

attributes hidden dangers, such as deceit and error, to the association of ideas without judgement. He encourages the separation of ideas, one from the other, in order to arrive at a judgement. Locke aligns associative ideas with allegory and metaphor.

However, despite the ongoing struggle of human endeavour, to make sense of the mystery of the world, what must be kept in mind is, that new thought, in the seventeenth century, takes for granted, or assumes, the ingenuity of the world's creator – Providence. As indicated by Hanson, notwithstanding the Fall of Man, a general understanding is that '*the earthy felicity of man was the constant and overriding concern of God*'[76] In other words, there is an awareness of God's search for man. So despite the preoccupation with self, that becomes apparent in the Renaissance, it must always be remembered this self- awareness is juxtaposed with the underlying belief in God's interest in the human being.

To summarize, the Renaissance is a period that develops the secularisation of art. The cornerstone for this has been laid in the Middle Ages. Increasingly, in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, allegory and symbol are used to transmit humanist ideals. This happens through logical and empirical analysis of the evolutionary understanding of the role of the symbol. The understanding, that previously attaches to symbol, as learned convention, must now be understood on the level of intuition. This new comprehension of symbol implies, the Renaissance is a period full of the idea of symbol as the purveyor of mystery. Another implication is the whole notion of adventure and possibility.[77]

The progressive aspect of artistic theory and the growing autonomy of the artist, which occurs in the Renaissance, endow a more prominent role on art. Much of this development can be attributed to the advance of humanism, and to the need for artists to adapt traditional concepts to the emerging independence from Church and state. Art is no longer regarded as a purely didactic tool; art now offers a socially attractive avenue along which it is possible to explore individual preference. A significant aspect of the autonomy of the artist, and the art of the Renaissance, is the advancement of the importance of the imagination. The imagination is engaged not only to put forward the exemplar idea, but also to acknowledge ownership of it. Gombrich points to the

consequences, and the responsibilities, that attach to such a perception of image, when he proposes the following

> *'For if the visual symbol is not a conventional sign but linked through the network of correspondence and sympathies with the supracelestial essence which it embodies, it is only consistent to expect it to partake not only of the 'meaning' and effect' of what is represents but to become interchangeable with it'*[78].

So, while the didactic role of art in Middle Ages requires the artist to be a craftsman, the art of the Renaissance widens its parameters to accommodate the development of Humanist ideals. One manifestation of the foregoing is the increase in the use of metaphorical symbol.[79] It is understandable therefore, how the role of the artist in the Renaissance can assume that of the genius.[80] If this is the case the implication is that the viewer must adopt a more interactive role with the visual image. It becomes incumbent on the viewer, to try and work out the exemplary idea, to which the artist is alluding through the use of metaphorical symbol.

To summarize thus far historically, there is sufficient evidence available, to affirm that aesthetics, and all epistemological enquiry involved therein, verify the quest by humankind to make more sense of the world. What is also evident is that this understanding is significantly assisted through the medium of art.

Cartesian reasoning contributes in a unique manner to the development of rational thought from the seventeenth century onwards, as Beardsley points out. In conjunction with the impact of the theories of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the influence of English thinkers, and German philosophers, is central to the development of aesthetic theory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As already seen, Descartes, and his followers, are interested in the power of deduction through intuition that rests on innate concepts and propositions.[81]

Norman Hanson, in 'The Enlightenment', shows that, a natural consequence of the epistemological and empirical considerations that are being debated in this period, is a

tension that provokes considerable argument between what is rational, what is sensational, and how art can reflect both[82]. The impression one gets from both Beardsley and Hanson, regarding this period of history, is one of a climate of great enthusiasm for adventure, particularly in the subject of knowledge. Hanson draws attention to the collaborative air between artists, philosophers, and theorists. Efforts include, trying to solve such problems as, the analysing of beauty, and the sublime experience. They also include an effort to justify the judgement of them, through their causes and effects.

Hanson notes that the dissemination of ideas is aided and abetted by the increase in the number of literate people, particularly in England. French is widely spoken, and Latin is also understood among the educated upper class. [83]One consequence is an expansion of Art Academies, ensures a greater involvement by a larger number in the making of works of art. This directly guarantees a place for art and the artist. As a result, art and artist become more dominant in this society. It is worth noting here that the scientific explorations of Isaac Newton (1643-1727), and Johan Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), into the theory of colour, expand and make available to artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the possibility for experimentation with visual language not previously undertaken. Both enquire extensively into the theory of light and colour. Newton's work Optics, and Goethe's Theory of Colour, provide the relevant evidence of their contribution. **Plate 9**

Empiricism is recognised as a key feature of eighteenth century philosophical debate. This preoccupation with cause and effect includes the investigation of the role of criticism, particularly with regard to aesthetics. Rules, previously accepted, are challenged. Many philosophers in the eighteenth century are involved in this new examination into the role of aesthetics.[84] Their scholarship carefully elucidates, and extrapolates from the traditions that precede them. They introduce new concepts for consideration, all in the effort to try and clarify the mystery surrounding a true work of art. They are also interested in trying to establish the role of art in relation to, for instance science and religion. In particular, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) add, in a special way, to an interpretation of mystery, and the links between fine art, spirituality and mystery. But, it is important to remember the influence of such British and Scottish philosophers as Thomas Hobbes

(1588-1679), the Earl of Shaftsbury (1671-1713), and John Locke (1632-1704) whose philosophies are the foundation on which later scholars e.g. David Hume (1711-1776) base their work.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), distinguishes ideas from impressions, and seems to adopt an Aristotelian approach to this dilemma, while placing great emphasis on the powers of the imagination. His study involves a break down of the imaginative process under two headings, simple and compound.

David Hume (1711-1776) seems to advance on Locke's thesis that ideas are not isolated. As already pointed out, Locke discredits the notion of innate ideas. One position, adopted by Locke, is that knowledge may only be arrived at through a proper and rational association of ideas. Such a position has further consequences for the role of art. It is only when genuine connections can be established between the ideas can great implications ensue for a work of art. Hume admits the tendency to associate ideas according to their resemblance, but also according to '*causal connection, and the spatial and temporal contiguity of their original impressions*'[85]. Espousal of this view is not too far removed from Aristotelian logic.

Beardsley remarks, divergent theories regarding the imaginative process, may well lead to a distrust of the role of the imagination, which emerges in the late seventeenth century.[86] All of the above, however, implies the importance of how to captivate the audience or spectator, and, by inference, the unique role of art in the development of the human being.

Practically speaking, by the eighteenth century, there is a growing inclination to up-date symbols. Reference has already been made to the fact that traditional symbols relating to metaphysical interests become dimmer, and no longer fulfil their function. In other words they are outdated. When the allegorical reference is lost there is a search for new symbols that have an aura of mystery about them.[87] Gombrich points to Friedrich Creuzer in his Symbolik of 1810 who links together the creative mind, art, religious faith and symbol. He details this connection

'*Whenever the creative mind takes up contact with art or dares to crystallize religious intuition and faith in visible shapes the symbol must become boundless and infinite*'[88]

The thrust behind this description of symbol is to include the immeasurable. The immeasurable associates with the notion of mystery and so the symbol is mystical. The influence of this type of symbol, according to Creuzer, is to attract the beholder with an irresistible force and so touch the soul with the need that belongs to the World Spirit. Creuzer makes a distinction between sign and symbol. Symbol, can be understood as being clouded in mystery, with several possible meanings, sign, is more singular and transparent.[89]

E. H. Gombrich alludes to the Christian adaptation of the Platonic standpoint, which is, that the world of the senses is only a pale reflection of the real world of the spirit and so use of symbol is justified.[90] But by the eighteenth century what some would consider as an irrational concept of symbol, that is an alignment with Christian revelation, is dispelled and replaced by the more logical Aristotelian approach to symbol, the illustrated metaphor.[91] **Plate 10** As the theories of Locke and Hume verify, efforts are made to separate symbol from intuition. But, the Earl of Shaftesbury goes back to the old Platonian theory of *a priori* knowledge. He places the emphasis on the first reaction to a work of art. This is primarily a sensuous reaction, and, according to him only thereafter can associations of a moral or aesthetic nature be made. His thesis of disinterested aesthetic contemplation is reflected and developed by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant strongly opposes the efforts made to separate symbol from intuition as put forward by the logicians.

Kant publishes three major works between the years 1781 and 1790, which directly relate to the investigation undertaken here. He focuses his attention on the problems of assessing and establishing criteria for the judgement of taste. The works are, Critique of Pure Reason (1781), Critique of Practical Reason (1788) and Critique of Pure Judgement (1790). Basically these relate to knowledge, desire and feeling. The first Critique explores the variations in empirical propositions, the second Critique examines

variations in *a priori* propositions, and the third Critique investigates aesthetical and teleological judgements.

One can verify the magnitude of the influence of Kantian philosophy, in the history of aesthetics through recognised texts. It would be extremely rare that any discussion on aesthetics could occur without reference to Kant. Any textbook of note will confirm this. Here, information is derived mainly from Beardsley's Aesthetics and Rasmusson and Kearney's An Anthology of Continental Aesthetics and E. H. Gombrich's Symbolic Images.

According to Beardsley, the rationalist approach of Kantian theory, in the eighteenth century, supports the idea of the relationship between symbol and intuitive thought. Gombrich's thinking reinforces this opinion. He points to the fact that Kant did not agree with the logistician's idea of symbol, that is, the separation of the use of symbol '*from the intuitive act*'.[92] Kant's theory relies heavily on the Platonic tradition, which separates the intuitive from the discursive. He makes the link between the concept of intuition and a judgement of taste. The problem of assessing and establishing criteria for the judgement of taste is examined and scrutinised by him.

As previously mentioned, a strong theme of Kantian theory is the differentiation between aesthetic judgements and logical judgements. Kant holds the opinion that the judgement of taste is concerned with three modes of consciousness, knowledge, desire, and feeling[93]. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant studies knowledge as the capability to include particular sense intuitions under general concepts. Kant considers the understanding to be the faculty of concepts, and the imagination to be the faculty, '*that brings together in a synthesis the manifold of sense*'[94]. Personal judgement arises, when the faculties of imagination and understanding are connected, to bring about cognition. He makes a very clear distinction between, desire and feeling. Basically, what he says is that desire is linked to reason, and intuition is linked to feeling. Here, Kant is making a distinction between a logical judgement and an aesthetic judgement. For Kant, aesthetic judgement does not depend on the cognisance of the object to be judged, but, relies rather, on the imagination and the feeling of pleasure or displeasure precipitated by the object. This judgement is determined by the fact that the object is independent of interest. There is no logical judgement made on the usefulness of the object, or any other advantage/disadvantage that may be attributed to the object. Certainly, Kearney's

interpretation of Kant is, that Fine art can only be judged through cognition and intelligence. Representation and technical ability in visual works are not sufficient to merit the definition Fine Art. Fine Art also must have an impact on cultural advancement in the interest of social communication. Kant concludes, that the requisites for fine art are, imagination, understanding, soul and taste. Soul, according to Kant, in an aesthetical sense, signifies the animating principle in the mind[95].

In no small way does Kant contribute to the notion of the artist as genius, or rather that Fine art is the product of genius, in so much as it must be original and exemplary. '*Genius is the innate mental aptitude through which nature gives the rule to art.*'[96] Kant elaborates still further and implies the mysteriousness quality of art because, according to him, '*it cannot indicate scientifically how it brings about its product*'[97]

What Kant discovers, in the area of aesthetics, seems clear from his essay on The Critique of Judgement. What is necessary, in a work of art, is sufficient association of ideas that will bring the viewer to a state of thought or contemplation. This, in turn, will focus the mind on an ideal that is worth pursuing. Once again, art is confronted with the exemplary idea. This philosophy, and theory of Fine Art, augments what, up to this point in history, has been examined and debated by epistemologists. Their concern is to explore the nature of aesthetic principles.

What is apparent, from Beardley's and Kearney's analyses of Kant, is the utmost attention that Kant gives to aesthetics, logistics and epistemological study. This, points to the fact that Kant is keenly interested in finding answers to many aesthetic questions. It would not be unfair to say, that Kant, sets about unravelling the mystery of what it is that conspires to arouse the human being to such heights that activate the soul. Even considering that Kant uses such terminology, implies that, despite all his dissection and rationalisation of desire, intuition, delight, disinterestedness, purpose without purposedness, subjectivity and objectivity, he still relies on such an ephemeral term as soul, to describe the ultimate aim of the aesthetic experience. This latter fact is convincing enough to align his search with mystery.

Where Kant takes this point of view, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) takes another. Hegel, takes for granted that, art proceeds from the Absolute Idea, which

is a Platonian concept, and, art is responsible for presenting, in the most appropriate sensuous manner, what will convey this Absolute Idea.[98] He takes an intensive look at the evolution of artistic practice and makes the following observations. These observations are outlined in Hegels' Lectures on Aesthetics, as researched by Kearney and Rasmusson in 'An Anthology of Continental Aesthetics'.

Central to Hegel's proposal, as outlined in his 'Lectures on Aesthetics', is the need to accentuate the importance of expanded elucidation, when evaluating artistic production. According to him, artistic production can no longer be limited to a formal activity in accordance with specifications, as was the case with Renaissance art.

George W. F. Hegel contributes, in an extraordinary way, to the notion of the relationship between philosophy, religion and fine art. He divides the objectives of art, and, by analogy, religion, into three spheres. Firstly, we are presented with nature, secondly, '*our consciousness makes God its object'* and thirdly, we need to worship as a community.[99] Hegel's emphasis is on the work of art as a spiritual activity. He strongly advocates his viewpoint when he remarks, that

> '*the universal need for art is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognises his own self*'[100]

Hegel categorises art as follows, he believes the first form of art is the symbolic form, where an object is portrayed in such a way that it conveys the substantial or exemplary Idea e.g. the art of the Middle Ages. **Plate 11** Subsequently these objects are interpreted in this manner.[101] He goes on to develop this line of thought and attaches to this first form of art or symbolic form, attributes of search, fermentation, mysteriousness and a sublime nature.[102]

Hegel considers Classical art the second form of art and opposes it to the symbolic form. **Plate 12** How, Hegel, sees the Classical art form is best expressed in the human body; the Classical stance, and the Neo-Platonism of the Renaissance that commit to the portrayal of the human body. But this form of art has its limitations in presenting the Absolute Idea.

Hegel logically develops his theories about spirituality in art, and concludes that Romantic art, the contemporaneous art practice, is '*the self transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself*'[103] **Plate 13** In a way, this echoes Eckhart's assessment of the image, not alone containing the exemplary idea but becoming the exemplary idea[104].

So, the secularisation of art, that takes place in the Renaissance, would seem to be usurped by the strong emphasis that Hegel attaches to spirituality in art. His approach is logical. Firstly, he examines the commonly held ideas of what constitutes a work of art (a) it is the product of human activity, not a natural product, (b) essentially it is made for human apprehension and issues from the sensuous field for apprehension by the senses, this relates directly to the Renaissance theory of art (c) it has an end and aim in itself. Hegel's third constituent for a work of art brings with it a reminder of Aristotelian logic. Secondly, Hegel scrutinises these common ideas of art and opens up new paths that offer and elaborate a wider basis to the understanding of visual art.[105]

In his examination of (a) art as the product of human activity, not a natural product Hegel distinguishes, the production of ordinary human activity and that of an artist, who, in his opinion, is a specially gifted spirit. The latter, is an idea that develops in the Renaissance. As such, the artist has a responsibility to produce work that reflects his own inner spirituality to the highest possible degree. He explains, human beings as free subjects need to try and make sense of the world around them, through the self-production of art, in order to more fully appreciate the essence of themselves, as human beings. Hegel clarifies this opinion, and explains that an artist satisfies this need,

> '*on the one hand, within by making what is within him explicit to himself, but correspondingly by giving outward reality to this his explicit self, and thus in this duplication of himself by bringing what is in him into sight and knowledge for himself and others*'[106]

He also makes a decisive point regarding the responsibility of the artist to himself and to his audience.

When considering (b) art is made for human apprehension and issues from the sensuous field for apprehension by the senses, the first point made by Hegel is, when considering a work of art, feeling or sensation of itself is a purely subjective, vague, empty, shallow, inadequate emotion. He is critical of previous educational efforts to expand the idea of feeling, from a mere sense of pleasure into a specific sense of beauty, and spells out his own position as to the seriousness of purpose, and the full thrust of reasoning required for the contemplation of a work of art. A full appreciation of a work of art necessarily includes a certain level of contemplation otherwise; it falls short of its main objective. Hegel suggests that a work of art,

> *' should disclose an inner life, feeling, soul, a content and spirit which is just what we call the significance of a work of art'* [107]

What is central to Hegel's proposal, in the Lectures on Aesthetics, is the need to accentuate the importance of expanded elucidation, when evaluating artistic production. According to him, artistic production can no longer be limited to a formal activity, in accordance with given specifications. On the contrary, because of its spiritual content, it must work from within itself, and, bring before the mind's eye, much more than the individual creations actual formulae can provide. Working from this position, allows the artist the opportunity for a considerable enlargement to the rules and regulations that govern the art of the Renaissance. So there is an expansion of humanism. The implications, demanded by this content of spiritual reflection in what can now be considered a work of art, mean that, a work of art can attain a higher position than any natural product, which is not imbued with a spiritual dimension.[108] In other words, what would appear to be implied here is that a work of art can be considered equal to a religious symbol.

A work of art is for both sensuous and spiritual apprehension. As indicated by Hegel this latter standpoint infers a responsibility to the artist. On the one hand, it is necessary to produce work that has an intrinsic content. On the other hand, the viewer must value what the artist is trying to convey, without getting too caught up in formal rules.[109] The involvement implied, between the artist, the work of art and the viewer, is reminiscent of the threefold relationship outlined in the Book of Wisdom *'that which determines,*

that which proportions, and that which distinguishes' that acts as a guide in the Middle Ages.

Another of Hegel's observations worth considering is the recognition of the extension of people's intellectual horizons in assessing works of art. How this intelligence can be complemented through philosophical research, into, not only the particularity of works of art, but also into a discernment as to what is theoretically possible to ascertain, concerning works of art *per se*.[110]Not only does Hegel show his concern for the universality and particularity of art works, he also elaborates upon the role these attributes play in the story of art. Hegel points out, that if art is only considered in the light of its function as explicit instructor, then it falls short of its broader intention.[111]

Still another aspect of artistic theory is highlighted by the German Idealists. Their concerns revolve around the dualism of human nature, and how to reconcile the sensuous, and the reasonable. To this end, they exalt and centralise the position of art. Hegel's argument, that the obligation of art is to bring spirituality and what is universally good to a wider audience, is a logical, cohesive argument. It elaborates upon Kant's position regarding the sensuous and intellectual responses to a work of art. While Kant provokes much debate and consideration of the beautiful, and the judgement thereof, Hegel's theories, stress the sheer magnitude of art's role in the holistic development of the human being, and, consequently, in society as a whole. Hegel refers here to the role of the spiritual in art. Hegel elucidates,

> *' when great passions and the movements of a profound soul are revealed, there is no longer any question of the finer distinctions of taste and its preoccupation with pedantic details'* [112]

Whereas, the position adopted by Hegel opens the door to the wider possibilities in the future of art, at the same time, it challenges traditional standpoints on criteria for judging a work of art. This gives more responsibility to both the viewer, and the artist alike. However, one direct result of Hegel's reasoning, regarding works of art and what they may precipitate, can be gleaned from the following statement. Works of art

'can bring home to our sense our feeling, and our inspiration everything which has a place in the human spirit'[113]

As a logical progression it is essential to consider (c) art has an end and aim in itself. For the moment, it is sufficient to point out that Hegel is adamant that a work of art is more than representation, and asserts the aim of art is to include more than technical expertise. According to Hegel the aims of art

' lie in something still other than the purely mechanical imitation of what is there, which in every case can bring to birth only technical tricks, not works, of art'[114]

Hegel shows his concern with the universality, and particularity of art works, and what role these attributes play in the story of art. If, art is only considered in the light of its function as explicit instructor, in other words the didactic role of art in the Middle Ages, then it falls short of its broader intention. Hegel elaborates, and makes the point, that, only when the content of a work of art is considered as essentially individual, and essentially sensuous, can that work disclose any degree of universality, otherwise it does not warrant being considered a work of art.[115] This would appear to contradict Artistotle's idea of universality. However, it appears that Hegel does adopt Artistotle's belief in the end for which things are made. It is not always clear how access to the heart and will is facilitated by art. Is it through recognisable forms, or is it through symbol. Hegel constantly refers to the transcendent nature of art's function and maintains that

'with the Concept of art there arises the need (a) for a common end for its particular aspects, but (b) also for a higher substantial end'[116].

The position, taken by Hegel, opens the door to the wider possibilities in the future of art. It challenges traditional standpoints on criteria for judging a work of art, giving more responsibility to both the viewer and the artist. A direct result of Hegel's reasoning implies, that works of art can focus the mind on what is important, and so, he emphasises, once more, the significance of art. Hegel believes that art can

'bring home to our sense our feeling, and our inspiration everything which has a place in the human spirit'[117]

Hegel analyses traditional roles that art has adopted. Classical art attains a harmonious unity of content and form not present in Symbolic art. Classical forms of art are specific and therefore restrictive in their wider potential for interpretation on a spiritual level. But Romantic art has a freedom of spirituality, unlike classical art, or symbolic art, therefore Romantic art makes more demands upon the spectator than either of these other forms of art. Hegel explains it this way

'*symbolic art seeks that perfect unity of inner meaning and external shape which classical art finds in the presentation of substantial individuality to sensuous contemplation and which romantic art transcends in its superior spirituality*[118].

Though Hegel makes his position quite clear, in his Lectures on Aesthetics, that the vocation of art is to gauge the spirit of a people, and find the artistic expression corresponding to it, he nominates Romantic art as the pinnacle of art forms, because of its openness to encourage and deepen spiritual awareness. Romantic art, according to Hegel, is best equipped to fulfil this vocation. This pinnacle can only be achieved if the artist is genuinely in tune with himself, his own spirituality and is aware of his contemporary surroundings. Romantic art form, provides an opportunity to touch depths of the imagination, that allows a human being to become enthralled, and so

'*lift the soul high above all the painful entanglement in the restrictions of the real world*[119].

Then the remit of the artist is to ignite this freedom of imagination within himself, and, through the content of his work, transmit it to the world.

'for when great passions of a profound soul revealed, there is no longer any question of the finer distinctions of taste and its preoccupation with pedantic details.[120]

As it is important to remember that Hegel strongly recommends artists have high ideals, and search for originality, he urges what ought to be paramount to the artist is *'the free development of the spirit'*.[121] Also, Hegel stresses, that freedom allows an artist to use all forms of representation, and presentation, as stepping-stones to higher or transcendent objectives. This freedom also opens the door; to the use of whatever material the artist can utilise, to achieve his aim. But, Hegel exhorts the artist to imbue the materials, to be used for artworks, with living and contemporary interest.[122]

While Hegel encourages the use of a variety of materials, he also issues a strong note of warning regarding the content of a work of art. No work of art should exhaust its content through its representation, so that the sense of mystery is lost, because as he sees it

> *'the spirit only occupies itself with objects so long as there is something secret, not revealed in them'*[123]

But, as Gombrich points out, we need language to be able to express what can be found in great art, or, as he puts it, *'understand the growth of those alternative systems of metaphor which make great art more profound that any mystic hieroglyph can ever be'*[124]

Symbol, as an image, offers more than the discursive, because language limits in a way that free association does not. In other words, metaphor can find a way to express a discordant relationship between language and image. Consequently, the art of the eighteenth century becomes more a question of deeper inward concerns, rather than mere outward appearance.

To summarize, the secularisation of art that is sown in the Middle Ages, that takes root in the Renaissance, gains ground in the eighteenth century, but without losing sight of the element of mystery that attaches to art. In fact, it is fair to say that, the eighteenth century, in a particular way, highlights the importance of mystery and spirituality, without an excessive reliance on religion, as a basis for this spirituality. It locates spirituality within the individual, by emphasising the possibility of the presence of spirituality within the imaginative and cognitive powers of the individual. This spirituality can be accessed through the tripartite relationship between the artist, the

work and the viewer. This viewpoint can only emerge as a result of a reassessment of the traditional concepts that have preceded it.

To consider some of the key features of aesthetic history from the ancient Greeks and early Christian period, through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, encompassing the Enlightenment and the Romantic period, clarifies that the search for meaning in the role of art is constant. In other words, each new development, or discovery of technique, or adjustment of content are markers, to aid the resolution of pressing questions. However, with each addition new possibilities are indicated, and thus the continuum is perpetuated. A quotation from Alfred Lord Tennyson sums it up

> *'yet all experience is an arch wherethro'*
> *gleams that untravelle'd world whose margin fades*
> *For ever and for ever when I move'*[125]

It can be seen that notions of Humanism and empiricism dominate the Enlightenment period. The affects, of Kantian theory and German Idealism, on the perception of imagination, really take hold in the Romantic period. The latter are investigated by Richard Kearney in his book 'The Wake of Imagination'. Kearney carefully elucidates the transition from the mimetic paradigm of imagination, predominant up to the mid seventeenth century, to that of a paradigm of production, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[126]

To explain the radical transfer in the perception of imagination, both Richard Kearney and Monroe C. Beardsley, offer some insights into the various intellectual and aesthetical questions that surround the need for clarification, which is sought in the nineteenth century.

According to Beardsley, the dominant intellectual concerns of the nineteenth century focus on the primacy of feelings, and emotion, over logical thought.[127] Subsequently, any attempts by theorists and artists themselves to expand aesthetic theory, involves the application of this new understanding of imagination. Consequently, the traditional value system, that underpins the creative process, is questioned. Beardsley points out

the fact that, Romantic theory is deeply linked with the literary arts. However, it can be understood, that when Kearney refers to the Copernican Revolution *vis.a.vis* the imagination, he is including all creative practice.[128]

Kearney's reference to the Copernican Revolution, *a propos* the imagination, refers to the fact of a transfer of location of the source of imagination. Such a transfer emanates from a static heavenly deist focal point, to a more flexible focus of the human mind as the new creative centre. The reassignment of location is reminiscent of the introduction of one point perspective in the Renaissance, with the same objective. Both innovations can be seen as contributors to the growing autonomy of the human being.

Self-expression is perceived to be the end for art in the Romantic period. Beardsley points to the fact that some artists acknowledge art as playing a part in transcendental enlightenment. While the functional end of art is kept before the mind, account is taken of the Christian adaptation of Aristotle's theory, and Christian impetus behind Romantic art is recognised.[129] A remark by Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), and quoted by Beardsley, illustrates the Christian influence,

> *'Imagination is, the faculty of making sensuous what is intellectual, of making corporeal what is spirit; in a word, of bringing to light, without depriving it of its nature, that which in itself is invisible'*[130]

So, efforts continue to try and unite the '*concepts of revelation and of creation*' into a comprehensive whole. In other words, efforts are still being made to try and solve the riddle of existence.[131]

Proposals to separate traditional insight into the role of the imagination, as a mimetic function, into the role of production are first tabled by the German Idealists. The particular understanding of imagination as a living organism is introduced by German Idealism, and supported by the opinions of Johan Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). Beardsley notes that Goethe's opinion in this context is that works of art have organic unity, because they grow out of man as part of nature. According to Goethe, works of art express man's unity with nature, '*A perfect work of art is a work of the human soul, and in this sense, also a work of*

nature'[132] He applauds the role of the artist, and the work of art as a spiritual creation. This, latter point of view, coincides with the Hegelian idea of spirituality in art already examined.

The hypothesis, that a work of art is a living organism, contradicts the concept of a work of art as an inanimate rational object. This opinion, art as a living organism, can be aligned with Kant's theory of the 'transcendental imagination' as outlined by Kearney[133]. Kant gives voice to the belief that human beings have within themselves the power to produce. He maintains the imagination is the seat of this power. Kearney continues to systematically explain how Kant arrives at this conclusion.[134] Kant ascribes to the imagination, the active responsibility of synthesising the two branches of knowledge, sensibility and understanding. It follows, that the new concept of imagination is an active, internal, productive agent, that Kant describes as an *'art concealed in the depths of the human soul'*. It is hardly surprising then, that certain ramifications ensue for artists, theorists and works of art.[135] .

Kearney alludes to the fact that Kant originally defined the 'transcendental imagination' as, *'a root unknown to us'*[136]. The implication from this statement would seem to be, that the powers of the imagination come from an unknown source. Traditionally, this unknown source is understood as divine. But, Kant carefully breaks down the mimetic and productive elements of imagination. He looks at sensibility as the human experience of things, and, understanding provides the formal categories to make sense of this perception. As already made clear, the active faculty for uniting these two, sensibility and understanding, is the imagination. But Kant is also saying that this synthesising function is *a priori*. The synthesising factor, which operates between sensibility and understanding, is productive through each individual imagination. In other words, human beings can summon imaginative powers from within themselves[137].

Beardsley cites Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), as the person responsible for introducing the theory of imagination as organic form, to Britain. According to Kearney, Coleridge also expresses his interest in separating the functions of imagination into primary and secondary functions, mimetic and productive. Kearney believes that, Coleridge aligns the primary function of representation with Kant's idealist position of 'transcendental imagination', and matches the secondary function of production with

Kant's judgement of taste.[138] Coleridge also refers to the secondary productive function of imagination as a '*synthetic and magical power.*'[139] The reason for this, he maintains, is that this secondary power can balance and reconcile opposites, and can inject a sense of novelty into old and familiar objects.

The challenge for Romantic Art is to adjust itself to these new theories relating to the imagination and feeling. Beardsley points out, that Romantic art is intuitive, and is trying to establish an important cognitive status for the creative process. The general aim is an art that can still be considered in a didactic role, but not in the neo classical sense; an art that should be the bearer of general truths, Aristotelian universals, and teachable abstractions.[140] As already intimated, theories surface to support the suggestion that scholarship continues to be concerned with exploring the mystery of how the creative process works.

The main thrust, of the dynamic change for the creative arts, can be seen in several instances. As already stated, the role of the artist, the critic and the work of art are comparatively different to the previously held definitions governing all three. Some attempt to illustrate these changes follows.

Beardsley makes a very important point when he draws attention to the change in status of emotional theory that occurs in the Romantic period. In the Aristotelian understanding of catharsis, the emotional theory is directed at the audience. In the Romantic understanding of catharsis, the cathartic effect is aimed at the artist himself.[141] This can be seen as one indication as to why the artist, or creator behind the work of art, becomes the centre of attention.

What is also evident from Beardsley's research is, that the artist is regarded as both a genius, and a sacred instrument in the Romantic period. If the artist is being referred to as '*God's tripod'* by Victor Hugo (1802-1885), or *'God's anointed'* by Goethe, it follows that the role of the artist is elevated to new heights at this time.[142]Attention is also drawn in Beardsley's 'Aesthetics', to the ivory tower syndrome into which artists are categorised in the nineteenth century. As he explains a widely held perception of the artist as genius isolates him from society.

'The artist's paradox is that of the mystical saint; both need their lone wilderness retreat; if they are to bring back to society the fruits of their meditation'[143]

In order that the artist can devote himself fully to his highest obligation, art itself, the demand for freedom from external pressures is recognised. However, due recognition to the need for isolation and freedom is acknowledged, in much the same way as it is understood that a scientist may need to be shut away in order to produce '*something of the highest value that cannot be achieved in the rush of ordinary affairs*'[144] Consequently the artist bears responsibility only to his creative genius and to nothing else. The artist makes an assertion for the right to freedom of self- expression, the gifted individual who must express himself or perish. What emerges therefore is the idea that the work of such inspired artists takes on the role of magic. As Beardsley points out, the creative needs of artists requires special consideration in view of the mysterious nature of his vocation

'the transcendent importance of his calling; and something of Mallarme's view that the artist practices a mystery which cannot be revealed to the masses who are not initiated into its rites' [145]

Many of the questions that arise in the nineteenth century are central to the function and relevance of art. These questions are posited by artists themselves, and also are of great interest to the critics. As Beardsley points out, a central motive behind a work of art, in the Romantic period, is to arouse the emotions. The role of the critic expands as a result. The critic must consider the work of art, but he must also consider the spiritual intention and sincerity of the artist.[146] Questions that arise, relate to the positive or negative aspects of art and, how art can contribute favourably to society on the whole.

Demands upon the critics, to have a clear knowledge of their subject matter, are stronger than ever before, in the nineteenth century. It comes as no surprise then, that some of the leading critics of the time, e.g. William Hazlitt (1778-1830) publishes 'On Reason and Imagination' in 1826, and John Ruskin (1819-1900), another noted critic, publishes two volumes of 'Modern Painters', in 1846 and 1853. Both these writers are deeply committed to the productive paradigm of art and imagination. As Beardsley points out,

Coleridge believes, '*The critic's job is to look for deeper unities*'[147]Interest of this nature is a reminder of the theorists, Alberti, da Vinci, and Durer, in the Renaissance period, where the Humanist impetus first emerges.

It is not surprising therefore that a prevailing belief of '*Art for Art's sake*' gains prominence in the late nineteenth century. Beardsley makes the point that, '*Art for art's sake*', has its own code of professional ethics, its own laws, which must be obeyed. These are demanded by each individual work of art itself '*to be developed and perfected*'[148]'*Art for Art's sake'* can be related to Kantian philosophy. For Kant, art is anything but utilitarian, '*for its purposiveness is without purpose'*. Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) sustains Kant's position. Schiller expands on Kantian philosophy and ensures its continued relevance[149].

Beardsley also supplies considerable evidence of the support given to the concept of '*art for art's sake'* by noteworthy writers and critics of the nineteenth century. For instance, Beardsley refers to the fact that Victor Hugo, French Novelist, is a great champion of '*art for art's sake',* and artistic freedom. Theophile Gautier (1811-1872), noted writer and critic, also supports '*art for art's sake'* and '*defends the right of art to be itself, and of the artist to go his own way.'* [150]The artist is the only one who can make the experience of art intrinsically worthy, according to Gautier. When Gautier attests to his belief in the autonomy of art,'*I believe in the autonomy of art; for me art is not a means but an end.'* Once again this comment raises the question of the Aristotelian rationale of causes. [151]

Another notable writer, who supports the '*art for art's sake*' view, is Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). He vows that art has its own morality. The implication here is considerable. It would seem to suggest that art is not dependent on any outside agency to inject or encourage a moral outlook. But, it is the theories of Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) in particular that draw considerable comment from Beardsley. Tolstoy is someone who examines in detail the social responsibility of art. He also attaches moral responsibility to art, because it is a production. He questions the functions that art may serve. For him, art is a means of intercourse between man and man, so art is a medium for communicating feelings. His thoughts on art are very well expressed in the following quotation, and cited by Beardsley,

'Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them'[152]

Tolstoy also introduces the question of what is counterfeit or bad art. This concept of counterfeit art will be examined in greater detail in the Post-modern period of art history. Basically, he says that good art is conveyed through the sincerity of the artist, and the feelings he expresses. If in any way the artist pretends, imitates, uses tactics to shock or excite, and fails to invoke any depth of feeling, then the art work is lacking and counterfeit. The following statement by Tolstoy has a threefold implication

'Good art is indispensable; it is a means of the movement of humanity forward towards perfection. The task of art is enormous' [153]

He, not only places a responsibility upon the artist to produce good art, he, also implies an obligation of accountability to the critic's role, and, ultimately challenges the viewer, to have a responsible attitude to art. Where the didactic role of the art of the Middle Ages is concerned with moral rectitude, based on fear of a judgemental God, the art of the Romantic period, assigns the judgement to the viewer himself, to act as a guide to moral rectitude.

So the question arises as to how, or by what means, the artist uses his materials to convey his feelings to the viewer. Once again, symbol and metaphor are put to widespread use. As Beardsely comments, the use of symbols is prevalent, to try and capture this wonderful inner glow of meaning that attaches to art of this period[154]. This is a reminder of the art of the Middle Ages, but what must now be accepted is, that already in the nineteenth century, Goethe makes an important distinction between the notion of allegory and symbol as follows. Allegory brings the universal and the particular together externally. Symbol's function, is to bring the object and the subject together, in order to suggest the ideal meaning to the mind of the individual[155]. William Schlegel (1767-1845), another critic, then makes the link between the spiritual and the material object through symbol.

The widespread adoption of the use of symbol and metaphor in poetry influences the visual arts. For instance it becomes quite common for Romantic artists to include verse with their visual art works. **Plate 14,** a painting by JMWTurner was accompanied by verse when exhibited. The symbol carves out a substantial niche for itself in the Romantic period and earns its autonomous position. According to Baudelaire, whose opinion, that everything is related, and that similarities exist between all things, suggests a system of universal analogy.[156] The artist, in a particular way, is gifted in locating these analogies. A very effective way to communicate analogy is through symbol. Symbolism, as an art movement, is a means to communicate a transcendental idea by the use of symbols of material objects. Such artists that adopt Symbolism as their form of communication include Odilon Redon (1840-1916), Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) and Edvard Munch (1863-1944). **Plate 15** by Edvard Munch is a good example of how the symbolic is used.

Hand in hand with artists and writers trying to establish universal analogies, is the growing mechanisation and materialism of the nineteenth century. This situation, of course, has deep consequences for aesthetic theory, and the creative process. So, while on the one hand, art is produced by such Romantic artists as Eugene Delacroix, James Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) John Constable (1776-1837), and Casper David Friedrich (1774-1840). **Plate 16** On the other, a school of thought gradually emerges that adopts a Realist, rather than a Romantic, approach to art; realists, including, Honore Daumier (1808-1879), Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), Jean Francois Millet (1814-1875) Thomas Eakins (1844-1916). **Plate 17**

Such divergent reactions, to an analysis of the world, are recorded in the critical theory of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), and referred to by Beardsley. Firstly, Schopenhauer looks at the world as phenomenon, and what this implies. The phenomenal world includes material objects, orderly relations of space, time, and causality. This world is subject to a principle of sufficient reason. Ordinary practical consciousness necessarily understands the things of the phenomenal world to stand in spatial and temporal relations, to be connected by causal laws. In order to understand and explain events in this phenomenal world, common sense inquiry, as well as empirical science, is ruled by this *a priori* condition of space, time, and cause.[157]

But behind this phenomenal world is the noumenal world. Shopenhauer compares the noumenal world to '*an irrational and limitless urge, the Will to Live.*' He professes a belief in a noumenal world that is free of the principle of sufficient reason, space, time and causality. This is reminiscent of Kant and his theory of purpose without purposedness. It is a striving to understand the mystery of life. So, really what he is saying is, that there are two forces fighting for survival, firstly the rational, secondly the emotional, not necessarily in that order. He attaches the emotional to intuition, and the spiritual aspects of human nature. He also believes there is no satisfying this longing. However, what he does say is, that art alone can transport the viewer out of this misery of longing. Art alone makes life tolerable. This is a new way of looking at art. It is not didactic. It is not aimed at a greater reality. Art is firmly linked to the emotional well being of the individual. It is an instrument, whereby the viewer can lose himself in contemplation, and become one with the object of his perception. Schopenhauer has no doubt as to the importance of art, or indeed the artist

> *'But what kind of knowledge is concerned with that which is outside and independent of all relations, that which alone is really essential to the world, the true content of its phenonema, etc.? We answer Art, the work of genius'*[158]

This theory of the phenomenal world is understandable, given the preoccupation with the usefulness of things, and their material value, that is linked with the Industrial Revolution, that occurs in the nineteenth century. However, it is most interesting that, Shopenhauer is deeply committed to the contemplative aspect of art, and feels, that art alone is the haven to which human beings can turn, in a time that is so heavily committed to practicality. Again the question of Kant's theory of disinterestedness is raised.

> *Art has no practical use, its value lies in the experience afforded by its contemplative reception, the gratification itself of becoming a pure will less subject of knowledge, freed from the burden and curse of self assertion' and 'Works of art exist to present Ideas'* [159]

For Schopenhauer, as pointed out by Terry Eagleton, the aesthetic transfigures the attitude to reality. In Shopenhauer's attitude to contemplation a Kantian air of disinterestedness can be detected. Eagleton summarises

> '*the asthetic is what ruptures for a blessed moment the terrible say of teleology, the tangled chain of functions and effects into which all things are locked, plucking an object for an instant out of the clammy grip of will and savouring it as pure spectacle*'[160]

Immediately, what is apparent here is the correlation between critical theory and art practice. It is not difficult to imagine that one understanding that may be deduced from the foregoing theory that Realism, as an art practice, belongs to the phenomenal world, and Romanticism, belongs to the noumenal world.

When Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), develops Shopenhauer's theory of the noumenal world, his interest is in the nature of the creative idea, the nature of the impulse to make art. Again it is Beardsley who follows Nietzsche's line of enquiry. He makes the point, that artistic creativity is the result of the overflowing of a super abundance of life force. Similar to Schopenhauer, he attributes a redemptive quality to art. Artists create work, and celebrate this life force in the work, in order that it may reflect this self same life force back to the creator. This theory again supports the idea of the central preoccupation of Romantic art with the individual artist. However the benefits are also there for the viewer. Similar to Schopenhauer, Nietsche attributes a redemptive quality to art, as can be deduced from the following quotation cited by Beardsley, '*Art is essentially the affirmation, the blessing, and the deification of existence*'.[161]

As Kearney points out, the combination of Romantic imagination and German Idealism is unable to blot out the reality of the world. The imagination then has to retreat into the world of illusion.[162]. However this state of affairs can only sustain itself for a certain period. Eventually the need to adjust to what is happening in the world is reflected in the Existentialist theories that are already apparent in the hypotheses of Schopenhauer and Nietsche.

To summarise the Romantic period, a number of important developments occur. The establishment of a new paradigm of imagination, i.e. an imagination as production, results in a closer association between theorists, artists and critics. Regarding the artist, as someone who isolates himself from the world, in order to create, carries two implications. One, that the artist may be removed from the political and practical realities of life, and two, that the artist can concentrate solely on the social conditions of the world. The focus on the life of the artist gives art a more central role. Art as a vehicle through which self -expression can be explored; an art that can excite important moral issues receives the support of theorists and critics alike. Due to the rise and acceptance of scientific research, and the perception of art as a living organism, analogies are drawn between the research of the scientist, and the research and development of the artist. Yet what is still running through the advanced theories is the underlying acknowledgement of a spiritual dimension to life.

The turmoil and tension, between rationality and spontaneity, is expressed through the different art movements that develop in the nineteenth century. It could be argued that the rationalist view is supported by the Realist movement; the spontaneous idealistic view by the Romantic movement; the Symbolist movement might be seen as an effort to bridge the gap between the two, or as an effort to synthesise the Apollonian and Dionysian characteristics that are to be found in every human being.

Already, in the late nineteenth century, it is apparent no definitive answer to the mystery of how knowledge is best acquired or responsibly transmitted is clear-cut. However, what is unambiguous is the importance that can be attributed to art. Despite proclamations of the death of art, or indeed, the death of philosophy, the following periods in art history are equally puzzled by what it is to be a human being. One question that remains relevant however, is how art and the practice of art can serve as a beacon, and offer some light, through the maze of possible avenues presented for exploration by the prevailing political and social structures. While the emphasis to this point has been concerned with the period up to the end of the nineteenth century the following chapter will concern itself with the convolutions and contortions of ideas familiar to those for whom the twentieth century is not too distant. The Modern period of art history is one that launches the twentieth century into a milieu of controversy

where efforts continue to try to resolve the integral relationship between cultural, sociological and political issues.

Chapter II: Modern Dynamics:

The impact of political and social conditions on the world of aesthetics is considerable throughout the twentieth century. What is generally understood by the term Modernism, a term associated with art and aesthetics extends over a period of approximately one hundred years, dating from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, circa 1960. Modern can often be confused as a term applying to current conditions. Here Modern applies to Modernist ideals, philosophies, and art movements of the aforementioned historical period.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific proofs become the new canon of genuine scholastic achievement as a consequence of the high status that attaches to scientific research. Scientific proof is also applied to the canon of art. One product of this development is the increased importance that attaches to aesthetics and art criticism. Hauser sees this advancement, and its consequences, reflected in art, as it continues to move from its traditional role

> *'into an expensive plaything of the cultured bourgeoisie and philosophical rebus of the academic and critical intelligentsia'*[163]

As, in all other great changes in art practice, there is no defining moment when what we call the Modernist movement in art is born. The voice of the critic reaches new heights and responsibility. The voice of the critic adds, to the deliberations of different philosophers and theorists, actively engaged in trying to resolve the role art plays in society. A claim, made by Clement Greenberg, art critic and seminal figure as regards the publicity surrounding art in the twentieth century, is that the greatest difference between criticism in the Enlightenment period, and, in the Modern period, is that the former has an external nature, whereas the latter is self engendered.[164] In other words, the didactic approach adopted by Kant, the idea of self-criticism as expressed in the Critique of Pure Judgement, adapts itself to a Modernist theory of art. The intensity, with which this self- criticism of art is approached, draws more and more attention to the importance of art in the development of society. This confirms the dynamics of the

aesthetic question; Kantian theory of the eighteenth century being resurrected, refined and readmitted into the aesthetics of Modern art.

Under this new didactic approach each discipline to be considered, under the term art, instigates its own self- criticism, independently of any other art discipline. Because of this preoccupation with itself, it is more noticeable that the language of art is distinctive. A term, now commonly used in the language of aesthetics, is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the term used for describing the translation of the language of art into a language of experience. Basically, the task of hermeneutics is to translate from one language into another, by way of intelligible structure, what the former is really trying to convey.[165]However, no meaning can be elicited without a willingness to understand, or an anticipation of what may be meant. An understanding such as this echoes Hegelian theory. As Hans Georg Gadamer puts it, a work of art, in a particular way, presents a challenge and expresses an excess of meaning, rather like a discovery of something not previously revealed.[166]

Several adjectives may be applied to describe the technological and philosophical debates that pertain to the Modern period in history. These may include authentic, futuristic, constructionist, formalist, psychoanalytic, revolutionary, populist, elitist, existentialist, and Marxist.

Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), opens up aesthetic discussion of the twentieth century, according to Beardsley. Croce's position is outlined in a paper entitled 'Fundamental Theses of an Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic', published in 1902, in which he carefully examines the objective and subjective nature of knowledge[167]. He believes that when it comes to criticism, it is important to separate the theoretical from the practical, and argues, that clear thought cannot be expressed in an obscure manner. Basically, he believes that art is an expression that draws all the complexities of intuitions together, to form a single feeling or emotion. He isolates the aesthetic emotion from any other physical activity, and points to its unique quality[168]. He also points out, that the failure of a work of art lies in the fact, that the intuitions have not been completely expressed or ratified by the artist.[169] A natural consequence of this position might infer that the responsibility for a work of art lies solely within the

mind of the artist. Therefore, the question of the construct of the imagination is again raised.

Consequently, the focus of study here is directed to a critical analysis of four major influences that contribute to the complexity of Modern aesthetics. The features of Modernism that come under scrutiny are Existentialism, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Formalism. In a particular way, the foregoing relate to the understanding of the imagination. As we have seen, the imagination has substantial links with mystery, and visual art. The Modern era in aesthetics is chronologically so close to the present time that Modern philosophies and aesthetical questions appear familiar. One explanation may be, that the theories of Modernism are very relevant to the Post Modernist aesthetic debates of today. No doubt an historical relationship is vital to all preceding theories, because it is often, with the benefit of hindsight, that solutions to current problems may be found.

Some of the main protagonists in this evolution of ideas and styles can be attributed to thinkers such as Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) Friedrich Nietsche (1844-1900) Edmund Husserl(1859-1938), Albert Camus (1913-1960) Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980). These are mainly concerned with Existentialist theories.

The theories of Karl Marx dominate the scholarship undertaken by the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School, set up in 1923, consists of a group of intellectuals supported by Frankfurt University. Prominent members of this school include, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Max Horkheimer (1896-1973) Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979). Jurgen Habermas(1929-)

Moving to the next significant influence of the Modern period it should become evident how the explorations into the sub- conscious by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), affect the direction of the social and artistic thrusts of this period. A study of Freud precipitates an examination of the work of Carl Gustav Jung. (1875-1961).

The responses of art critics, Clive Bell, and Roger Fry, will present a substantial resume of how the varying psychological, social, technological and political

undercurrents influence the visual art of this period. Clive Bell et al, challenge aesthetic claims regarding works of art with great emphasis.[170] More and more the role of the critic appears to eclipse the more philosophic attitude of the aesthetician.
It remains to be seen, what will emerge, if with the advances in technological, psychological and epistemological scholarship, a more concise understanding of mystery is presented. If human beings continue to struggle in order to strike a balance between the immanent and the transcendent?

What should be clear, from the foregoing look at the history of aesthetics, is a sense of exploration; a search, to locate some clarity, regarding a particular aspect of what is in vogue, in the cultural climate of a specific era. Central to this is a sense of adventure and thirst for knowledge, which might eventually lead to an extraordinary insight. Such extraordinary insight implies tremendous ramifications for the history of art. Essential to this is, the idea of a journey along a road, with various signposts, that on some occasions leads to *cul de sacs,* and on others, leads to extraordinary vistas of incredible potential. Another aspect, which may be deduced from the above research, is the recognition of a certain unrest and dissatisfaction. The latter is indicated by the fact that philosophers, from each era, are apt to disagree as to what direction to take, when their journey appears to point them down a one-way street. What comes to mind, immediately, is the notion that *'Art is dead',* which is the mantra of some theorists in the early twentieth century. This results in the anarchic thrust of art forms such as Dadaism and Surrealism. It is reasonable to assume that some, like Baudrillard and Said, believe that contemporary art has also reached a dead end. However, it is to be hoped that such a negative outlook may not be the only option open to art and aesthetics.

As already pointed out the Romantic period encourages the autonomy of the individual. Romantic ideals promote a humanism that supports the belief that the human condition can conquer all eventualities despite prevailing social conditions. This is especially evident in well known art works of the period. **Plate 18**

According to Kearney, Romantic culture conceals the condition of social existence, at the same time as it affirms the condition of aesthetic existence. Kantian and Heglian philosophy, adopted by the Romantics, is instrumental in the rise of bourgeois culture.

Hegelian philosophy, believes in the superiority of the mental and spiritual realm of value, above the practicalities of social conditions. Kearney puts forward a summary of the German Idealist stand on transcendental doctrine, as follows

> '*With the discovery of the transcendental imagination each individual dispenses with all worldly and heavenly mediations and becomes the immediate source of value*'[171]

It is not surprising, therefore, that bourgeois culture, concerns itself with the individual. Freedom, happiness and beauty are the goals of this society. This utopian dream is far removed from the society that exists at the end of the nineteenth century. As Kearney puts it, *'The pure humanity of art became the counter-image of what obtained in reality'* [172]

It is inevitable that a belief in universality of opportunity and value is challenged by the philosophers of the time. It is also reflected in the emergence of Realism as an art form expressed through the work of visual artists such as Honore Daumier (1808-1879). **Plate 19**

Soren Kierkegaard (1815-1859), the Danish philosopher, is the first notable proponent of existentialist theory. This theory, as expressed by Kierkegaard and researched by Kearney, exposes the limits of man's creative powers. Existentialism therefore is a philosophy of human finitude. Kearney draws attention to the emergence of an existentialist outlook, which implies a movement from a basically affirmative culture, to a negative culture. [173]

Kierkegaard considers the role of aesthetics is only one ingredient in the process of human development. The other components that form a triadic in this process are religion and ethics. Romantic idealism supposes that the ethical and the religious can be subsumed under the aesthetic stage, but for Kierkegaard, the three coexist in the individual. What Kierkegaard holds, is that the human being must consider all three to make a free choice if, '*he is to attain an authentic existence?*'[174] His argument is, that if human beings confine themselves solely to the aesthetic, then authenticity cannot be attained.

But, Kierkegaard takes his case further when, he points out, that the two stages, the ethical and the religious, impose limits on the creative imagination. The ethical presents responsibilities, to the individual other, and to the social other. '*The religious stage transcends and dialectically recapitulates'* the two other stages, it transforms the irresponsible aesthetic attitude '*in favour of a 'leap of faith' towards the absolute'* [175]

Kierkegaard freely admits that there is something absurd in taking the aforementioned position, as it cannot be backed by any traditional onto-theology. He is concerned with religion as an existential choice. To back up his argument, he tries to make an analogous connection between a religious act of faith, and an aesthetic act of imagination. He points to what is common to both. Neither can be based on rational discourse as in '*the objective norms of universal law';* instead *'both are expressions of individual will, and both are existential projects without rational guarantee'* But then, he also points out the essential difference between imagination, and faith, because faith in *'its 'subjective inwardness' posits, however absurdly, a relation to the transcendent Other beyond human subjectivity'* [176] while imagination, is '*the inward face of will and desire before whose gaze all the contradictions and sufferings of reality seem to disappear*' [177]

It is understandable; therefore, that Kierkegaard disagrees with the efforts of Romantic idealism to elevate the human being to a Godlike status and to reduce God to the level of the human being. He warns against the glorification of the imagination, and the power invested in it by the Romantics.

> '*The Promethean hope of Romantic idealism inevitably collapses into existentialist anguish; the terrifying discovery that the human imagination is, at bottom, a gaping void'* [178]

As Kearney points out, Kierkegaard has serious misgivings with the modern human being's inclination towards confounding human imagination, with what he calls '*divine invention'*. The consequences of such confusion, '*betrays at once the existential finitude of mankind and the eternal infinity of God'* [179]

Kearney does point out, that Kierkegaard does concede, that the imagination can play a positive role. In his later work, Kierkegaard refines his earlier singular criticism of the Romantic idealism of the imagination i.e. a transcendent imagination. The '*passion for the possible*' as Kierkegaard describes the imagination, may serve, '*on occasion, as in initiating force in the dialectical opening towards faith.*' [180]

Imagination is the key to adventurous possibility for Friedrich Nietsche (1844-1900). One attitude he adopts, is to celebrate the eschewing of a transcendental deity, a condition he maintains that allows the imagination free rein. For him, this means there is no stricture on the possibilities of imaginative power. He avers that traditionally, by subscribing to the notion that God is the prime mover, man is denied the power to decide for himself.

As Nietsche sees it, existentialist theory exposes holes in the arguments of German Idealism and Romanticism, particularly in relation to truth. Nietsche points to the failure the Enlightement project as, '*The so called thirst for knowledge, may be traced to the lust of appropriation and conquest*'.[181] Traditionally, truth is regarded as being fixed in God. For Nietsche, truth is a fictional notion, orchestrated by man, in the quest for power. Consequently Nietsche regards German Idealism and Romanticism as the obfuscation of the absurdities of reality.[182]

Kearney also points out, how Nietsche strongly upholds the notion that good and evil are man made inventions, basically for manipulative purposes. Even though Kierkegaard discloses the void at the heart of human existence, he allows a glimmer of light through which one may take a leap of faith. Nietsche, does not allow for this possibility. He maintains, the nothingness of existence has to be confronted. By reversing Kierkegaard's model of three stages of existence, he lifts the aesthetic stage above and beyond the religious, and the ethical stages. For him, therefore, the aesthetic stage is the highest expression of existence. For a moment this assumption might suggest a strong alignment with Romantic idealism; the basic difference being, however, that the latter form their theories from a belief in the transcendent, while Nietsche, bases his hypothesis in a belief in the abyss of nothingness.

Despite Nietsche's negation of the authenticity of the creative imagination, because, in his view, it depends on illusion to be taken as truths, he does admit, the creative imagination is authentic, for the very reason that it acknowledges its basis in illusion. His attitude is, that for the inventiveness of the imagination to be put to proper use, '*one has to abandon all established notions of truth*'. Thus '*the self contained infinity of God'* can be '*replaced by the open infinity of human interpretation'* [183]

Nietsche's assertions go on to claim that truth can only be formed on a fictional basis, so truth has to be created. His understanding of truth is '*no more nor less than an army of metaphors'*.[184] Existence is made up of a series of cover -ups '*which the human imagination invents for itself in order to experience an endless multiplicity of meanings'* [185] He denounces metaphysics as fiction. If the latter is the case, he argues, and then truth is an illusion and has to be created. To adopt Nietsche's position then the concept of truth may only be formed on a fictional basis.

But when it comes to art, Nietsche makes a distinction, on one side there is fictional truth posing as reality, and on the other is art, '*that is masquerading as truth but which knows itself to be fiction"*[186]. He attributes a positive influence to art because its' '*self acknowledged lies ……enhance the creative playfulness of existence'*.[187] For him, art has a more powerful influence than knowledge, because '*art desires life whereas knowledge achieves as its ultimate goal only destruction*', because it denies reality. But if art can be considered as '*great ennobler of life'* it may only do so in so far as '*it is prepared to let nothingness be'*.[188] Nietsche argues, Christianity is nihilistic, because it negates the possibility of nothingness in art. Whereas he has admiration for those in the artistic world who exercise their imagination and so '*dare to express the multifaceted complexity of existence*' [189]

The contradictions in Nietsche are, on the one hand he believes in the creative imagination as a limitless source, *'Art and nothing but art', said Nietsche, we have art in order not to die of the truth'.* [190] On the other, he believes in the limits of our concrete existence, and talks about the abyss of nothingness. Neither Kierkegaard, nor Nietsche, despite their in-depth epistemological enquiry into the imagination, solves the enigma of the creative imagination. They do, however, draw attention to some of the complexities of the puzzle.

Together with, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus (1913-1960) carries the torch of Existentialism into the nineteenth century. Continuing with Nietsche's theory of the meaninglessness of existence, Kearney refers to the fact that Camus, recognises the necessity to face up to this perceived reality, namely, the futility of existence.[191] Camus, understands that a recognition of the world as it is, provides a platform from which to move forward, and become ' *the great artist, the creator'*.[192] As Kearney points out, Camus, makes a sincere effort to confront the '*contemporary crisis of nihilism'*, and asserts, that the only way to do this, is to reaffirm '*the creative power of human imagination'*, while, at the same time, admitting the absurdity of this creation.[193] Camus' analysis of the absurdity of nature is, the unbridgeable gap between the imagination's desire to transform the world, and the refusal of the world to be transformed. In other words, an impossible situation exists, on the one hand, man's search for meaning and, on the other, the meaninglessness of the universe. Kearney refers to Camus' interpretation of Nietsche's idea of existentialist imagination, that draws an analogy between war and the absurd,

> *'So it is with the absurd: it is a question of breathing with it, of recognising its lessons and recovering their flesh. In this regard the absurd joy par excellence is creation.*[194]

It is interesting to note how Camus' use of metaphor gives a positive slant to the existentialist imagination. As Kearney specifies, Camus' theory, the greatest difference between the existentialist imagination and the romantic imagination is a question of admission. The existentialist imagination owns up to its fictitious nature, whereas the romantic imagination does not.[195] This admission allows for the possibility of moving forward so the existentialist creative imagination is content to produce myths.

Camus, uses the myth of Sisyphus as an example of the absurd.[196] His argument is that even within this absurdity it is possible to outlive the absurd. Sisyphus is cognisant of the fact that he is not really achieving anything by his repetitive acts. But, by showing contempt for the futility of his acts, he can adapt to his seemingly useless acts. What is important is the struggle towards the heights, and not the futility of the journey. In other words, acceptance of the inevitable allows a possibility for achievement in the act

of doing. This position has a much more positive outcome for the individual than the one taken by Nietsche.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), as the founder of the phenomenological movement in modern philosophy, marks a new approach to logic. In his book entitled 'The Idea of Phenomenology' published in 1907, he defends phenomenology as, that which is before the mind when a human being has a thought.[197] The main interest of the phenomenologist is the content of consciousness and the consciousness of things rather than natural sciences' preoccupation with the things of this world. Basically, the phenomenologist is seeking a primordial or ultimate understanding of things. For the purpose of this essay the concern is with the phenomenon of consciousness.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), famous for his modern interpretation of traditional metaphysics, adapts Husserl's theory of phenomenology towards a greater understanding of Kant. He is fascinated with Kantian philosophy. In his controversial work 'Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics' (1929), Heidegger, points to the fact that, in his opinion, Kant already knows about the finitude of human subjectivity.

Heidegger believes that Kantian theory revolutionises thought regarding the imagination, in so far as Kantian theory initiates the case for the formative property of imagination e.g. its productive role. The main purpose that Kant attributes to the role of the imagination is that of a productive power '*presupposed by sensation and understanding rather than a derived intermediary function which comes after them*'[198] Heidegger develops Kant's recognition of the imagination's power to intuit images, and produce them itself, without depending on '*representations of empirical perceptions*'. He makes the connection between this *a priori* condition and '*the origin of our intuition of time*'[199]According to Heidegger, if imagination is an original power of production, then, without it, sensation and understanding can have no meaning. So, Heidegger credits Kant as the first person who questions the timelessness of 'Being'.

In 'Being and Time', published in 1927, and referred to by Kearney, Heidegger takes Kant's interpretation of the transcendental imagination and gives it an existential reinterpretation. In his efforts to advance Kant's understanding of the imagination, [imagination produced through sensibility and understanding, i.e. transcendental

imagination], he limits the concept of imagination to temporality, '*as a finite being towards death which projects itself out of nothing towards nothing*'.[200] Therefore, according to his interpretation, the metaphysical concepts of 'Being', really emerge from the limiting in time of the projections of imagination. It is reasonable to assume, that in this interpretation of the temporality of the imagination, the traditional concept of the timelessness of 'Being' is refuted.

It is most interesting to note, as indicated by Kearney, how Heidegger moves modern philosophy away from the transcendental concept of imagination by renaming the imagination Dasein, which in German means existence.

> '*beyond the anthropological basis of modern idealism to a philosophy which reveals that human being, qua Dasein, is in fact grounded on the non-ground of nothingness, a non-ground which gapes into Being*'.[201]

It is also fascinating to remark that, where Nietsche talks about the abyss of nothingness, Heidegger talks about the abyss of 'Being'. Nietsche's abyss of nothingness implies hopelessness, whereas Heidegger's abyss of 'Being' offers a positive possibility.

As already demonstrated, through analyses of other philosophies, Husserl and Heidegger's theory of phenomenology, adds to the story of the mystery of human existence; developments that connect so strongly to the concept of imagination upon which visual art is so dependent.

According to Kearney, Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Camus, share a '*common fidelity to the struggle of imagination in a meaningless world*'. [202] Where Heidegger wants to move away from the anthropological understanding of imagination, Jean Paul Sartre is keen to cherish and restore the anthropological nature of the imagination. For him, the great function of consciousness is to create a world of unreality.

Starting from a phenomenological base, Sartre expands on the studies of Husserl and Heidegger. In his phenomenological attempts to describe the essential characteristics of imaginative activity, Sartre points to four distinct features.

In the first place, the imagination is a productive activity, a position far from the traditional Platonian idea that images are deposited in the memory. According to Kearney, Sartre agrees with the existential idea that the essential life of consciousness is an intentional activity. The imagination is a phenomenon of human significance independent of empiricism. [203] Images are intentional projections of consciousness, and it is only through this understanding of image that the essential characteristics of imaginative activity can be understood.

Sartre points to a distinction between image and percept. While both are different ways of being conscious of objects, they are not different objects of consciousness. He refines these further into categories of the real and the unreal, passive and spontaneous.

It is important to note his comments on symbol. His explanation, that the image is a deliberate act of consciousness, so therefore it cannot later acquire symbolic meaning. In other words the symbolic meaning is inherent in the image and therefore cannot be detached from the image. '*The image is defined by Sartre, accordingly as a sui generis act of consciousness independent of both the percept and the concept*'[204]

Secondly, the percept he defines as the real presentation of the object, and the image as the unreal presentation of the object. '*The quasi reality of the image is different to and fundamentally distinct from the literal reality of the percept.*' [205] This understanding of image will prove interesting for a postmodernist philosophy of the counterfeit. What may be implied from Sartre's enquiry is, that there is something absent in the image. According to him, it is the hint of an absent world which pulls the present one into shape, and endows it with meaning, so '*imagination far from appearing as an actual characteristic of consciousness turns our to be an essential and transcendental condition of consciousness*'[206]

Thirdly, Sartrean theory, as presented by Kearney, argues that imagination is an active genesis which spontaneously creates its meaning out of itself. '*Imagination is a spontaneity of free subjectivity left entirely to its own devices*'[207]. Perception is a passive genesis, which receives its object and subsequently works it out. According to him the image is always spontaneous '*immediately present to and identical with itself*'. [208] This

theory of passive and active responses to the image is hugely relevant to the understanding of visual art.

Fourthly, Sartre's argument for the freedom of the imagination incorporates a belief of an image as, ' *a nothingness'* '*To project an imaginary world is ipso facto to negate the real world'*.[209] This, latter statement, is an imaginative projection. More light on this subject will emerge when psychoanalysis is examined. Again Sartre appears to be raising questions regarding the '*purpose without purposedness'* of Kant.

Kearney continues, having established an imaginary world is different from the world of existence, Sartre makes a case that the imaginary world of art is a double negation of the world of existence. Because art is a state of pure nothingness, and cannot be reduced to the world of perceptible things, and because, according to Sartre, beauty cannot be '*experienced as a perception and which by its very nature is out of this world.*[210] He believes that art is final in itself, and that it is impossible to be present to the real and the unreal at the same time, when confronted with art.

In his efforts to explain the dualism between the real and the imaginary, Sartre takes the phenomenological approach, between being- in- itself, e.g. the material facticity, and being- for- itself e.g. the inner freedom from material facticity. As Kearney explains, Sartre believes, the ultimate goal of consciousness is to combine the inner freedom of existence with the outer necessity of being – a synthesis of pure freedom and pure necessity. Sartre admits that God is what represents this ideal synthesis

> '*But while Sartre admits that such an ideal project of divine existence is what every human subject desires, he declares such a project is impossible'* [211]

This is part of the puzzle that Sartre cannot solve. His theory would suggest the divide is too big between nothingness and being.

> '*The ultimate human project to be God is a mere fiction that can never be realized. It possesses all the 'unreality' of an imaginary object. It is a nothingness projected by an imaginative consciousness'*[212]

Based on the above argument, Sartre's conclusion is that God is nothingness, and a product of imagination, but his theory does not offer a solution as to how to bridge this

gap. It appears that he does, at all times, imply the object of consciousness is the search for what is absent.

But as Kearney notes, in Sartre's book 'Being and Nothingness' published in 1956, he assigns the being- for- itself of consciousness, as value. Value, is defined by Sartre, as the possibility of a meaningful and unified existence: an always absent possibility imagined in order to try to make some sense of experience, what is not yet determining what is. For Sartre, however, this value is an imaginary something that is desired by human existence, but, at the same time, according to Sartre's own interpretation of imagination, value cannot be defined as a phenomenon. The question arises that; perhaps Sartre is substituting the idea of God with value. If however, Sartre holds that art is complete in itself then his idea of art does not allow for the possibility of absence.

Sartre is full of contradiction. It appears that on one hand he is upholding the arbitrariness of consciousness,

> *'Human consciousness is always to be equated with freedom to the extent that it is always moving beyond the real towards the imaginary'* [213].

While on the other, he is acknowledging the possibility, or indeed the necessity, of a goal. At the same time that Sartre recognizes that if human beings acknowledge the omnipresent activity of imagination, then human beings are acknowledging their freedom from the given reality. There can be no doubt, however, as to the importance that Sartre attaches to the role of the imagination.

> *'Deprived of imagination the human subject is 'crushed in the world, run through by the real'; he is reduced to the condition of a mere thing in the midst of things'* [214]

In Kearney's interpretation, Sartre takes the position, that if imagination is the *'transcendent condition of all consciousness'* then, a human being's existence comes before his essence; and, each subject makes their own choice as to what they become, with their own particular meaning or value. Part of this theory accepts '*a project of imagination which negates what is in order to open up possibilities of what is not yet*'. Because this freedom of choice exists it is necessary to obliterate the possibility of God. Sartre disagrees with Kierkegaard, and the possibility of a leap of faith towards a deity,

Sartre believes in the '*leap towards existence.*' In his later work Sartre admits a faith in existence will produce the authentic human being, ethical, moral and responsible. '*Sartre now affirms that the human act of self-creation is in itself an act of moral commitment'.* [215] As Kearney notes, Sartre goes on to compare, the moral choice or self-creation with a work of art, his reason being that both comprise creation and invention.

Kearney also points out, that Sartre recognises a problem if self-creation has moral implications. His reasoning is, if all human beings have the same self -determining morality, morality must collapse into an absolute relation of conflicting values. This poses the question of how it may be possible to have a universal morality. As Kant has already worked out, that a universal morality can only be applied if each individual acts '*in a way that is universalizable for others*', this leaves Sartre with a dilemma. [216] He is forced to make a choice between the primacy of imagination, and the primacy of reason. Sartre opts to move from '*an existentialism of subjective imagination to a Marxism of dialectical reason'*[217] In other words to move from the more individual consciousness of imagination, into the more collective, discursive possibilities of the dialectic.

To summarise this period in art history and critical theory what should be taken into account are the most relevant developments as regards the visual arts. Basically, in the late nineteenth century, and up to the middle of the twentieth century, social realities of technological development, and the impact of two World Wars, completely overturn Romantic Idealism. Romantic Idealism is anxious to ignore the facticity of human existence. To redress this situation an existentialist theory evolves. The existentialist negation of the imagination brings the finiteness of human existence into conflict with Romantic illusion.

The intellectuals, most responsible for exploring the existentialist theory, include Soren Kierkegaard, Albert Camus, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre. What appears to emerge has both positive and negative implications for the concept of mystery that is being explored.

On one hand, Kierkegaard concedes the finitude of human existence, but has reservations about too much reliance on the imagination. He does, however, concede that imagination may have a positive contribution, in so far as it can institute a possible

leap of faith towards the Absolute. In other words, he brings a Christian dimension to existentialism. Camus, through his interpretation of the Sisyphus myth, also implies a possible solution to the awfulness of reality. While Nietsche, considers the imagination to be the centre for every possible adventure, he dismisses truth, God, and Romantic Idealism as being manipulative forces to gain power. The redeeming aspect of his theory is his view on art. It is here, Nietsche believes, that it is possible to find truth, because art does not hide behind a façade of illusion. Art is the only means to present the '*multifaceted complexity of existence*'[218]

The phenomenologists, Husserl and Heidegger, try to establish a primordial understanding of things. Heidegger, because of his close association with Kantian theory, is most interested in the timelessness of 'Being'. The implication of Heidegger's theory, may be linked with that of Kierkegaard and Camus, all three acknowledge the possibility of hope in the Absolute.

Sartre contradicts or opposes Kierkegaard's leap of faith, he puts his trust in existence. As much as Heidegger wants to move from the anthropological understanding of imagination, Sartre wishes to cherish it. Even though Sartre believes that art can be compared to self- determination, he sees art as finality in itself. Sartre's theory on art appears to contradict Nietsche, as Nietsche believes in the possibility of truth in art. However, it is evident from Sartre's late work that he is aware of the contradictory nature of existentialist humanism, and the creative imagination. Sartre maintains that the existentialist imagination has to die if humanist man is to live on. What he means by this is that the indulgence of the autonomy of the individual implies the negation of the social responsibilities that surround the inclusive humanist objective.

So, despite the great advances and enormous scholarship undertaken by existentialist scholars, it is incumbent on The Frankfurt School, in the twentieth century, to pursue the mystery that relates to human existence.

What is obvious by now is the level of debate, conjecture, and argument, which surround aesthetics, and the consequent impact on the human condition. The Modern era is no exception. Herbert Marcuse, maintains that the purely ideological conception of art, which is the basis of Marxist aesthetics, is questioned with increasing intensity in

the Modernist era. According to him, subjectivity breaks out of its inwardness and becomes a political value, to counteract aggressive and exploitative socialization. [219] Yet Theodor Adorno, critical theorist, adopts a position that proposes that only through the dynamics of its own laws can art be understood?[220] There is something familiar about this viewpoint; it has already arisen in the philosophy of Hegel.

Considerable effort, to address fundamental social issues that arise out of the changing value systems of the early twentieth century, is made by the Institute of Social Research, otherwise known as The Frankfurt School. As one writer puts it, '*one of the primary tasks of Critical Theory in the twentieth century is to challenge the hegemony of scientific technology*[221]. This school is set up in 1923 by a group of intellectuals, with support from Frankfurt University. An apt description might be the birthplace and nurturing home of modern Critical Theory. The Frankfurt School, includes such theorists as Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Georg Lukacs (1885-1971), Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), and Jurgen Habermas (1929-,. All of these are influenced by Marxist theory, but, several studies in different aspects of critical theory such as deconstruction, the reinterpretation of myth and symbol, plus studies in both anthropology and psychology, also form part of the history of modern aesthetics.[222]

It is generally held, that the Marxist dialectical method, is the most influential on the history of aesthetics in the twentieth century, even though Marx did not specifically deal with an aesthetic theory *per se*.[223] Central to Marxist aesthetic theory is the question of the relevance of an historical connection, as Terry Eagleton remarks in The Ideology of the Aesthetic , '*the point of evoking the past is to summon the dead to the aid of the present*'[224]

At this point, a brief explanation of the terms that dominate cultural and aesthetic debate in the twentieth century is called for. These include dialectical materialism, reification, instrumentalism, and deconstruction. A dialectical method of reasoning is a process of proposing a thesis, which brings about an opposition or antithesis, and holding on to and reconciling the contradictive elements arrive at a resolution. Marxist dialectical materialism is based on Hegel's method of reasoning. Reification basically means the reduction of all phenomena to their material value, objective value; human beings are

also considered under the heading of object. Instrumentalism is an evaluation of the scientific theory of truth; two views emerge from this evaluation, one that rejects truth in favour of usefulness, and one that identifies truth with usefulness. Deconstruction concerns textual analysis. It questions the validity of a single definite interpretation of a text[225].

Critical theorists, of the Frankfurt School, concern themselves with exposing the oppressive and exploitative mechanisms of modern society. A task of this aim is, to alert human beings to the manipulative impulses of the society in which they live. Part of the criticism is directed at the perceived value of materialism, over and above the well being of the individual and society. It is here, that the first empirical and sociological research into mass media, bureaucracy and technocracy is undertaken. Results point to the manipulation of individuals through the mass media, and the fact that mass media are lowering the standards of all kinds of aesthetic and intellectual culture. Research also shows, that public figures, bureaucracies, and commercial organisations, manipulate and distort public awareness of social and political matters. One direct consequence is that cultural and personal values are neglected[226]. The Institute of Social Research considers the Enlightenment project responsible for this latter state of affairs. A major criticism is, that the Enlightenment project takes for granted that all rationality is instrumental, which means that reason cannot establish any ends, but can only indicate means to ends[227].

By exploring, analysing and explaining the phenomenon of instrumentalism, the Frankfurt School hopes to improve society, and free people to make informed choices. Instrumentalism, as already stated, may be understood as a theory that supports two ways of approaching phenomena, in the first instance to reject truth in favour of usefulness and secondly, to identity truth with usefulness.[228] Those who support the Frankfurt perspective object to a purely scientific understanding of things. They reject this position on the grounds that it is too clinical. They are critical of those positivists who consider knowledge to be free of interest and value free. As has already been pointed out, the theory of disinterestedness is associated with Kantian philosophy. A critical theorist argues that if a social science that supports a technology of satisfying people's preferences is allowed to develop; and a technology aimed at shaping these preferences follows, the result will be the inability to legitimise any basic values.[229] It is

understandable; therefore, that Marxist perspective goes a long way to challenge the ideologies of the Enlightenment. Rather than uphold the ultimate Humanist tradition of individualism, which can lead to the exclusion of a more inclusive socialism, Marxist doctrine, emerges as a deep desire to bring about a utopian society of universality, where everyone has equal opportunity and equal status. As Terry Eagleton remarks

> '*The utility of objects is the ground, not the antithesis, of our appreciation of them, just as our delight in social intercourse is inseparable from its necessity*'[230]

Marxism, as a political doctrine, grows out of the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). It is a reaction to the dominance of bourgeois values in the society of the early twentieth century. Bourgeois society is understood to be in the ascendancy at this time, and includes owners of factories and those who source raw materials; in other words those who can command a position of power and influence due to their economic proficiency. The proletariat, are those who own nothing, and have no means to achieve any type of economic independence. Marxism, as an ideology, looks for support in the growing working class or proletariat movement, in order to achieve a utopian socialist system of equality. Marxism may also be interpreted as an ideology that incites revolution by the proletariat to achieve more equitable status. Eagleton points out, how Marxist doctrine suggests that the proletariat might achieve social equity

> *'in a condition in which the powerful run insanely rampant, only the powerless can provide an image of that humanity which must in its turn come to power, and in doing so transfigure the very meaning of that term'.*[231]

In other words, according to Marx, the social forces that will finally put an end to alienation are, themselves, the product of alienation in its most extreme and most extensive form, therefore revolution depends on the proletariat.[232]

While at Berlin University, Marx becomes part of the Young Hegelian movement. Hegelian philosophy promotes two distinct sets of followers, those on the right, who

believe history has reached a rational climax in the Prussian state, and those on the left, who are interested in atheism and revolution. Marx falls into the latter category.[233]

Many of Marx's writings do not become widely available until long after his death e.g. Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, written in 1844, but not published until 1932. Marx argues that productive activity should be seen as an essential component of man's being. In bourgeois society, however, private property represents the products of labour as if they were things. One corollary of this position is the alienation of labour from itself. In reducing all phenomena to the status of thing, labour included, it follows actual human endeavour, which comprises labour, is discounted and relegated. Capitalism, therefore, produces a society that expands the proletariat, with nothing to sell but their labour. If labour comes under the heading of reification, it follows that the proletariat is also considered under the heading of commodity. Consequently, in order to assert some semblance of the value of humanity, the proletariat is interested in the abolition of private property. Marxist ideology proposes a solution to the proletariat, to alter the capitalist domination of society. The solution proposed is communism, the abolition of private property in general, and wage labour in particular.

Of those theorists, of the Frankfurt School, who engage with Marxist doctrine, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), and Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), are considered among the most significant. Evidence of this is apparent in their publications, but also their exchange of letters highlights in a particular way the diversity and debate that surrounds Modern aesthetics. Aesthetics and Politics with an afterword by Fredric Jameson, An Anthology of Continental Aesthetics edited by Richard Kearney and David Rasmusson, Adorno by Martin Jay, Aesthetics by Monroe Beardsley and The Ideology of the Aesthetic by Terry Eagleton, are most helpful to this study.

Benjamin and Adorno try to analyse the changing value systems in the twentieth century, how they may affect the individual, how these changes might be interpreted and the role of aesthetics in affecting change. It would appear that, Benjamin accepts the inevitability of mass culture, and tries to salvage what he can from the ruins of tradition, by promoting a new dialectics of seeing. His proposed understanding, of the role of tradition, appears to offer the faint possibility of an optimistic future for the individual, while simultaneously acknowledging the advance of a collective response to

phenomena. However, despite his introduction to an alternative method of assessing tradition, he cannot offer a blueprint that will give a definite solution to the problems that face the Modern aesthetician. He sees communism as the redemptive tool to redress the Fascist position of politicising aesthetics. While Benjamin does offer great insight into Modern aesthetics, the mystery that surrounds the perceptive mechanisms of human beings remains open to continued scholarship.

Martin Jay makes it clear that Adorno, recognises the complications that arise in trying to understand Modern culture. His introduction to Adorno outlines the foundations that form Adorno's critical outlook. Ideally, culture can be associated with the expansion of the human mind, but from the nineteenth century onwards, culture assumes a less than ideal status. Culture plays a divisive role, instead of fostering harmony and development; culture becomes the surrogate for religion. One reaction is that the populist view of culture is tinged with suspicion. In other words culture is more closely associated with the division of classes. Art becomes a commodity, and signifies cultural values and status in the twentieth century. Adorno, recognises the shift in understanding, from an anthropological basis to an elitist position, and, adopts metaphorical language to illustrate and examine cultural and social phenomena.

The letters, exchanged by Adorno and Benjamin, and published in Aesthetics and Politics, offer good insight into the nature of dialectical debate, as they express the nature of subjective and objective criticism. Adorno, believes that the aim of immanent criticism, with regard to intellectual and artistic phenomena, is to grasp the contradictions of Modern society '*through the analysis of their form and meaning the contradiction between their objective idea and their pretension*[234]. Adorno, also suggests, a less hermeneutic interpretation of Marxist dialectical materialism than that proposed by Benjamin. He sees the dangers of invoking a collective consciousness as, he believes that such a move distracts from individual opinion. He encourages Benjamin to rely more heavily on theory[235]

Some of the main concerns of Benjamin and Adorno can now be looked at in more detail. How Benjamin, uses the model of Marxist dialectic tradition to forward his ideas, is demonstrated in his approach to questions of mass culture, history and art.[236] Marxist philosophy, as embraced by Benjamin in his theses '*On the Concept of History*' (1940),

offers a view of historicism that differs from philosophical tradition. The latter upholds the idea of history as a linear progression. Taking this tradition to its natural conclusion, would seem to indicate that the human race will modify and adjust the apparent discrepancies of past times, leading to a utopian future of self fulfilment. But, Marxist theory and Benjamin refute this linear progression. It is Benjamin's contention, that an examination of the unfulfilled hopes of past generations may provide the present generation with resolutions to pressing social concerns. Terry Eagleton, refers to Benjamin's 'Messianic' reading of history.[237] It would appear that he is supporting the notion that each generation, in its chronological present, is capable of asking new questions and proposing new solutions to the unresolved problems of preceding generations. This theory displays an optimistic appraisal of the individual capability of human beings to plough new furrows in a force field of current construction. The dialectical image is suggested as a means to facilitate a new understanding of social history, to quote Benjamin '*image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation*[238].

What Benjamin proposes, in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', brings aesthetic debate onto a new level of enquiry? He examines how revolutionary, technological advancement in reproducibility, influences and effects visual art. [239] At the beginning of his essay Benjamin compares the manual reproduction of past, with the mechanical reproductive capabilities of the Modern era. His argument, which the unique existence of time and place previously associated with a work of art, is dissipated through the process of reproduction. An express consequence shows the authenticity of the work of art is interfered with. He points out '*the presence of the original is a prerequisite to the concept of authenticity*'.[240] This loss of authenticity means the object, namely the work of art, can no longer have the authority once attached to it.

By making a work of art available, to be viewed by an individual in a contemporary environment, Benjamin points to the fact that reproduction allows the work of art to be displaced from its unique original time and place. The latter condition reduces the distance between the viewer and the work. This shattering of tradition explodes the mythical quality of a work of art. Consequently '*that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art*'.[241] So in other words the cult

or distance value of the work of art is dismantled. However, rather than lament this fact, Benjamin embraces what he considers the explosion of myth, and views it in a positive light. He believes that when art can be removed from its original birthplace, and brought into direct contact with the individual, the object portrayed is reactivated. He accepts the idea of mass culture and considers that '*mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual'*.[242]

Benjamin's essay offers critical analysis of the effects of mass production on cultural history. He suggests a synthesis between a loss of 'aura' that traditionally attaches to the work of art on the one hand, and the power of technological reproduction on the other. This synthesis may produce a positive outcome. In other words, the bourgeois perception that a work of art should be isolated, and maintained at a distance, is dissipated through the intervention of mechanical production, and so, may become more universally accessible. Adorno, makes the point, that the alacrity of Benjamin's uncritical acceptance of technology, is connected to his over valuation of the archaic as such.[243]

'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' is referred to in Adorno's letter dated eighteenth March 1936. His concern is with Benjamin's correlation of magical aura and the autonomous work of art. He remarks, that originally Benjamin differentiated works of art from magical documentation, and is disturbed to find that Benjamin now seems to casually relate magical aura to '*an autonomous work of art,'* and at the same time '*assign to the latter a counter-revolutionary function'*. Adorno eloquently defends the central role of art as dialectic

> '*it seems to me that the centre of the autonomous work of art does not itself belong on the side of myth ... but is inherently dialectical; within itself it juxtaposes the magical and the mark of freedom'*[244]

Aesthetic Theory by Adorno addresses the dilemmas that confront art, the artist and the viewer in the modern era[245]. At the outset, Adorno gives an overview of these problems. He questions the function of art, if art can justify its existence, and whether art has in inner essence, and, if it does, what does this inner essence consist of.

For Adorno, autonomy is an irrevocable aspect of art, but, he argues in Aesthetic Theory, in Modern times autonomous art is blind. He suggests, as a reasonable probability, the release of art from the redemptive notions of religion i.e. the secularisation of art, could provide an opportunity for art to flourish. But, according to Adorno, this does not happen; no real alternative is put in place of religion. In his interpretation of Modern culture, neither the rejection of redemption nor it's opposite, total secularisation, sums up or '*captures the meaning of art*'. For Adorno, to arrive at an accurate understanding of a work of art a third dimension should be added. In his opinion, Modern art, however, does not succeed in adding this third dimension because, it has no clear idea where to go. '*It is through its dynamic laws, not through some invariable principle, that art can be understood.*'[246]

The latter statement seems to be directly aimed as a criticism of Hegel, and Enlightenment aesthetic theory, when art is spiritualised. Adorno observes that those who do not understand the latter may have a reactionary response, and opt for a consumer art that they may enjoy. The effects he sees as twofold. Firstly, this puts the Modern artist in the position that necessitates finding other ways to spiritualise art. According to Adorno this explains why so many modern artists feel the need to look back to archaic art. It also perhaps indicates his consideration of the Marxist understanding of the role of history. Secondly, bourgeois society reduces art to an objective status; to be measured on a scale of the pleasurable sensation it can proffer the viewer. Adorno, has no interest in such a reduced perception of art.

In his analysis on the enjoyment of art, Adorno raises a number of interesting ideas. What he identifies, initially, is the equation of the fetishising the enjoyment of art with crudity and insensitivity, in other words the raising of art to a level of irrational reverence. From this, it is quite easy to appreciate Adorno's strong contempt for bourgeois values. But then, he examines this viewpoint in detail and admits the limitations of such a critique. He questions, whether art may have any purpose if it is devoid of an enjoyment principle. He comments, that people enjoy art less the more they know about it and vice versa. He compares the modern enjoyment of art with the traditional role of art. He allows that originally works of art fall into the realm of magic and ritual, and do not have an aesthetic autonomy. Traditionally, their purpose is not pure enjoyment; traditionally they are valued for their sacredness. Even though Adorno

is a staunch supporter of Modern art in so much he does not believe in a return to '*classical or realistic alternatives*'[247] he distances himself from regressive fantasies of organic wholeness in the past, and rejects the idea of positing any new ones for the present.

Reality or truth, or the lack of either, is a vexed question for many in Modern society. Art, in the Modern era, is hiding reality and is caught up in self- awareness, according to Adorno, and, when art becomes self- aware, the illusion, that art is pure spirituality, ends. The function of art is to unlock the unique and individual. Questions regarding reality that are unresolved in the empirical world are reflected in art, or as Adorno puts it, take '*the guise of immanent problems of artistic form*'.[248] Such an opinion would sustain Croce's point that resolution of meaning must be reached by the artist, prior to the execution of the work of art. What Benjamin proposes, is that the individual should look beyond the obvious, and search for constellations of meaning, which the discerning eye will eventually yield up. According to Croce, meaning can be found in a work of art.

In order to clarify the conundrums of modernist aesthetics, both Benjamin and Adorno, anticipate deconstruction theories. Theories more usually associated with postmodernist critical theory, particularly with those of Jacques Derrida (1930-). Adorno considers that all the '*heterogeneous fragments*' be presented for an inclusive interpretation or evaluation.[249] Metaphorical language is a means to employ to try to unearth reality and truth. In using the '*constellation*' metaphor to describe social phenomena, it is clear that Adorno, believes that social phenomena cannot be carefully structured into one core principle. According to Jay, the metaphor of the constellation encompasses the juxtaposition of, and the subtle relationships between, the subjective and objective, particular and universal, historical and natural dimensions. Adorno, does not believe in a hierarchical system that elevates one element over another. The 'force field' metaphor is used to describe the '*relational interplay of attractions and aversions that constituted the dynamic, transmutational structure of a complex phenomenon*'.[250]

Naturally, questions of reality and truth lead to questions of value. Benjamin points out, how the ritual value of art is replaced by the exhibition or material value. One conclusion that may be drawn is, that the aesthetic value is relegated to secondary

importance, while the material value of a work of art is awarded primary status. A change of values indicates how a work of art, in the Modern era, can be considered under the term commodity. Even though Adorno recognises that the fetish character of the commodity is dialectical, he also points out the limits of viewing art simply for its commodity status. In his letter to Benjamin he states

> '*The fetish character of the commodity is not a fact of consciousness; rather, it is dialectical, in the eminent sense that it produces consciousness*'.[251]

Adorno makes the point that, if life is only looked at through the mediation of commodities, then it is reasonable to assume that the viewer may get lost in art, so that he can hide from '*the penury of life*'... He recommends that, '*in order to grasp the importance of art one has to zero in on the artistic object rather than on the fun of the art lover*'[252]

The lowering of value of art, in Adorno's opinion, is attributable to the failure by art to reflect current historical circumstances. His opinion is that '*the affirmative essence of art, has become insufferable.*'[253] But, Adorno implies a redemptive role for aesthetics, however, because aesthetic identity can help to promote the idea of truth and 'assist *the non identical in its struggle against repressive identification compulsion that rules the outside world*'.[254]

By the same token, Adorno, warns against the narrow-mindedness of viewing art in purely aesthetic terms. He raises the point that, he thinks what is taking place in the Modern era is, that aesthetics is becoming the obituary notice for art. He queries how a work of art can be regarded as a windowless monad.[255] What he proposes is a synthesis between unreality, and non- existence, and the existent in art, the transcendental, and the physical. What seems to be implied is the promotion of a holistic interpretation of the role of the work of art.

> '*The elements of art as well as their constellation, or what is commonly thought to be the spiritual essence of art, point back to the real other*'[256]

Adorno, criticises the hermeneutic aspect of aesthetic enjoyment, because it compromises the social essence of art, and the critical tendencies inherent in it. In other words, this concept is too restrictive, because it only appeals to one aspect of the human condition. He blames this attitude on the bourgeois mentality where, art is only measured on a level '*of a use value modelled on sensuous pleasure*'. . Pleasure in isolation is infantile, according to Adorno. This is doing a disservice to both sensuous pleasure and to art. Art does not seek to produce pleasure as an immediate effect. He makes the point that, the person, who cannot differentiate between a beautiful sound and a dissonant one, is lacking in artistic experience, but '*in true art the pleasure component is not given free rein, depending on the time it is more or less narrowly circumscribed*'. So, it is dependent on the empirical and the historical reality. '*an autonomous entity and a social fact*.[257]

Adorno makes a strong case for those who have genuine interest in art, those who have no aspiration to reduce art to the status of an object, or commodity. He has no interest in a reduced perception of art. Adorno emphasises that art is not merely about pleasure. In his opinion, the deprivation of real gratification to human beings by providing '*sensously dressed up art*', results in a reified consciousness. A reified consciousness can use a strategy of pretending to bring works of art closer to people, but, in fact, the effect is to reduce art to the level of the commodity

> '*for the fetishistic notion of art as a good that can be owned and, through reflection, destroyed, corresponds neatly with the idea of a piece of property in the psychic household*'[258]

An indication of the loss of confidence in individual judgement, and the increase in the comfort of collective evaluations, can be deduced from Benjamin's comparison between the reaction of an audience to a Chaplin movie, and the reaction to a Picasso painting. In the case of the film, where visual and emotional enjoyment is fused together, and engineered in such a manner that the viewer can pronounce with expertise on the value, there is an affirmative response. The other, i.e. the Picasso painting, presents an enigma not easily grasped, and not easily evaluated. What is not easily understood can pose a threat, what is not clear therefore is viewed with suspicion. A consequent result is an adverse reaction to progressive or avant-garde art, which is in direct opposition to

Marxist hopes and so the proletariat is deprived of its revolution. When, through the medium of film, the public takes on the role of critic, cult value is relegated to the background. As Benjamin sees it

> *' The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent minded one'*[259]

This problem of the absent minded examiner is referred to by Eagleton, in his essay entitled 'The Marxist Rabbi'. He maintains that, an important aspect of Modern aesthetics is the '*re-entry of myth into European culture*'[260] Eagleton puts forward a logical argument to support the resurgence of myth. For him, myth is resurrected, to try to give some level of understanding, to every phenomenon that is submitted to a method of deconstruction and reification. The point he makes, supports the idea that the individual has lost the power to discriminate, and relies on myth to provide some answers. He explains

> *'Perhaps, then, it is myth which can provide the missing mediations between the over formalized on the one hand and the myopically particular on the other*[261]

If the value of a work of art is understood as a commodity then the way is clear for the politicising of aesthetics, according to Benjamin. To explain what he means by the politicising of aesthetics, Benjamin uses the example of the Futurist manifesto that maintains that '*War is beautiful*'. So the Fascist cry '*fiat ars – pereat mundus*' [create art – destroy the world] implies that war may be the only means to satisfy a sense perception that has been altered by technology. In other words the beauty of war is the exemplary idea. The message being put forward is that war is justified[262]. By using this reference Benjamin draws attention to how the politicising of aesthetics may serve the propaganda machine of the capitalist society and lull the masses into a false notion of cultural expertise. He proposes support for communist ideals as a way to combat this phenomenon. **Plate 20**

To summarise the Marxist dimension of the Modern period, it would appear that aesthetic theory, as analysed by both Benjamin and Adorno, epitomises the concept of a Marxist dialectic. A dialectical system makes a proposition, is challenged by an antithesis and suggests a synthesis. By engaging in a search, for a solution to bridge the gap between idealism and materialism, Marxist dialectics plays its part in the ongoing puzzle that is life. As Kearney remarks,

> '*Marxist synthesis of critical reflection with productive praxis – a dialectical synthesis which aims to resolve the traditional opposition between idealism and materialism*' [263]

Both, Benjamin and Adorno, express deep concern for the modern perception of art, its affects and its function. Benjamin embraces the advent of the technical advancements that allow works of art to be reproduced mechanically. He considers this phenomenon opens the way for the emancipation of a work of art from a purely auratic perception. Adorno expresses his reservations on the development of a global consciousness of perception that contributes to the obfuscating of reality, and the reduction of an understanding of an ideological concept that can only breed fascism. As Martin Jay points out, Adorno blames this circumstance on a reproducing society. He quotes Adorno

> '*where purely immediate relations of power predominate, there are really no ideologies .....for ideology in the proper sense, relationships of power are required which are not comprehensible to this power itself, which are mediated and therefore also less harsh. Today society, which has unjustly been blamed for its complexity, has become too transparent for this*' [264]

Adorno also maintains, that, when art becomes totally absorbed with individualism it closes in on itself, and does not really express the reality of the whole. By not expressing the truth of society art loses its autonomy, so Adorno observes, that '*As society became less humane, art became less autonomous*'[265]. This opinion echoes that of Sartre, that individualism does not necessarily benefit society as a whole.

Perhaps what underlies the polemic of the early twentieth century is best expressed in the exchange of letters between Adorno and Benjamin. What should be kept in mind is that, while they both share such common ground as their Jewish traditions, their preoccupation with Marxist aesthetics, their scholarship also very clearly indicates, the continuing attempts to lift a veil on the mystery that attaches to all human endeavours. While clarity is the perceived goal of the debate, what does emerge is the breadth of interpretations that can be ascribed to aesthetics. Notwithstanding the concern that is expressed, it is encouraging to note, that both men are still interested in the concept of astonishment, as quoted by Benjamin in his letter of ninth of December 1938.[266] Astonishment can be related to a concept of mystery, as can the obvious dialectic between Adorno and Benjamin, which implies a need to travel further on the road to discovery.

As already mentioned the study of psychoanalytic theory plays an important role in aesthetic theory of the Modern era.

Psychoanalysis is an analytical study of the workings of the human mind. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is generally considered the father of psychoanalysis. There is significant documentary evidence to support this, e.g. Freud, by Richard Wollheim and Sigmund Freud by Pamela Thurschwell. Another important name to be associated with psychoanalysis is that of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961).

Both Freud and Jung hold medical degrees, Freud in physiology, and Jung in psychiatry. Presumably it is from their common interest in medicine that their collective scholarship emerges. Their theses point to an extraordinary elaboration of the knowledge surrounding the constitution of the human psyche. The basis for this scholarship comes mainly from observational analysis of patients. Patients who have presented themselves with symptoms of illness that in some cases have no obvious physiological basis, symptoms that manifest themselves through neuroses of various forms. A neurosis may be defined as a psychological disorder.[267] Both Freud and Jung are interested in the origins of such neuroses. A major priority, for both scholars, is to make a map of the human mind whereby, cul de sacs and avenues can be explored, and malfunctions, which interfere with the normal functioning of the mind, can be exposed. The systematic naming, and deconstruction of the different parts of the psyche, occupies

their lifetime endeavour. In fact, Freud and Jung, collaborated and agreed basic elements of psychoanalysis until a point where they disagreed on fundamental approaches to methods and the interpretation of the evidence presented to them.[268]

An interesting aspect of Jungian theory is his inclusion of soul and spirit into his analysis of the psyche.[269] Freud is also aware of the disparities of perception between the external and the internal. Both men, however, are agreed on the importance of the unconscious. They are particularly interested in its' influence, and the subsequent responses of the human psyche to the physical world of people and objects. Because of what their research uncovers, and simultaneously despite their efforts, debates and arguments on their theories form the basis for continued research. One such noteworthy theorist who has devoted considerable time to psychoanalytic theory is Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who, for instance in his support of Freudian analysis, draws an analogy between the psychological structural relationship of unconscious/ conscious and the Saussurean model of langue and parole in linguistics[270].

With the advent of psychoanalysis it could be imagined that definite answers, to all questions pertaining to the reactions of human beings to external stimuli, might be made available. After all, it is the mind that separates the human being from objectified reality. The natural propagation of such theory might consequently result in all traces of mystery being removed from aesthetics. However, while psychoanalysis opens up, and sheds light on many areas of understanding, it does not complete a picture of irrefutable proof; many questions remain a mystery. It is no surprise, therefore, that visual art, in a particular way, responds to and reflects the impact of psychoanalysis

> *'For art, as an open-access laboratory of imaginative exploration, is one of the most powerful reminders that history is never completed'* [271]

The intention here is to set out, briefly, some of the main elements of psychoanalysis that may be considered influential in the history of aesthetics. As already indicated, psychoanalysis is an analytical study of the workings of the human mind. For a simple introduction of the Freudian construct of the psyche the metaphorical symbol of the iceberg, where one third is visible and two thirds submerged, is one that is familiar and easily grasped. **Plate 21** In plain terms the visible third may be equated with the

conscious mind and the remaining two-thirds with the unconscious mind. Both areas can be further divided e.g. Freud identifies the preconscious as the area that straddles both the conscious and the unconscious mind. Jacobi's description is helpful

> '*It is rather the case that the psyche is a conscious – unconscious whole with continually shifting borderlines of contact*' [272].

In Freudian theory, the preconscious can be summoned by the conscious mind, as need requires. Conforming to the analogy of the iceberg, the unconscious forms the largest portion of the psyche, and is not so easily accessed.[273] Both Freud and Jung, develop strategies to awaken, and disclose, what information is contained within the unconscious. This information is gleaned mainly through such methods as hypnosis, free association and dream therapy. In turn, this information may be used to help rectify whatever disturbance produces neuroses in certain individuals. While both scholars submit that the unconscious is a source of knowledge not to be underestimated, Jung in particular, draws attention to a portion of the unconscious that can never be accessed.[274] In Jungian theory, the unconscious acts as an archive for the Archetype, a central theme in his dialectic that will be referred to later.

For the purposes of this essay, the essential relevance of psychoanalytic study rests on the discovery that the unconscious is a dynamic source of knowledge. Freudian theory, dispels any misconception that the mind consists of purely conscious matter, and that the unconscious consists of only that which is forgotten or repressed by consciousness.[275] As Wollheim remarks

> '*if we relinquish the equation of the mental with the conscious and interpolate mental events into the gaps of consciousness in such a way as to get rid of the discontinuities of mental life, we still have only a descriptive conception of the unconscious*'[276]

Wollheim, makes a strong case for the Freudian understanding of the dynamic unconscious. Jolande Jacobi's book, The Psychology of C. G. Jung, endorses Jung's theory on the dynamic energy that attaches to the unconscious. Jung also expands the understanding of the unconscious, and, focuses attention on the role of the collective

unconscious. It would appear that, Jung ascribes a more expansive remit to the role of the unconscious, and, certainly, his approach is reminiscent of dialectical Marxism. Like Aristotle, and the end for which things are made, Jung is interested in a synthesis that can be arrived at through a process of thesis and antithesis.

Freud outlines, and names the constituent parts of the human psyche, and makes a case for the progression of the various stages in the growth of a healthy psyche. He, also, points to the areas where neurosis and disease may occur. He analyses these parts into such areas as the Id, the Ego and the Superego. Basically, the Id can be described as an amorphous substance that is present at birth, from which the mind develops. The predominant impulse of the Id can be expressed simply as *'I want'*[277]. The Ego, develops from the Id, and is described by one writer as the image of the individual as a self-conscious being. Wollheim, interprets Freudian theory of the ego and explains it as follows,

> *'It is in virtue of the ego that we can perceive the world, that we can change the world, and that we adapt to the world'*[278]

Put another way, the Id has no parameters, is not really capable of discernment, while the development of the Ego introduces a faculty of perspicacity. In Freudian theory, a healthy psyche develops the Superego. The Superego, plays the part of parent or, in other words, introduces the restraining factor, and according to Freud, and pointed to by Wollheim, *'a power of this kind, watching, discovering and criticizing all our intentions, does really exist.'*[279] Wollheim, also, indicates a summary of the activities of each of the foregoing functions of the psyche as interpreted by Freud, in the following

> *'Repression is carried out by the ego upon the id, but the ego acts in the service and at the behest of the superego'*[280]

While Freud concentrates on the tripartite functions of the psyche, Jung extends his understanding to include a fourth function. The functions he names are, thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation. To these functions he adds ancillary characteristics, namely extroversion and introversion. Jolande Jacobi makes the eloquent observation in her preface *'For the psyche is always capable of putting forth new flowers'*[281].

According to Jung, all human beings can be psychically assessed, and categorised under a combination of the previous headings. However, Jung maintains that, no two functions can operate simultaneously.[282] Freudian theory seems to indicate that the main function that operates in the psyche is instinct[283]. As Wollheim remarks, '*For Freud instinct is at the forefront of his picture of the mind.*'[284] But,as already mentioned, Jungian theory allows that there is an area in each individual that cannot be accessed.[285] While both Freud and Jung concentrate on the force of the Libido or psychic energy, Freudian theory is usually understood to equate psychic energy with sexual energy, whereas, Jung adopts a more inclusive role and equates all psychic energy to libidinal impulses[286]. Such explorations are evident in the renewed interest in sexual fantasy as expressed in the art of the twentieth century. **Plate 22**

From the research conducted by this study, it appears that, while Freud is the instigator of psychoanalytic theory, Jung encourages a wider perspective and extends the parameters of the understanding of the individual psyche. Jungian theory offers a greater opportunity for a wider dialectical understanding of the concept of a holistic psyche. In Jacobi's opinion, Freud poses the questions *'why'* and *'whence'* whereas Jung asks '*To what end*?[287] For instance, Freud emphasises the repressive function of the unconscious whereas, Jung concentrates more on the dynamic nature of the unconscious. In formal analysis, Freud encourages a passive role for the analyst whereas; Jung encourages a more interactive role between analyst and analysand.

The concern here is the consequences for the visual arts and aesthetics. It is not difficult to imagine that the initial reaction, of the creative community to psychoanalytic theory, could be construed to be one of freedom from constraints of form and content. However, because psychoanalytic theory attempts to constrain and enclose all actions to particular areas in the psyche, and, tries to explain every eventuality by narrowing meaning down to action, and reaction, the impact upon the visual arts is twofold. Firstly, what is generally perceived to be the accepted norm can now be extended, and, consequently, ascribed to the product of the unconscious. Questions of dream interpretation and apparent free association are manifest in the art of the Surrealists. **Plate 23** Both Freud and Jung, attach significant importance to dream therapy. Dream therapy can offer a more complete understanding of the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious. Freud writes extensively on this subject, particularly in his paper

entitled 'The Interpretation of Dreams', published in 1900. In keeping with Freudian scholarship it would appear that each effort is carefully constructed to transmit the symbolic reference that can be accessed and recognized. As Jacobi remarks

> *'As far as we can follow the creative process, it consists in activating the external symbols of mankind which lie dormant in the unconscious and in shaping and elaborating them to produce a finished work of art'* [288]

Secondly, from the art historian's viewpoint, interpretative freedom is the responsibility of the viewer, in so far as the individual's understanding of particular symbols allows. If we are to believe Jacobi's interpretation of Jungian psychology then

> *'The individual is not just a fixed and unchangeable complex of psychological facts; he is also an extremely variable entity'* [289]

The question must be, whether the impact of psychoanalyses offers a more comprehensive understanding of a work of art to the viewing public, or does it in fact deepen the mystery surrounding the human condition. While offering possible explanations at one level it must also be remembered that Jung, in particular, emphasises the uniqueness of the individual psyche, and cautions, what must be remembered at all times during analysis is, that judgements and conclusions can only be reached by bearing in mind the particular psychical make up of the individual.[290] This, then, makes a clear case for the contemplation and unique concentration of time and space to be afforded each work of art. Universality can only be achieved at a theoretical level. What seems to be the aim of economic and technological advancement in the modern and post-modern world is to promote a universal response, which displaces the requirement of a deeper personal responsibility. An endorsement of this latter statement can be linked with Jacobi's observation of Jung's position,

> *'But the consciousness of modern man has moved somewhat too far from its origins, from the unconscious; we have forgotten that the unconscious does not function in accordance with our conscious purposes; but autonomously'*[291]

Psychoanalysis does not eliminate a concept of mystery. Psychoanalysis does not offer irrefutable proof of empirical reality; in fact both Freudian and Jungian studies in psychology reinforce the existence of vast areas of the unconscious that are impossible to deconstruct, and reassemble with plausible answers. The impact of psychoanalytic theory on aesthetics as explored by Freud and, more particularly by Jung, therefore, is dynamic. Nowhere is this more evident than in Jung's theory of the Archetype or primordial image. The Archetype, according to Jung, can manifest itself either in static form, or as a dynamic process, in the functioning of consciousness. What could be perceived to forge a link between universality and individuality is the Jungian description of the archetype.

As Jacobi points out Jung understands the psyche to consist of two antithetical spheres, the conscious and the unconscious. From the aesthetic viewpoint his inclusion of soul, or anima, as part of the inner persona offers a more complete picture of the psychical impulses of the human being than the instinctual attitude of Freud's theory. Spirit is a faculty that pertains to consciousness, but also has a natural bond with the unconscious. Jung considers that spirit comprises intellect and soul[292]. It is, however, reasonable to make a connection between spirit and intuition because, both are illusive, and, in Jungian terms, could be considered irrational when compared to those functions of thinking and feeling that are concerned with evaluations and judgements. But, according to Jung, '*Intuition perceives through its capacity for an unconscious inner perception of the inherent potentialities of things*'[293]

According to Jacobi, Jung bases his theory of the Archetype on Augustinian philosophy.[294] St. Augustine is one of the foremost thinkers of the Middle Ages and has already been referred to in a previous section. Jung distinguishes, between an Archetype that is non-perceptible, '*which is present only potentially in every psychic structure'* and, archetypes that have '*already entered the field of consciousness*'[295]
Jung believes, that all the typical human manifestations of life rest on archetypal foundation. While their symbolic meaning may shift with the tides of time and space, their basic foundational structure is steadfast. For Jung, the Archetype plays a vital role in the inherited functioning of psychic life as he says

'*they represent or personify certain instinctive data of the dark, primitive psyche, the real but invisible roots of consciousness*'.[296]

It can be understood that, Jung is referring here to the numinous function of the Archetype, rather than the Archetype representing a particular preconditioned method of reaction. Even though Jung considers the Archetype as being universally present in all human beings, he is much more concerned with the individual archetypal history of each psyche. What he is saying is, that we can control the content of our consciousness by our will, but we cannot control the unconscious. Part of this has to do with what archetypal foundation has been laid, or what pathways the individual travels to unleash an archetypal image, or, indeed, what circumstances may lead to the Archetype. What Jung claims is, Archetypes are laid down in our unconscious, they are the reservoirs of all the historic data and experience of mankind, but it is the arbitrary nature of certain circumstances that may bring these to light in the individual, '*the unconscious, however has a continuity and order that is independent of us and impervious to our influence*'[297]

Jung is referring to an inherited idea, he is pointing to an inherited mode of psychic functioning, corresponding to a pattern of behaviour. That is only an external manifestation. At the core of the individual the Archetype presents itself as numinous (spiritual), and this ought to be the concern of aesthetics. As Jung points out, '*their ultimate core of meaning may be circumscribed, but not described*' and, again, that the Archetype is invariable in principle, but not in '*concrete manifestation*'. Jung also describes the Archetype as '*self portraits of the instincts*'. Instincts cannot be defined and rationalised, therefore the theory of the Archetype is central to both psychology, and, to the argument in support of mystery.

'*Not for a moment dare we succumb to the illusion that an archetype can be finally explained and disposed of. Even the best attempts at explanation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphorical language*'[298]

Doubtless the influence of both Freudian and Jungian psychoanalyses impacts on the creative mind as is most evident in the art of the Surrealists. It also opens the way for Outsider Art and Art Brut and several other art movements of the twentieth century; it opens up an interest in the psychic life of artists and viewers. **Plate 24**.

Psychoanalytic theory opens new ways to look at the oppositions between, what is rational and sensual, universal and individual. Despite the obvious insights psychoanalytic theory can offer, it is clear that the ripples that emerge from this theory are linked to the overall concept of mystery that can be ascribed to the aesthetic experience. For example, an acceptance of the validity of psychoanalytic theory may encourage research, speculation, and culminate in a desire to attempt symbolic associations into what may be put forward in a work of art.

For consideration of the concrete effects on creative art of various developments including philosophical, empirical, theoretical, and psychoanalytic theory, Clive Bell, Roger Fry noteworthy critical theorists of the twentieth century, offer interesting theses for debate.

While, for the most part, it is the theories of French and German scholars that predominate this research, Britain also produce some notable contributors to this debate, as mentioned earlier. The introduction of Post-Impressionist's artworks to Britain plays a decisive role in motivating two British theorists, Roger Fry (1866-1934) and Clive Bell (1881-1964), to undertake projects that exercise considerable influence on the subsequent history of aesthetics, and subsequent Modern art movements of the twentieth century. This is borne out by the following statement by Hayden B. J. Maginnis, in Art Theory, as recently as 1996

> *'Formalist criticism in art history and in discussions of the' moderns' was central to scholarship of the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It shaped our understanding of modern art; it reshaped our understanding of artists of the past; it claimed to make accessible art from all times and all cultures'*[299]

Art movements, in the early twentieth century, are often accompanied by written manifestos, setting out the criteria, the aspirations and justifications for particular attitudes to visual art e.g. the Futurist Manifesto 1910, Percy Wyndham Lewis 'Our Vortex' 1914, De Stijl Manifesto I 1918 'The Realistic Manifesto 1920. J. B. Bullen, in his introduction to the 1949 edition of Art by Clive Bell, makes the point that Bell's work is in keeping with this popular tradition. Here, Bell attempts to set out what

criteria should be applied to the judgement of a work of art. His conclusion comes under the generic heading '*significant form*'. How Bell explains this will be looked at later in this section.

No doubt the questions posed, by Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), regarding the aesthetic merits of a work of art, exert influence on the criteria for judging a work of art in the early twentieth century.[300] Tolstoy is interested, not only in the moral implications of a work of art, but in clear expression, and the intention of the artist.[301] The birth of abstract art in the twentieth century is a break with traditional representation of objects defined by nature. Consequently, a problem arises for the artist and the critic, on how to disseminate form in such a manner that the criteria referred to initially by Tolstoy and subsequently by Fry and Bell might be recognised.

From a world of Realism and neo Classicism to Impressionism, is a considerable leap. The Post-Impressionist exhibitions of 1910 and 1912, introduce the avant garde and modernism of European art to the British Isles.[302] It is in the catalogue for the second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in Britain in 1912, compiled by Bell, that the first reference to '*significant form*' is made'[303]. Bell, it seems, opposes an art that is too involved in '*illusionism and the mechanical reproduction of natural forms.*'[304] It is suggested, by Bullen, that Bell uses the art of Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), as the yardstick whereby all great works of the past may be measured. If a general understanding of the art of Cezanne includes the cone, the sphere and the cylinder as those shapes in nature he translates into painting, the transition to a notion of *'significant form'*, made by Bell, is more easily understood. It is not surprising that, in the aftermath of such a radical move from traditional mores, e.g. Post Impressionism, some attempt is made to re-establish parameters that clearly outline what may be considered art. Consequently part of the flourishing of art awareness in the early twentieth century, involves the reassessment and re-examination of traditional attitudes to art. To this end, Roger Fry (1866-1934) and Clive Bell (1881-1964), publish two books namely Art by Clive Bell, published originally in 1914, with a later edition in 1949, and Vision and Design by Roger Fry, published in 1920. In the words of Clive Bell '*the science of aesthetics is a complex business and so is the history of art*'[305]

It really is a question of emphasis. Bell, appears to solve the question of aesthetic response as being firmly related to '*significant form*', and attempts to set out what this is. Roger Fry, acknowledges the important role of design, but places his stress on aesthetic perception.[306] Both are agreed that the nature of the response to a work of art is unique.

In relation to this unique un-quantifiable attribute, Fry and Bell attempt an explanation, by looking at various common aspects of works of art. For both, the representation of natural objects is examined and, both express their interest in primitive art forms. As Bell points out,

> '*primitives neither create illusions, nor make display of extravagant accomplishment, but concentrate their energies on the one thing needful – the creation of form*'[307]

From their opinions, as outlined in their respective books, the implication can be drawn that representational form is not the only requirement for the judgement of a work of art, even though, Fry does not discount its value in quite the same manner as does Bell[308]. Such an avoidance of representation is certainly in keeping with many subsequent art practices of the early twentieth century. **Plate 25.** Also implied in their critique, technique alone cannot produce, what they consider should be a requirement for great works of art. While, on the one hand they encourage abstraction, gesture, and expression in their support of the art of the primitives, on the other hand, they emphasise the importance of line, colour, spatial planes, design, in the support for the art of Cezanne. As Fry remarks,

> *'one might add as an empirical observation that the greatest art seems to concern itself most with the universal aspects of natural form to be the lease pre-occupied with particulars*'[309]

For Bell, it is a particular combination of all the elements of design that bring about '*significant form*'. Significant form being, for him, that illusive component that he can name, indicates where it might be found, but not specify exactly how it may be achieved.[310]

While Bell and Fry elaborate on particular aspects of aesthetic judgement, they both infer that what is required is an intangible, intuitive, attribute, which affectively, inspires an awesome response in the viewer. According to Fry, another indicator that points to the possible discovery of the aesthetic emotion is, for the viewer to know the intention of the artist. As Fry points out,

> *'I also conceived that the spectator in contemplating the form must inevitably travel in an opposite direction along the same road which the artist had taken, and himself feel the original emotion'*[311]

Another indication of the importance of the relationship between artist and spectator is referred to in Fry's statement, where he suggests the link between the intention of the artist, and how art impinges on the viewer, and so uncovers latent emotions that otherwise might remain untapped[312].

As already remarked Fry, in particular, emphasises that aesthetic emotion is completely and utterly different to any other emotion; he also points out that it is impossible to define aesthetic emotion and that the concept confounds him. As he explains

> *'One can only say that those who experience it feel it to have a peculiar quality of 'reality' which makes it a matter of infinite importance in their lives. Any attempt I might make to explain this would probably land me in the depths of mysticism'*[313]

But, as Bell points out, the attributes of design, already referred to, are integral to the realisation of this unique experience. He avers in his 'Aesthetic Hypothesis',

> *'The relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'Significant Form'; and 'Significant Form' is the one quality common to all works of visual art'*[314]

However, having explored the theories of both Fry and Bell, neither theorist/critic does explain in a scientific manner what specifically induces the aesthetic emotion. Their foundation, for its' existence, lies in the fact that historically there have been great

works of art that stand the test of time and space. What is clear is that the aesthetic response they try to explain remains enigmatic. For Bell, what is universal to all these works of art is their 'significant form'. For Fry, it is the perceptual uniqueness of the response. This quality they identify is an intuition, a feeling, an emotional reaction that cannot be quantified, a *'je ne sais quoi'*. As pointed out by Jeffrey Dean in his article entitled Clive Bell and G. E. Moore: The Good of Art, that while not all works of art will provoke the same emotion, the emotion itself is of the same kind and peculiar to the viewer's experience of art, and that nothing else can inspire this emotion.[315] However Bell makes the eloquent claim for the effects of art, which can be linked to Kantian thought, and Burke's exposition of the sublime, when he says

> *' Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation; ---- we are lifted above the stream of life '*[316]

It should be noted here that the concept of the sublime has several interpretations. In one case the effect is one that inspires awe, fear, terror and suspense and the other brings about a reverence, a dreamlike feeling of wonder and infinity. Both Kant and Burke try to explain the mysterious sensation that attaches to an experience of the sublime.[317]

In conclusion it is fair to say that what Tolstoy, Fry and Bell uncover, confirms that in the twentieth century, despite all advances in technological and scientific research, no one can define specifically the feeling of awe that a great work of art inspires in the viewer. In his book 'Pictures and Tears' James Elkins examines this very concept of awe. While he gives many examples of the reactions experienced by viewers to great works of art the main thrust of his scholarship indicates that the experience has a very definite link to an understanding of the transcendent[318].

A key work e.g. that of Wassily Kandinsky, is a testament to how colour and emotion are formally employed to express the exemplary idea in the twentieth century. **Plate 26.** What remains to be seen is, whether with the unprecedented advance of technological, cybernetic and academic pursuits that constitute the Post modernist era of the twentieth first century, the notion of mystery is finally labelled, packaged and assigned for recycling.

Chapter III: The Dilemma of Postmodernism:

Having looked at the main aesthetic concerns that coincide historically with or pre-empt decisive shifts in art practice, it is now imperative to examine the current position of philosophy, and critical theory, and the implications for aesthetics. The dominant theme, uncovered in this period of history, is the apparent supremacy of a universal concept of mystery over an individual interpretation, in other words, the subjugation of the individual opinion in favour of globalisation. Any understanding of mystery in art is understandably submerged within this debate. Because the individual is immersed in time and place, any conclusion, or analysis of a contemporary period, can therefore only be provisional. As Martin Heidegger points out, in his essay entitled 'The Politics of Being', '*the sighting of any particular thing is always itself elusive, fading into indeterminacy as the thing itself surges forward*'[319]

Several writers offer opinions on the prevailing tensions, and values that emerge from, what is termed the Postmodern period, the late twentieth century to the present. For instance Frederic Jameson, in Postmodern Culture, edited by Hal Foster offers a resume of the position of the Postmodern viewpoint *vis. a vis.* aesthetics[320]. Elsewhere Foster, in his essay Art in Theory, makes the point that the role of the artist in the contemporary world and the role of the viewer have expanded

> *'becomes a manipulator of signs more than a producer of art objects and the viewer an active reader of messages rather than a passive contemplator of the aesthetic or consumer of the spectacular*[321].

Foster suggests Postmodernism as a concept may be divided in two, progressive and regressive. In his essay, entitled Postmodernism and Consumer Society, he describes each position; firstly as a theory that attempts to deconstruct Modernism and resist the status quo, and in the second place, as a theory that repudiates Modernism to celebrate the status quo. In other words a proposal to incorporate Modernist theory into the present day, Modernist theory that is based on a critical appraisal of the world as it is, or a proposal to reject the Modernist theory. The former, a resistant Postmodernism, is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition with a critique of origin. Basically

this type of postmodernism is interested in questioning rather than in exploitation of cultural codes, to explore rather than conceal social and political affiliations. The latter, is a postmodernism of neo –conservatism or reaction. Jameson supports the former as the more progressive.[322]

It is understandable, how many of the prevailing thought patterns that surface in the twentieth century and already referred to, influence those currently in vogue. These include dialectical Marxism, existentialism, psychoanalysis and formalism. Twentieth century scholarship produces other methods to assess cultural history, such as phenomenology, critical theory and structuralism, all of which impact upon the subject of this essay and aesthetics as a whole.

Phenomenology deals with objectivity versus subjectivity, as Richard Kearney explains in his book, 'Modern Movements in European Philosophy'. Phenomenology *'wished to eliminate all prejudice, to suspend all our easy answers to fundamental questions, all our taken for granted attitudes'*[323]. While, critical theory is deemed necessary to critique those values that surface in cultural and social conditions of the western world. Values that indicate causes for concern, such as, reification, the reduction of the human being to the status of object, materialism, reality versus hyper-reality; simulation and counterfeit, and the Modern sublime. Georg Lukacs (1885-1971), cited by Kearney, offers a justification for critical theory in the contemporary world, and, subscribes to the belief, that questions that have either a moral or aesthetical implication cannot have a singular solution. As he remarks, such questions *'pertain to a moral and aesthetic intuition irreducible to the empirical positivism of the natural sciences'*.[324]

Structuralism has three main themes. Firstly, phenomena ought not to be taken at face value. Secondly, a structural method ought to be followed to examine meaning. Thirdly, that linguistics is the discipline to be scrutinised. A method, that is similar to the continuous refinement of a piece of technical equipment in order that it may function at a higher level, and disclose possibilities other than those clearly indicated, is how Kearney describes it.

Phenomenology, is first introduced by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and advanced by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). It emerges as a response to the positivism of modern

science that sidelines human subjectivity. Phenomenology supports the celebration of individuality. Husserl's argument revolves around the notion that subjectivity and objectivity of the human being cannot be separated into two opposite poles. Meaning, therefore, can be presumed to come from a combination of both subjectivity and objectivity. Epistemology is a term that applies to the branch of philosophy that inquires into the nature and possibility of knowledge.[325] Ontology is an inquiry into the theory of being as such, and forms the general part of metaphysics, or theoretical philosophy.[326] Kearney explains, Husserl's theory of phenomenology has epistemological concerns while, Heidegger's theory moves to ontological concerns that '*Human existence ..... must be understood as a project of possibility.*[327] As a student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger applies an existential dimension to the theory of phenomenology. For Heidegger, existence must be understood '*neither as mere subjectivity nor mere objectivity, but as a fundamental openness to the Being of beings'* [328] '*A project of possibility'* may be taken as an affirmation of the ongoing search for solutions, while, at the same time, indicating the continued presence of mystery.

Another important voice that adds to the phenomenological debate is that of Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980). As Kearney points out, Sartre's main concern is with the freedom of the human being, and the lived experience '*in order to rediscover an intentional and creative relationship with the world'*[329]. Where Heidegger is concerned with the '*Being of Beings,'* Sartre places his emphasis on the human being, and regards the human race as firmly and genuinely situated on *terra firma*. Essentially, he explores the possibilities of choice that are open to the authentic human being. It is obvious that Sartre considers art to be an important aspect of human development, as he bases his analogy of moral choice on the construction of a work of art. He points out that, '*there is this in common between art and morality, that in both we have to do with creation and invention'*[330] In Sartre's exploration of the concepts of consciousness, emotion and imagination, he finds that neither emotion nor imagination can be reduced to conform to mechanical '*models of explanation'*. Nor are they, '*simply the products of empirical causes but express a highly strategic consciousness'*[331]. The latter is an obvious reference to the basic Husserlian understanding of phenomenology. As already indicated, under the section that deals with existentialism, Sartre directs his emphasis on the importance of the individual, and freedom of choice. His search for meaning seems

to point towards the consequences that may result from a false understanding of reality. As Kearney concludes

> *'by means of his distinction between a liberating imagination of aesthetic play and an incarcerating consciousness of self obsession, Sartre lays the foundation for his ontological distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence'*[332]

As, with most debates, several contributors can be found, each adding significantly to a wider understanding of the concept, or at least offer their theses as an opportunity for lateral thinking. Maurice Merleau Ponty (1898-1961) can be counted among these. He expands on the duality of Husserl's notion of phenomenology of object and subject, and maintains a dialectical model is appropriate. His comprehension of the person as a holistic unit is exposed in Kearney's interpretation of this commitment, indicated as follows

> '*phenomenology made possible the recognition that the body is not an object amongst objects, to be measured in purely scientific terms, but a mysterious and expressive mode of belonging to the world, through our perception, gestures, sexuality and speech* ' [333]

Other contributors to the concept of phenomenology include Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), and Jacques Derrida (1930-), as recorded by Kearney. Ricoeur emphasises '*the primacy of symbolising signification'*, while his main discourse concerns hermeneutics, '*the art of deciphering indirect meaning*'[334]. For Ricouer, hermeneutics can thus be raised to the level of a universal philosophy. A philosophy which acknowledges that, when we use language we are already interpreting the world, not literally as if it possessed a single transparent meaning, but figuratively in terms of allegory, symbol, metaphor, myth and analogy.'[335] Ricouer leads beyond Husserl, and believes that it is inadequate to describe meaning as it appears. He suggests, that there is more to it than meets the eye, '*we are also obliged to interpret itself as it conceals itself*'[336]. Ricouer also acknowledges that Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietsche, in other words dialectical materialism, psychoanalysis and existentialism, contribute greatly to the complexity of meaning. Meaning for Ricouer is, *'far from being transparent to itself, is in fact an enigmatic process which conceals at the same time as it reveals* '[337].

Ricouer refers to this as the problem of false consciousness. Another indicator of the perceived crisis in the interpretation of meaning that is prevalent in the contemporary world. This might be considered a further reminder that mystery is an integral part of the interpretation of phenomena.

Jacques Derrida draws attention to the importance of looking beyond the surface of things. The main area, he concentrates on, is the deconstruction of language. He refutes the possibility of arriving at a definite meaning that can be contained, packaged and consigned to a particular destination.

> '*What deconstruction certainly does denounce is the attempt to reduce the signifying process to a totalised system of absolute knowledge – to a meaning that could be possessed once and for all*' [338].

In fact, Derrida's thesis may be looked at as a total rebuttal of the contemporary desire to come up with definite answers for everything. The latter phenomenon will be addressed in Baudrillard's essay entitled Simulations later in the essay. Derrida puts forward the proposal that, meaning is illusive, and may perhaps always lie beyond reach. Derrida's meticulous exploration into language under the heading, 'Of Grammatology' implies that a concept of mystery exists, despite all attempts to locate meaning within the parameters of empirical reality. As he points out

> '*that meaning is always other than consciousness, extending infinitely beyond the self into the ever receding horizons of historical signification*[339]

It is a fair assumption that, while phenomenology is an additional attempt to unravel the mystery that surrounds human development, phenomenology cannot supply all the answers, but can only aspire to completion. Rather than dispel the concept of mystery it contributes to the fact of its existence.

A different group, critical theorists, such as Walter Benjamin, (1892-1940) Georg Lukacs,(1885-1971) Antonio Gramsci,(1891-1937) Ernst Bloch, (1885-1977) Herbert Marcuse, (1898-1979) Jurgen Habermas, (1929-), are also considered protagonists in the social and cultural debate of the twentieth century. Critical theory challenges

empirical proof as the most positive means to address social culture. Some, like Georg Lukacs, urge a renewal of theory in order that there might be a renewal of practice. He is interested in, redirecting dialectical materialism, away from the positivism that is predominant in European thinking of the twentieth century. As Herbert Marcuse remarks in his essay, One Dimensional Man, '*When technics becomes the universal form of material production, it circumscribes an entire culture*'[340]

Lukacs sees one of the main problems to be that, of the predominance of reification '*the practice of reducing men to the condition of 'things'*. [341] What is emerging here is the awareness among some of the foremost scholars that, reduction of everything to an objective status is limited, and narrow-minded. Such a reduction does not adequately reflect the human condition. This is an echo of the line drawn between the objective and the subjective, through the study of phenomenology. Kearney points to, Lukacs belief that, the '*history of the human spirit could not be explained away in terms of general methodology of neutral or ahistorical 'facts'*' [342]

While the main thrust of Marxist theory, one of the more dominant ideologies of the twentieth century relates to the unification of human beings through a revolutionary process of material equality, certain Marxist theorists seek to adapt dialectical materialism to include a cultural production. One such writer is Antonio Gramsci. What he implies is, that the orthodox Marxist misses the point if, cultural production is not included in the grander development of mankind. His writing proposes that, economic advancement alone is insufficient to bring about the necessary changes that will ensure a more equitable system for all. His proposal, therefore, is for the adoption of a radical cultural critique.

Ernest Bloch (1885-1977), is another Marxist who suggests a different approach to dialectical materialism. In the same way as Husserl, in the case of a theory of phenomenology, Ernest Bloch, introduces the theological dimension to dialectical materialism. He does this, because he believes it to be a necessary ingredient in the well being of mankind, '*in order to keep open the futural horizon of transcendence as a sort of spiritual leaven to the ongoing revolutionary struggle*'[343]. Obviously Bloch considers the spiritual or transcendental to be of supreme importance to the evolution of the individual, and, by inference, to society in general.

Universality is countered by arguments put forward by Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), and Jurgen Habermas (1929-. Marcuse in particular, as Kearney points out, is concerned about how the individual conscience can get swallowed up in a universal ideology. As Marcuse sees it

> '*the concreteness of philosophy in the existence of each individual person must ever be relegated to an abstract subject, to a 'one' for this would mean relegating decisive responsibility to some arbitrary universality*'[344]

Marcuse, according to Kearney, seems intent on synthesising the Marxist dialectical theory and Heidegger's phenomenology in order to produce a dialectical phenomenology. Marcuse, has great faith in the effectiveness of art to fulfil this two dimensional role. Together with Ernest Bloch, his theory recalls the need for the transcendent dimension in life. 'The Aesthetic Dimension' by Marcuse, is an important defence that culture carries strong import on the welfare of the human species. His contention is that a work of art may provide a solution to counteract the rationale of production

> '*the inner logic of the work of art terminates in the emergences of another reason, another sensibility, which defy the rationality and sensibility incorporated in the dominant social institutions*'[345]

But Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), would seem to adopt a more material approach when he applauds the loss of auratic tradition. He believes that the loss of aura and authenticity opens up the world of art to a wider audience. In his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' Benjamin dismisses the need for mystery, he promotes the idea of montage and pastiche, and particularly embraces the art of film as the progressive means to an inclusive and positive reaction to a productive society. Such a position by Benjamin might be construed to support the idea of a regressive postmodernism as proposed by Fredric Jameson, which is to accept the status quo, and to embrace the current codes and practices. However, Benjamin does make the point that even though the audience at the movies takes on the role of critic he also adds '*the public is an examiner, but an absent minded one*'[346]

Habermas also recommends that, critical theory take on the challenges posed by technological and materialist domination. Positivist thinking is one result of a total reliance on materialism and scientific proof. From a phenomenological and critical theory standpoint, positivist thinking has the effect to dis-empower or suppress individual critical evaluation. Edward Said points to this phenomenon in his essay, 'Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community, when he remarks, that in the contemporary world everything must be viewed and assessed under a specific label, and what now exists is a neutralisation of dissent[347].

The other group, are those who question how advisable it may be to adopt a purely material approach to life in the twentieth century. As already mentioned they come under the general heading of Structuralism. They include such writers as Ferdinand de Saussure,(1857-1913) Claude Levi Strauss (1908-, Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Louis Althusser (1917-1990), Roland Barthes (1915-1980). All of these contribute to an increasing number of voices not happy to; accept the popular consensus that material progress is the only kind of progress that matters in contemporary society. In other words, they appear to be concerned with balancing the scales between an empirical approach, which may be construed as universal and a more transcendental approach, which might be classed as individual.

As already remarked, structuralism has three concerns: phenomena ought not to be taken at face value; a structural method be used to decipher meaning,
and, the focus of the latter two concerns is linguistics. Different writers concentrate on various aspects of this process. The main thrusts of some arguments have implications for aesthetics, and in particular, to the history of art. For instance, Ferdinand de Saussure, examines the structure of myths, symbol and kinship codes in language. All of the latter play a significant role in visual art, because of their relationship to the imaginative process. Claude Levi Strauss also looks at the construct of myths[348]. He submits that, they are structured in a manner to make intelligible those inner drives, which cannot be adequately expressed through the accepted codes of language. Levi Strauss also submits the thesis that the recurrence of the use of myth is on the level of optimism, a refusal to accept the positivism that is prevalent currently. Comparison between traditional metaphysical understanding of myth, as opposed to the economical character of myth today, can be augmented by reading Baudrillard, under the heading

Mythologies. Optimism, as proposed by Levi Strauss, can be deduced from the fact that a myth can have many different versions and not one definite one. Myth, for Levi Strauss, also affirms the complexity of human intelligence and denies the wisdom of trying to direct it to a definite line of thought. Michel Foucault makes the point that; production is not the primary motivation that inspires progress. He is also concerned to examine how, the de-structuring of language may have implications that lean towards the domination of society, rather than purely to broaden knowledge.[349] While Louis Althusser considers that what may be proved empirically implies more than a single signification, and Roland Barthes offers interpretations of language based on his studies in semiology.[350] All of the foregoing point to the disadvantages of a purely empirical, rational, clinical, interpretation of language. The concerns, expressed by these writers, appear to imply what a more inclusive interpretation of language may offer. While merit is attached to the methodological investigation, significant importance may attach to time for contemplation, in order to fully understand the implications that changes in social and moral conditions uncover.

In the latter half of the twentieth century several other writers emerge who question the positivist influence of production and materialism. They offer suggestions as to why a dogmatic theory might need examination. What is generally perceptible from contemporary aestheticians is an unease or discomfort with the direction being suggested as a desirable aim for artistic endeavour.

As already mentioned, this is a period referred to by art historians as the Post Modernist period. Jean Francois Lyotard (1924-1998) and Jean Baudrillard (1929-), could be considered exponents of an antithetical approach to the contemporary aims being promoted by the arts [351] From their work one can detect a deep concern with what they consider the abuse of scientific and technological advancement which is proving detrimental to the world of art. Not only does Lyotard question what kind of demand Postmodernism makes upon artistic experimentation, he also maintains there is a call for order, a desire for unity, for identity. In other words, he points to the need for a sense of direction; a sense of direction which has been perceived by authority to have been derailed by both the Avant Garde and the Modernist movement. One Postmodernist reaction maintains that a coherent line of direction is signified through embracing realism.[352]

In his essay, entitled 'Note on the Meaning of the Word 'Post' and answering the question "What is Postmodernism",Jean Francois Lyotard, addresses an understanding of this term[353]. Lyotard specifies that an impetus to complexify, quantify, synthesise and modify the size of each and every object obfuscates rather than clarifies a fundamental search for progress.[354] He highlights the dangers that attach to the elevation of objectivity over subjectivity, a position that echoes the viewpoint expressed by those who support phenomenology. By referring to Jean Baudrillard's essay entitled Simulations, Lyotard's view may be sustained. Baudrillard claims that human beings are perceived under the category of object. As Kearney remarks

> '*The positivist attitude of much modern science reduces the world to an isolated object, and consciousness to a disembodied spirit*'[355].

People are faced with the complexity of the techno-scientific, and, simultaneously faced with the problem of the survival of the human race. Simplicity is looked upon as barbaric in such a context. What must emerge, as a result is fear on a grand or sublime scale! Lyotard's sublime has the element of fear that is common to Burke's and Kant's notion of the sublime that has already been examined in the section on the Enlightenment, but the Post modern understanding of sublime does not have a transcendent resolution. A more detailed account of Lyotard's sublime is set out in his essay 'The Sublime and the Avant Garde'[356]

It is also Lyotard's contention that it is difficult to recognise or identify what is real in our contemporary world. He elaborates that, what is presently being promoted is a realism constituted of such attributes as nostalgia or mockery. This type of realism is based on the ambitions of a capitalist society. Effectively reality is destabilised, and what passes for reality is a counterfeit. The new realism bears little or no relationship to what is outlined by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) in his essay '*Popularity and Realism'* as realism

> '*discovering the causal complexes of society, unmarking the prevailing view of things as the view of those in power ..... Emphasising the element of development, making possible the concrete, and making possible abstraction from it*'[357]

For Lyotard points out, '*reality is so destablized that it offers no occasion for experience but one for ratings and experimentation.*[358] A direct result, which arises from a false notion of reality, must be the question of how this relates to art and highlights a crisis in aesthetics.[359] In the absence of aesthetic criteria determining judgements are made by politics, the politics of the market place. As Kearney notes, the preoccupations of the age are '*Man's obsession with technical prediction, economic profit and political control*'[360]. Such a statement affirms the preoccupation of objectivity over subjectivity that is prevalent in contemporary society. At this juncture it is important to clarify how Realism can be understood from a traditional point of view and from a Postmodernist perspective. In her book '*Realism*' Linda Nochlin gives a definition of realism as follows. Realism, she maintains,

> '*is concerned with giving a truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of contemporary life*'[361]

Pursuant on the technological revolution of recent history, and the rise in material values where production is the key concept, it is easy to understand how such an idea that the real is that which can be proved scientifically gains ground. However such writers as Lyotard, Baudrillard and Edward Said, among others, recognise the dangers, to the well being of the individual, which may arise as a result of such a false concept. One such danger, expressed by Edward Said, in his essay entitled, Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community, is impassive criticism. He comments

> '*the cult of expertise and professionalism, for example, has so restricted our scope of vision that a positive (as opposed to an implicit or passive) doctrine of non-interference among fields has set in*'[362]

A suggestion, already referred to by Walter Benjamin, when he remarks on the collective nature of the public as an absent-minded examiner.

While Lyotard is concerned with coming to terms with the meaning of Postmodernism, Jean Baudrillard elaborates on an understanding of reality. He moves forward from Lyotard's position of counterfeit, to the idea of simulation. This latter notion of simulation includes concepts of the series, the model, and cybernetics[363]

Baudrillard proposes interesting challenges, with regard to the proliferation of reliance on technological expertise, the overturning of subjectivity in favour of objectivity, the obfuscation of reality and the rise in impassive criticism. He examines this question of signification and reality. His insight supports and reaffirms those already indicated by phenomenology, structuralism and critical theory. He goes even further to discover how a concept of reality is currently perceived, and expresses grave doubts as to the wisdom of such a perception. He explains that traditionally a sign indicates the real and has obligations of authenticity. In other words, the relationship to its referent is obvious. But, in a contemporary context, the sign is arbitrary and, as such, has no definite obligation. The contemporary sign only simulates its relationship to a referent and so the contemporary sign is counterfeit and puts the status of reality under suspicion.

Also examined by Baudrillard is the concept of the test, the rapid-fire question and answer syndrome. He maintains, that the context in which the test is set, is engineered and counterfeit. He looks at the consequences of this. Baudrillard's essay, Simulations, exposes the theory that everything is controlled by the code.

> '*All material production now falls into the sphere of reproduction, in the sphere of simulacra and the code that the global process of capital is founded*[364].

This is an interesting and incisive estimation of the impact of technological production, and dependence thereon, and what affect the fragmentation of sign referents has on contemporary aesthetics. Among the causes for this situation he cites the automaton, the robot, the series, the code and more recently the model as they constitute the components of the value system that currently prevails. He then looks at the implications of these technologies for the human race and for art. His observation is that

> '*All aura of sign, of significance itself is resolved in this determination; all is resolved in the inscription and decodage*'[365]

From Baudrillard, it is possible to adopt an understanding that the code overrides any spontaneous dialectical possibilities as he states, '*it is the discontinuous indeterminism of the genetic code that now controls life*'[366] Everything is decided on the test, the model, question and answer. Such preoccupation, having to supply a rapid response to

the barrage of questions that contemporary society poses to the individual, implies there is no room for contemplation. Lack of contemplation in turn, displaces individuality. As Baudrillard points out,

> '*Montage and codification demand, in effect, that the receiver construe and decode by observing the same procedure whereby the work was assembled. The reading of the message is then only a perpetual examination of the code*'[367]

One more construction that Baudrillard refers to is the Hyperreal. His description, taken from his essay, The Critique of Originality, is an indictment of the contemporary understanding of reality.

> '*It becomes reality for its own sake, the fetishism of the lost object: no longer the object of representation, but the ecstasy of denial and of its own ritual extermination: the hyperreal*'[368]

Here it is implied that no traditional concept of reality is tangible or currently accessible. The effect of duplication of the sign is, that it destroys its' meaning, therefore the contradiction between real and imaginary is dimmed, '*the very definition of the real becomes that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction*'[369] The subsequent consequence for art and aesthetics is dismal, according to Baudrillard,

> '*because reality itself, entirely impregnated by an aesthetic which is inseparable for its own structure, has been confused with its own image*'[370]

According to Baudrillard, the implications of heightened technological advancement, in particular DNA is practically universal[371]. One cannot help comparing this position to that of Aristotle and John Locke's ideas on universality. Baudrillard is quite pessimistic, and feels that dialectical evolution is no longer a possibility but '*it is the discontinuous indeterminism of the genetic code that now controls life*'[372]

Consequently, reality is broken down into simple elements that are reassembled into scenarios of regulated oppositions. Reality is tested, and the viewer must decode it by applying the same methods. Baudrillard maintains public opinion is hyperreal, its

survival depends on montage, and test manipulation. He remarks that in this euphoric state of fusion of information creativity suffers. The real collapses and we are left with the hyperreal.

It is reasonable, therefore, to assume from Baudrillard's essay, that he perceives creativeness and aesthetics to be in crisis. This is an affirmation of what has already been attested to by Lyotard Baudrillard goes further, he infers that preoccupation with technology, the test, rapid-fire question and answer syndrome deprives human beings of their power to discriminate, and lowers their status to either that of the automaton (mechanical man) or robot. To strengthen his argument, he includes how with the advance of genetic science each human being can now be considered under the code of DNA. The danger in depending too much on such scientific data is a construction that implies the path of the individual may be inevitable, and offers little opportunity for change. A consequence of such an understanding must infer that there is little hope for creativity or spontaneous reaction to stimuli and no space for imagination. As Richard Kearney asks '*Has the very notion of imagination become a contradiction in terms'*. [373]

Baudrillard is not the only philosopher who is concerned with the contemporary use or misuse of sign or with the concept of hyperreality. Umberto Eco (1932-), in his essay 'Travels in Hyperreality', confirms how the application of new technology implicates the creative world of the artists, and consequently the perceptions of the viewer. Eco is extremely critical of the value system that pervades society. In particular, he is critical of American values '*a country obsessed with realism'*. As he sees it the counterfeit, the fake and hyperreality are some of the consequences of this obsessiveness. He makes the point that, the completely 'real' now consists of the completely 'fake', '*Absolute reality is offered as real presence.* '[374] For Eco too, the contemporary function of the sign is to become the object. The latter is in line with Baudrillard's opinion. Basically, Eco maintains, that technology confuses the real and the fake, and the result is what is sign '*appears to seem reality'* and '*reality aspires to appear sign* '[375]He warns that, in these circumstances, any referents for the sign can be replaced. In particular, Eco looks at the consequences for art and for aesthetic appreciation. He uses the example of the copies in waxwork of Leonardo's Last Supper,and points to the fact that, in making any of these copies, the concern is not with the formal execution, but only with the subject matter. One implication that can be drawn from this could be that it makes it difficult to argue

with its authenticity as a reproduction. When Eco refers to Randolph Hearst's recreation of European grandeur, he stresses that every space is filled with some suggestion and, Eco is scathing in his derisive criticism of this '*baroque rhetoric, eclectic frenzy, and compulsive imitation'* that prevails in a land '*where wealth has no history'*. To back up his argument even more, Eco uses the example of theme parks '*Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can*'[376] In Disneyland, any individual initiative is discouraged. As Eco sees it, parts of the theme park plan means no allowance is made for transitional spaces. He also makes the point that, in museums all is sign but aspires to seem reality, and, in the simulated version of reality, in such places as e.g. Marineland, another theme park, all is reality but aspires to appear sign.

A brief synopsis, of what could be considered a crisis in 'reality', can be outlined as follows. Already in the early twentieth century, Walter Benjamin points to the powers of reproduction and how they obscure authenticity. He also makes reference to the use of montage, and the manipulation of data, particularly with regard to photography and film. With the advance in technology further possibilities for obfuscation of reality are made available. The combined affect of all such advances is to reduce reality to a counterfeit or hyperreal state. The result brings confusion as to what, if anything might be considered real.

Despite the obvious tensions, the implications from the foregoing are that, certain writers and philosophers engage their dialectical skills to suggest alternative values, to combat a predominantly materialistic and technological society that prevails at this point in history. They are anxious to bring about a critical awareness of what it is that undermines aesthetic values in today's world; a society which, in their view, increasingly appears to be compelled to obscure the more esoteric aspects of the human condition. The perceived need for such a dimension - a holistic development of the human being - and the evolutionary process that is involved therein - is suggested by several. Merleau Ponty, for instance states that,

> *'The genesis of meaning is never completed. We can only contemplate truth in a symbolic context which situates our knowledge.* [377]

Even considering the title 'Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics' by Paul Ricoeur alerts the reader to the concerns of contemporary philosophers, when considering the arts, particularly with regard to interpretation [378] He points to the fact that, hermeneutics shows that philosophy does not have all the answers,

> '*there is no 'first truth', no 'absolute knowledge' no transcendent vantage point of lucid consciousness where the dispersal into multiple meaning could be definitively overcome in one final synthesis.*'[379]

Baudrillard's writing suggests that, the role of aesthetics is to dissipate the myth that science and empirical testing can supply all the answers. What is vital in the contemporary context therefore, and the imperative of creative artists, is to produce an art that can imbue the viewers with a sense of wonder and awe, a sense of mystery. Baudrillard makes the significant observation that, despite the fact that signs now refer

> *'only to the law of exchange and come under the commercial law of value'* there still exists *'a nostalgia for a natural referent of the sign'*[380].

Yet again, the particular angle taken by Merleau-Ponty on phenomenology, alerts us to the significance of the aesthetic image, in the following assertion

> *'Each artwork articulates a particular style of expression which opens an horizon of interpretative possibilities for reader or viewer. Put in another way, the meaning of an artistic project is determined as much by the audience's recreation as by the author's original creation'*[381].

Despite the serious construction that may be the initial response to the title of Richard Kearney's, The Wake of the Imagination, he does hold that, in the realisation of a human being's individual potential, salvation may be found through communication with fellow human beings. As he puts it,

> '*in the everyday claim of the face to face relation that we discover the still small voice which bids us continue the search for an ethical imagination – even when it is pronounced dead.*[382]

Relating to a sense of mystery can thus affirm, within the individual, the uniqueness of themselves as created beings, and not simply as an objectified code. Kearney describes this as

> '*the inalienable right to be recognised as a particular person whose very otherness refuses to be reduced to a mimicry of sameness*' [383]

In the foregoing, many eminent scholars draw a picture of the contemporary cultural climate; a picture that implies meaning at several different levels.[384] A brief summary may suggest two interpretations of the role of mystery in the Postmodernist period, namely the concept of mystery, as it refers to the empirical nature of phenomena, and a loss of a concept of mystery, as it refers to the transcendental nature of the individual.

In the former case, the concept of mystery as it refers to the empirical nature of phenomena; it might be felt that no satisfactory solutions can be concluded, despite all the delving into structure of both language and production, enabled by the consistent breakdown into separate fragments of the content of any given phenomenon. This methodology produces the cult of the expert that, might fit with one writer's opinion of postmodernist society that, '*replaces the cult of originality with myriad variations on the theme of repetition*[385] Expert opinion is constantly being sought, and relied upon, and may be alleged to have universal power. Increasingly language is used to quantify, qualify, and sort into categories the conceivable permutations that go into the production of an object. Unfortunately, the individual is also examined by means of objective method. Reality and authenticity become relics, and are replaced by montage and pastiche[386]. Nothing is at it appears to be, which is one level at which a concept of mystery might be understood to exist, and this is a universal empirical level.

An alternative interpretation might be the loss of an understanding of a concept of mystery as may be applied to the individual. A world, inhabited by experts, institutes a constant barrage of information, and images, and manipulates communication and meaning at an inordinate rate. One affect, that may result, is the individual imagination is anaesthetised. Any space, for the expression of or contemplation of a concept of mystery that expresses the transcendental, is pushed aside.

However, Julia Kristeva (1942-), noted contemporary philosopher and psychoanalyst, introduces a note of optimism into what might appear to be a pessimistic future. She points out the importance of retaining a sense of the imaginary '*the need for the imaginary, in fact, never ceases to make itself felt and is never exhausted*'.[387] One solution to the current need to reinstate the imaginary and restore the transcendental imagination in its role as the purveyor of mystery may be found in a work of art as suggested by Edward Said[388].

The turmoil of the twentieth century, and the present cultural history, is affected by the counterfeit, the hyperreal, the series, and the code. How these conditions impact upon contemporary aesthetics is explored not only by Baudrillard, Paul Ricoeur, and Umberto Eco, but also by Edward Said in his essay 'Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community' As Said sees the current situation

> *'far from taking in a great deal, the universal system as a universal type of explanation either screens out everything it cannot directly absorb or it repetitively churns out the same sort of thing all the time'*[389]

Said talks about the limitations imposed by fields of expertise. One consequence may be the lack of objectivity of the expert regarding his own position in relation to society as a whole. It is encouraging, however, that despite the seeming inevitability of experts, Said concludes his essay on a more optimistic note that,

> '*one must refuse to believe , however, that the comforts of specialized habits can be so seductive as to keep us all in our assigned places*'[390]

But the fact that philosophers do not always arrive at satisfactory or logical destinations on their journey does not dampen the enthusiasm of their successors; in fact it has the effect of encouraging a fresh start or renewed vigour to continue the search. This could be understood as, ambition to outshine ones predecessors, or perhaps, more a case of a genuine desire for knowledge, and a holistic attempt to enhance the destiny of the human condition.

A fresh approach, by a new generation, certainly takes into account the tradition out of which each study arises. This is evident in the fact that Moderism, adapted Kantian theory for its purpose, and if the rationale of this essay were to prove other associations and derivatives it would not be difficult to draw the strings of correlation together. However, what is of interest here, is the drive down new avenues with due regard for the foundations that have already been put in place by previous seekers of knowledge. This is the ongoing search for answers regarding the fundamental elements of creativity, through the medium of art, which will be of most benefit to human beings in their quest for the meaning of life.

Several analogies come to mind that may clarify this striving or hunger for solutions to perennial questions, one that may adequately capture the picture is that of the enchanted forest with its gnarled and twisted roots and divergent paths. Unquestionably, what can be deduced from the preceding pages is the importance of the reaction of contemporary aestheticians to previous canons; also the belief that the quest will continue, block upon block, refining and redefining in order to build a solid structure; such structure to form the basis upon which to uphold the claims of the importance of the cultural implication that attaches to the creative arts.

Conclusion:

The basis for this thesis was set in motion by a particular individual experience. Due to the nature of the phenomenon, it was decided, that the most likely source to offer an explanation of the wider implications, if there was any, might be found through exploring the history of aesthetics. A series of insights begin to emerge.

At the outset it was necessary to get an understanding of the historical role of art in cultural development. What was found is that social conditions have always been the dominant influence on the content of a work of art. The same can be said for the present day.

There is no ambiguity in stating that the primary purpose of art is its role as communicator. Traditionally, works of art are committed to the communication of a particular idea. By means of the recorded changes in art practice, as shown in the attached images, the history of art is divided into several periods. From these periods, it can be seen that an interesting shift in emphasis, of what is being communicated, has taken place over time. The content of earlier works of art was concerned with promoting an exemplary idea that had a basis in metaphysics, but from the Renaissance onwards, the focus of works of art takes on a more secular bias.

For example, in Ancient Greece the concept behind the work of art takes the form of ideal beauty, the omnipotence of a Christian God is the message in the Middle Ages, the genius of the artist in the Renaissance, the autonomy of the individual spirit in the Enlightenment, the individuality of the artist in the Romantic period, the political imperative in the Modern period, but now with the ambivalence of contemporary art it is almost made a virtue in itself to assess what the content is trying to communicate. What makes this ambiguity more complex is the prevalence of more material values in the evaluation of contemporary postmodernist era.

Indications on how to proceed are revealed slowly and with an open mind. Having established the role of art as communicator, the next imperative was to find out what constitutes an aesthetic experience. Just as the gradual realisation of the presence of the

Rothko paintings infiltrates the mind, so the connection between various elements that can be adduced in the contents of a work of art come to light in this search. To ascertain, if particular criteria are necessary before a decision as to the specific nature of what occurs when confronted with a work of art, can be judged to come under a particular heading, is indicated.

Initially, the contents of a work of art can be judged at two levels, the objective and the subjective. As far back as Plato and Aristotle there is evidence of the tension between such apparently obvious oppositions. What becomes clear, however, is that the relationship between what is objective and subjective is mirrored in the oppositions between the empirical and the transcendental, the universal and the individual, the reasonable and the sensual, the realistic and the imaginative. Some works of art reflect the logical, reasonable, empirical proposals to understand and measure what is perceived to be reality. **Plate 27.** Other works of art, at different periods in history, are more concerned with the imaginative, intuitive, emotive, sensual, metaphysical, interpretations of reality. **Plate 28.** Neither opposition, however, actually reflects the complete picture. The question must be if a third dimension is needed, in an effort to explain what happens when confronted by a work of art. So, the journey assumes an added necessity, to find out if, and, of what, this third dimension may consist.

What was found was, that, ideally, there must be a dialectical possibility between the artist, and the work of art, that must, in turn, synthesise with the viewer, in order to create the climate for the aesthetic experience. In other words, a tripartite relationship is formed between the artist, the work of art and the spectator to validate a truly aesthetic experience. A synthesis such as this indicates the presence of a ground from which to propose a new thesis. The importance of the aesthetic experience is then guaranteed and so is the possibility of a continuum.

From the examples looked at, it is evident that, there is no standard agreement on the criteria that can induce an aesthetic experience. All that can be stated is that at different times, subjective considerations are in the ascendancy and objectivity is relegated, and vice versa. Other contradictions also become clear, as more and more information is uncovered and the voices of various writers are heard. Step by step, the recognition of the consistency of the tensions between, the rational and the sensuous, the

epistemological and the ontological, the universal and the transcendental becomes clear. There is no conclusive evidence to support the primacy of one element over the other; rather, what can be deduced is a situation that makes allowances for the inclusion of both, to create another. It is impossible to provide definite answers to how this can be achieved successfully. What is implied is the importance of the individual involvement, and engagement with the work of art. The individual must engage with the work of art and take responsibility for making a judgement.

The task at hand takes on a more intimate and personal agenda, and encourages a tantalising desire to uncover more. There is no conclusive evidence to define how the constituent parts produce the complete aesthetic experience. However, even though the latter case is valid, detailed arguments to support the value of such an experience can be verified by history. The aesthetic experience can be linked to the exemplary idea. Kant, Hegel and Burke and many others attest to the interactive relationship, between the viewer and a work of art. Visual art can transport the individual from the realm of reality into another reality, a transcendental space. Values that are central to the holistic development of the human being are brought to the attention of the viewer, through the medium of the aesthetic experience.

Several writers support the idea that this must benefit the individual, and elevate the consciousness of society at large. Such a situation is reminiscent of ritual, and, by inference, religious practice. What appears to happen then is that the work of art can act as a catalyst so that the viewer is reminded of the importance of the exemplary idea and a value system, which is removed from a purely tangible material value. Consequently, the question that arises must centre on the validity of the aesthetic experience, as it can be related to the cultural climate of today; in other words the relevance of the aesthetic experience in the contemporary world.

It is clear, from history that the exemplary idea is open to individual interpretation but, in earlier times, symbolic reference keeps the focus and interpretation of works of art within certain parameters, one reason being that the content was based on natural phenomena. In other words, a consensus on symbolic meaning was possible. Today, however there is confusion because the symbol itself has no basis in any reality and symbol is a conglomerate of any number of phenomena. Nature is being sidelined in

favour of simulation. An added problem is that several experts can explicate the meaning of any given symbol. Universal opinions are handed down and take the form of dogma; the question and answer test syndrome is perceived to be the most reliable evaluation system. Any opinion that cannot fit such criteria would appear to have no value, or might be viewed with suspicion. One result appears to be that, the individual's own integrity is relegated by expert opinions and therefore, the value of individual integrity is placed at risk in the rush for globalisation.

If a universal value is applied to a work of art surely there is no compulsion upon the individual viewer to examine the content in any great depth. Therefore, the aesthetic experience may be deemed unnecessary, and the exemplary idea has little or no value. The value of the work of art is merely the commodity value, and, as such, is robbed of a more esoteric possibility and, consequently, so is the individual. As James Elkins remarks '*We are on a strict diet of ironic detachment; we permit ourselves slim rations of pleasure, but genuine transport is strictly forbidden*'[391]

While the pendulum swings from the empirical to the transcendental, there is a space in between that offers more intriguing possibilities. It could be construed that the contemporary message being delivered by works of art is one of complete materialism on the one hand. It should be remembered however that throughout history there has been a core element of thought that has never completely forgotten or ruled out the transcendental tradition first attributed to the Classical period of ancient Greece. So, on the other hand, evidence to support the importance of the aesthetic experience can still be recognised in the work of some thinkers and some artists.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the current situation that some element of hope and redemption is always to be found. This is dependent on a number of factors. The imperative of the artist to instil within the work some essential element that is extraneous to the work itself. The illusiveness of this element must, in turn, fascinate the viewer in such a manner that the desire to be led into this enchanted space defies logic. This brings the argument full circle, back to the aesthetic experience. An experience that cannot be quantified and qualified except in so much as it is construed to be impossible to contain within any logical explanation.

The initial steps, along the path of the history of aesthetics, make it clear that there is no continuous conduit that leads from the Ancient Greeks until now. The history of aesthetics is like a maze that shows many different routes leading to various points at which the traveller must pause, and reassess what has been learnt along the way. What has been learnt is, that all through the history of philosophy and critical theory tensions exist between both empirical and transcendental solutions, between the epistemological and the ontological. Neither one, nor the other, can claim exclusive paths to the truth, or, put it another way, both can claim their way leads to the truth. However, a more balanced opinion incorporates both views and proposes a third. Even so, while theorists and critics put forward different arguments, the individual conscience is the final arbiter.

All the time this journey branches off down side-roads that offer a more interesting vista of the area being explored. The question of individuality is one that insinuates itself into the equation. A work of art is an affirmation of the individual, not alone as the individual *per se* but the individual as a member of a community. A work of art is made for the community; otherwise it would have no function. A work can have many different agendas, it can be for enjoyment, as an anarchic political statement, or as a conscious reminder of some important truth, but ideally, a synthesis of the sensuous and the reasonable to produce an ephemeral third dimension, the aesthetic experience, is what makes a work of art.

Claims can be made for the role of art in society. What was found is that the subject of art is commensurate with the changes that are contemporary to society. In this way art is still imitative but through more abstract means of representation. One could say that, art is the barometer of the social conditions that prevail at any given moment in history. This can manifest itself as a total rejection of reality, as a symbolic reflection of reality, or as an attempt at a realistic re-presentation of reality. What is firmly established, as a result of this research, is that art has many roles, teacher, social analyst, spiritual and moral guide, and symbol of material status. Therefore art can have an influence on the well being of the individual.

Art cannot be relegated to a cul de sac. Whether the message it conveys is derisory or cynical, or positive and affirming, it always commands a response. Because of this, some feel that it is incumbent on the artist to adopt a very responsible attitude to the

creation of an image that will impact on the viewer as a capacity for good. While others maintain, that the artist and art should be autonomous. The balance to be struck is a question of value, aesthetic value or material value. The question of value challenges the viewer's own set of values. Through the whole journey, what dominates is the intrepid enquiry of so many philosophers, theologians, critical theorists, and critics, into this enigmatic experience that is provoked by a work of art. This is what this journey has been all about, enigma, mystery, illusion, and ephemera. This journey itself takes on all the attributes of mystery as it leads from one idea to another. Whether the aesthetic experience may mirror, or form a link to any other known life experience, gradually impinges upon the mind. In a Western Christian tradition such signposts can lead to only one possible link that is analogous with this experience, and that is, the religious or spiritual one.

To revert to the experience of the Rothko paintings there is no absolute explanation for such an experience. It can be partially understood but is not completely understandable. What is established however is that this experience can be shared. It does have a communal aspect to it.

Throughout the course of this research references are made to the strong relationship between art and metaphysics. Religion is traditionally related to metaphysics. What is suggested by this research is the very authentic and important role that art plays in the overall holistic evolution of human beings. Considering a number of facts that emerge, namely the advance of secularisation and the relegation of religion; allowing for the relationship between the exemplary idea and mystery; allowing that Mystery has many connotations but the most valid seems to be related to an out of world experience, in other words a transcendent experience; a suggested path is to identify what other known experience may be linked to the aesthetic experience.

In Western Christian tradition an aesthetic experience is most easily linked to a notion of sacrament. A short explanation, of the role of Sacrament in Christian tradition, shows that sacrament is linked to the most important events in the life of any human being. Sacrament is a sign and symbol that arises out of the experience of our lives. The purpose of Sacrament is to call to mind certain things but, Sacrament can only be effective so long as it is relevant to life. As Joseph Martos explains, '*Sacraments are not*

for the unconscious, the asleep or the dead'. They are for the awake and aware, the living and the growing'[392]. Birth, communion, initiation to adulthood, relationships, reconciliation, dedication and death are what form the basis of Christian sacraments. There can be no argument that such events are essential, they are individual yet impinge on the community, and so there is an obvious connection to the exemplary idea. Art is also a communicator through sign and symbol of the exemplary idea. So the question that now must be asked is, can a work of art fulfil the role of sacrament in a contemporary society? A reasonable proposal suggests that art might fill the obvious void left by obsessive secularisation.

Finally, what is found is a degree of mystery is what impels human beings forward on a quest to try and understand the fundamental issues of life. The aesthetic experience not only facilitates a concept of mystery, it embodies mystery. Art can have a very positive role in the overall well being of an individual. An individual is part of a community, therefore, art can have a beneficial communal affect. So the experience in the presence of the Rothko paintings is once again recalled. In the words of James Elkins

> '*The glow of a Rothko painting might be a sign of God or even a sign from God: but it also could just be a reminder of God*'[393]

An experience that is inexplicable, wondrous, enigmatic, essential, haunting, magical, spiritual, and inspiring. The aesthetic experience is validated through this research.

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[17] Eco, op.cit.p.54
[18] ibid.p..94
[19] ibid. p.41
[20] Gombrich, op.cit. p.3
[21] ibid. p.13
[22] Eco, op.cit.p.19
[23] ibid. p.53
[24] ibid. p.34
[25] ibid. p.66
[26] ibid .p.73
[Entelechy a term of art introduced by Aristotle in Metaphysics. It can be understood as the state of perfection towards which, by nature, each thing of a certain kind tends. Dictionary of Philosophy p.170]
[27] Beardsley, op.cit. pp.89-98
[28] ibid. p.94
[29] Eco, op.cit. p.47
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[32] Gombrich, op.cit. p. 13
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[69] Beardsley, op.cit. 167
[70] ibid. p.170
[71] ibid..p.170
[72] ibid. p.171
[73] ibid. p.173
[74] ibid. p.173
[75] Hanson, op. cit. p.39
[76] ibid.p. 82
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[78] Gombrich, op.cit p.172
[79] ibid.p.167
[80] Beardsley, op. cit. p.130
[81] ibid. pp.140-141
[82] Hanson, op. cit. pps.186-189
[83] ibid. p.53
[84] Beardsley, op. cit. p.167
[85] ibid. p.177
[86] ibid. p. 176
[87] Gombrich, op. cit. p.183
[88] ibid. p. 187
[89] ibid. p.188
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[135] ibid. p.167
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[138] ibid. p.182
[139] ibid. p.184
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[141] Beardsley, op. cit. p.249
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[188] ibid. p.215
[189] ibid. p.216
[190] ibid. p.220
[191] ibid. p.219
[192] ibid. p.219
[193] ibid. p.220
[194] ibid. p.220
[195] ibid. p.222
[196] Sisphyus in Greek legend is rolling a large boulder up a hill, but the weight of it does not allow him to reach the top, the effort is futile, he will never reach the top.
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Phenomenology is the attempt to describe our experience directly, as it is, separately from its origins and development, independently of the causal explanations that historians, sociologists or psychologists might give. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit is an account of how spirit gradually makes its appearance. The process begins by way of initial oppositions between itself and something else, and between different forms of consciousness and finally ends one all separation is overcome, with self knowledge, i.e. absolute knowledge. op.cit. 421
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[238] http:// www.philosophos.com/philosophy-article-69.html 03/06/2005
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[241] ibid. p.168
[242] ibid. p.169
[243].Aesthetics and Politics op. cit. p.116
[244] ibid.p.121
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[248] Adorno, 'Aesthetic Theory; in, ed. Kearney and Rasmusson, Continental Aesthetics, op. cit. p.246
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[369] Baudrillard, ' Simulations' in, Kearney and Rasmussion, Continental Aesthetics,op. cit. p. 426
[370] ibid. p. 427
[371] Baudrillard,'The Ecstasy of Communication', in, ed. Hal Foster, Postmodern Culture, op. cit. pp 126-133
[372] Baudrillard, 'Simulations' in, Kearney and Rasmussion, Continental Aesthetics, op. cit. p.417
[373] Kearney 'The Wake of the Imagination' op. cit. p 359
[374] Eco, 'Travels in Hyperreality', in, ed. Kearney and Rasmusson, Continental Aesthetics, op. cit. p.400
[375] ibid. p.408
[376] ibid. p.406
[377] Kearney, Modern Movements in European Philosophy, op. cit. p.80
[378] Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics',in, ed. Kearney and Rasmusson , Continental Aesthetics,op. cit. pp.339-358
[379] Kearney, Modern Movements in European Philosophy, op. cit. p.92
[380] Baudrillard, 'Simulations' in, ed. Kearney and Rasmussion, Continental Aesthetics, op. cit. p. 412
[381] Kearney, Modern Movements in European Philosophy, op. cit.p.82
[382].Kearney, The Wake of Imagination op. cit.p.366
[383] ibid.p.361
[384] See Roland Barthes interpretation of the Paris Match Cover in his final chapter of Mythologies where he puts forward the different interpretations that this image might induce. in, ed. Kearney op. cit. pp.319-331
[385] Ed.Wood and Harrison, op. cit. p.1044
[386] 'Thus the art of collage proves to be one of the most effective strategies in the putting into question of all the illusions of representation' Quotation from Derrida from Grammatology under the chapter on Collages cited in Gregory L.Ulmer's essay on 'The object of Post Criticism' in, ed. Foster, Postmodern Culture, op. cit.p. 88
[387] Ed. Wood and Harrison op. cit. p.1055
[388]ibid.. p. 1058
[389] Said, Edward. 'Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community', in, ed. Foster , Postmodern Culture, op. cit.p 143
[390] ibid. p.159
[391] Elkins, James Pictures & Tears op.cit. p.129
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[393] Elkins James, Picture & Tears op.cit. p.175

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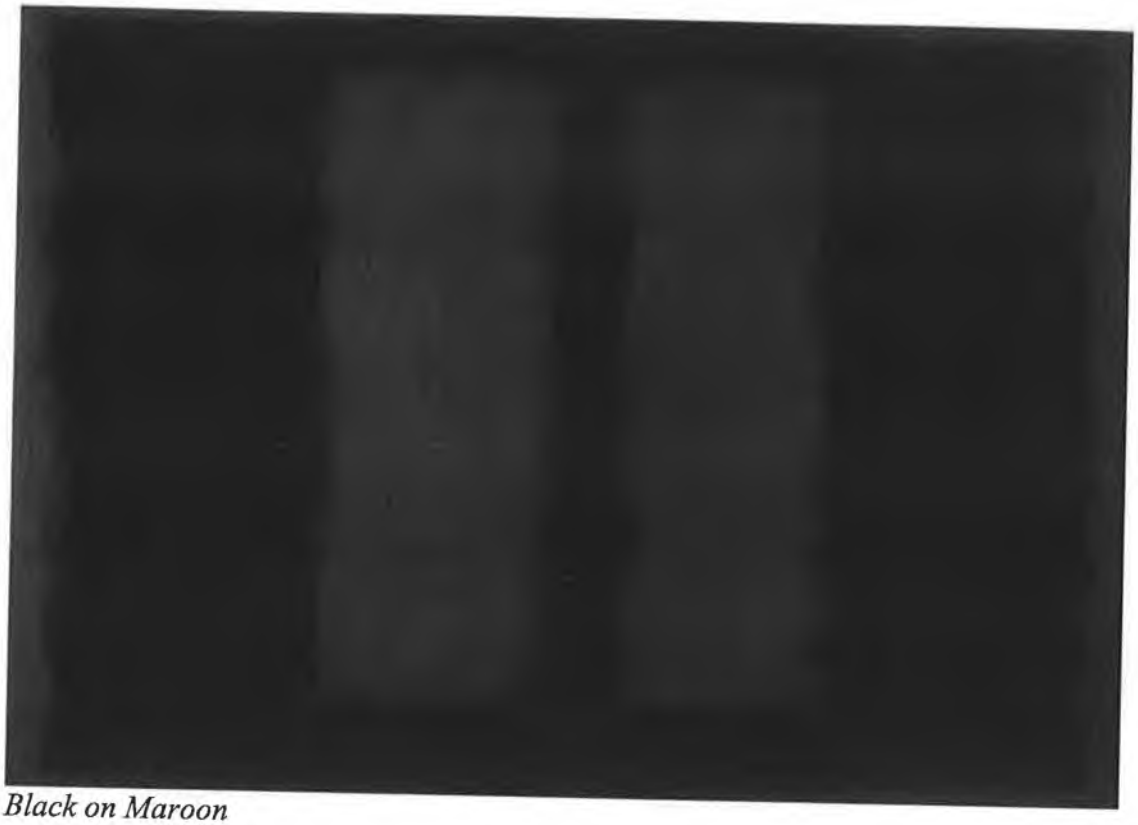
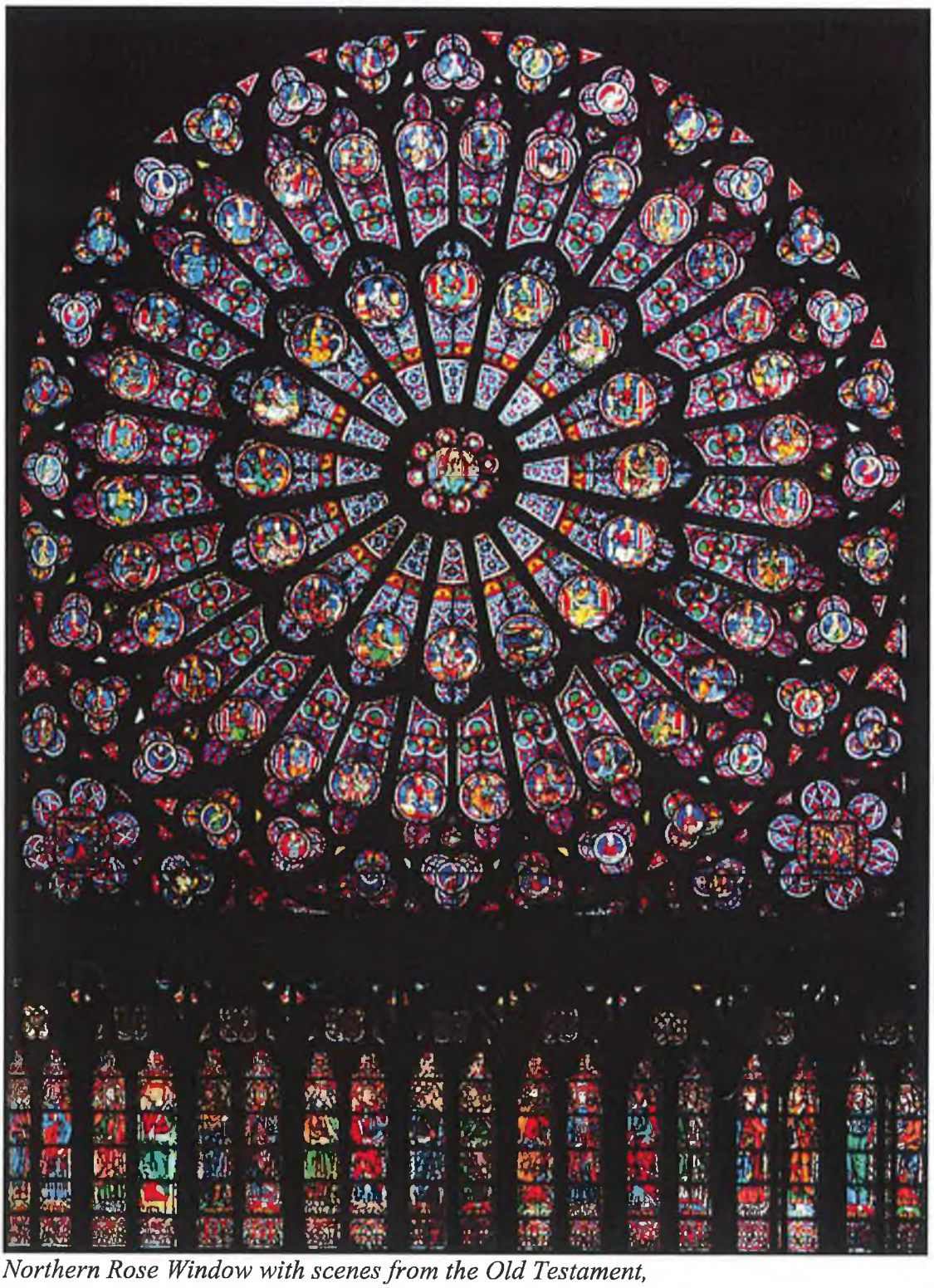


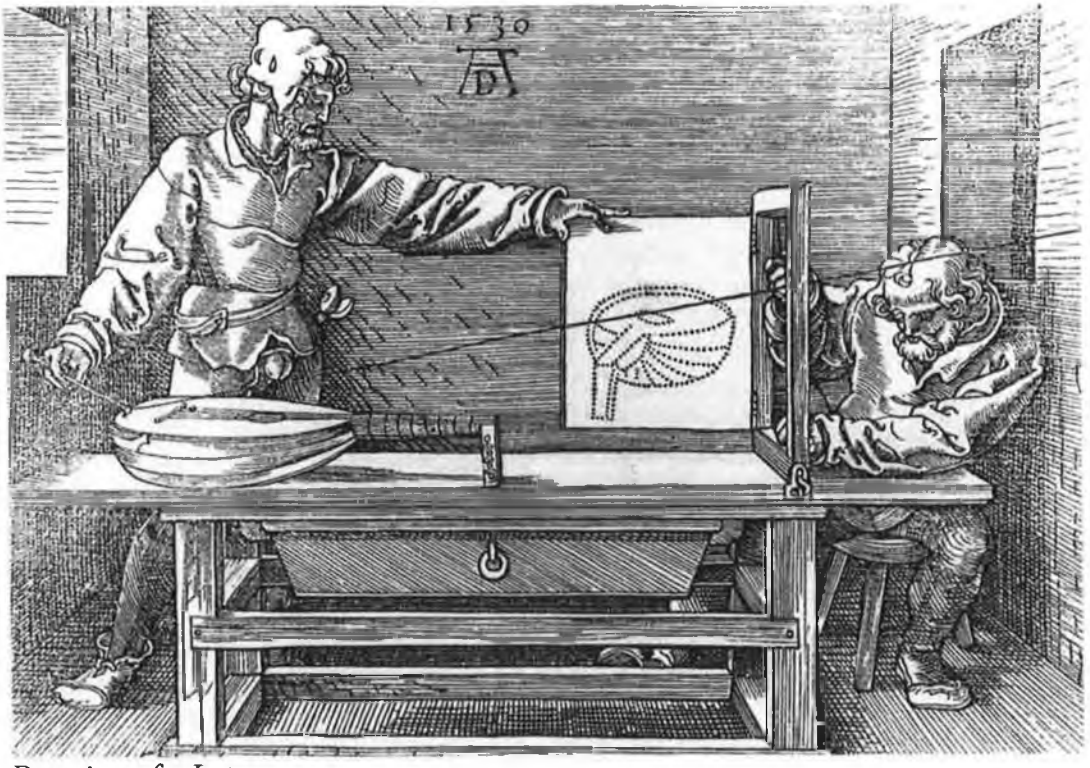
Black on Maroon
Oil on canvas,
226.7 x 457.2 cm
Mark Rothko 1959
Tate Modern, London

Discobolus,
Bronze Sculpture,
155cm
Myron, 460-450 BC



Northern Rose Window with scenes from the Old Testament,
The Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris

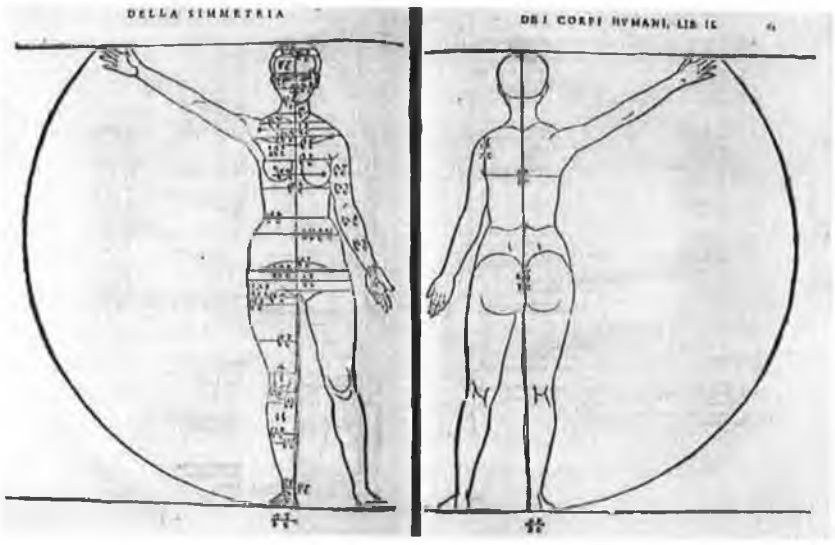
Lady with an Ermine,
Oil on Walnut Board,
40.3 x 54.8 cm, Leonardo da Vinci
Krakow Czartorysky Musuem



Drawing of a Lute,
Woodcut,
13.6 x 18.2 cm
Albrecht Durer, 1525
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Madonna of the Rocks,
Oil on Panel,
199 x 122 cm
Leonardo da Vinci, 1503-1506
Louvre Museum, Paris

Peasant Wedding,
Oil on Wood,
112.5 x 161.25 cm
Peter Bruegel the Elder, 1568
Kunsthistoriches Museum, Vienna



Anthropometric Plate from On the Symmetry of Human Bodies,
Albrecht Durer, 1528

GOETHE's
Colour-Wheel

The Nightmare,
Oil on canvas,
127 x 102 cm
Johann Henreich Fuesli, 1781
The Institute of Arts, Detroit USA

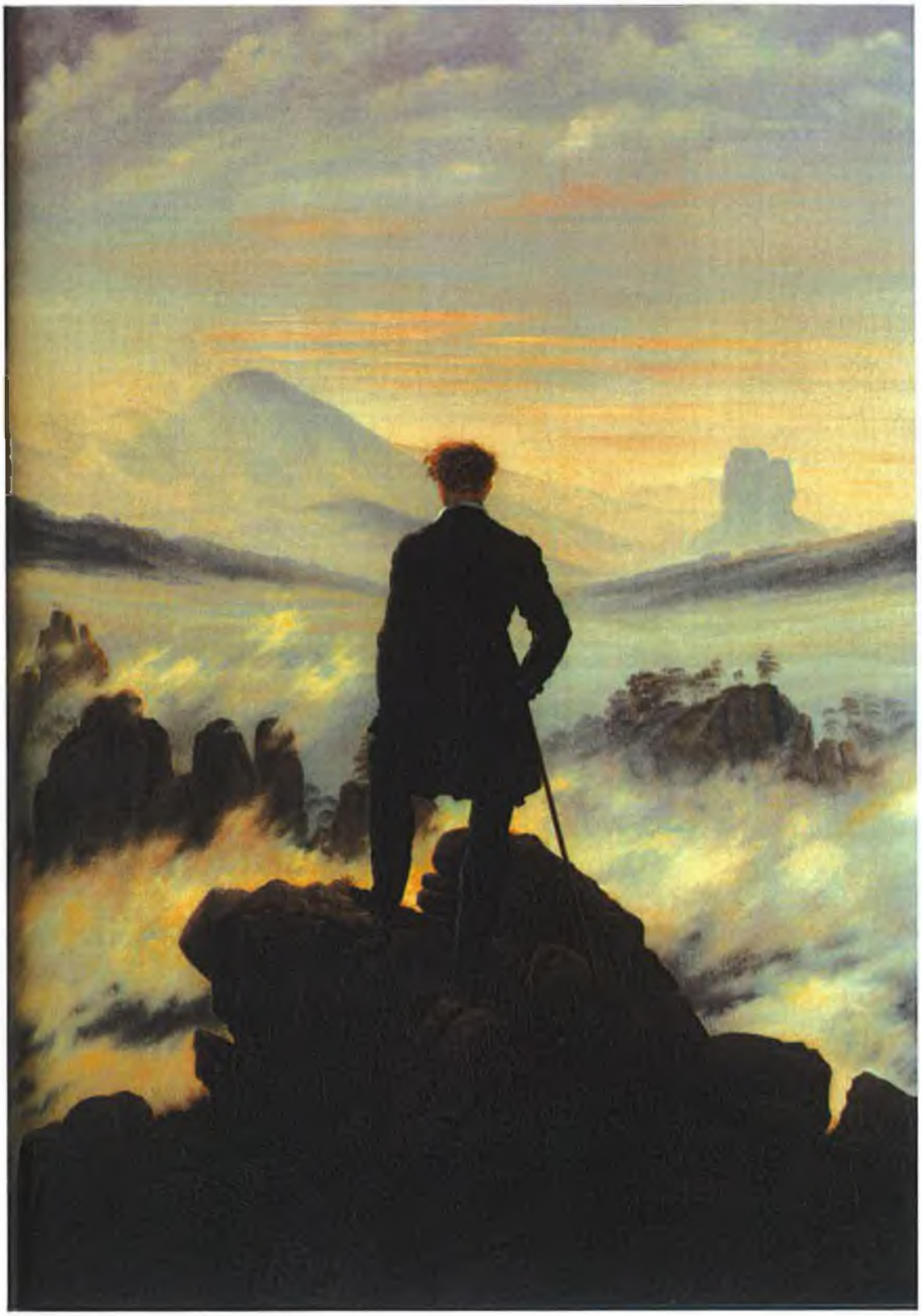
Angel Opening the Bottomless Pit and the Emergence of the Locusts,
From Beatus of Lienana,
Illuminations of Beatus Fernando I and Sancha (code B.N. Madrid)
Eighth century.

Laocoon Group,
Marble,
Height 244 cm
Late 2nd century BC
Vatican Museum, Rome

Les Demoiselles au bord de la Seine,
Oil on canvas,
174 x 206 cm,
Gustave Courbet, 1857
Musee de Petis Palais, Paris

Hannibal Crossing the Alps,
Oil on Canvas,
146 x 237.5 cm
Verse: 'While the fierce archer of the downward year
Stains Italy's blanch'd barrier with storms'
James Mallord William Turner, 1812,
Tate Britain, London

The Dance of Life,
Oil on Canvas,
123.75 x 187.5 cm
Edvard Munch 1899-1900
National Gallery, Oslo

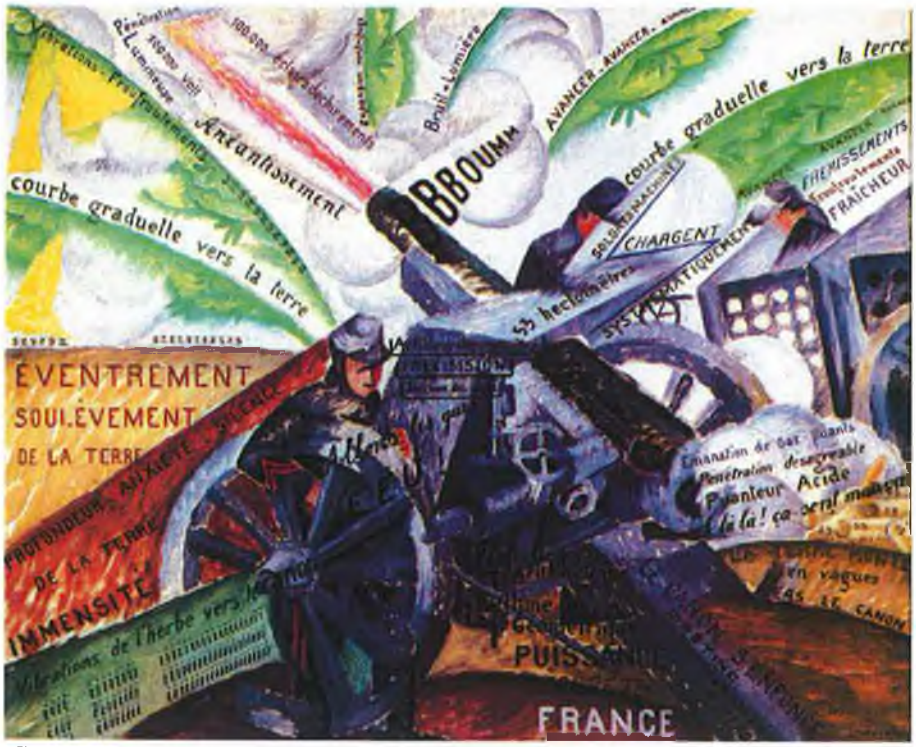


Wanderer Above the Mist,
Oil on canvas
174.8 x 94.8 cm
Casper David Friedrich, 1818
Kunsthalle, Hamburg

The Gleaners,
Oil on Canvas,
83.8 x 111 cm
Jean Francois Millet, 1857
Musee d'Orsay, Paris

Liberty Leading the People,
Oil on canvas,
65.4 x 90.2 cm
Eugene Delacroix 1830,
Louvre Museum, Paris

TheThird Class Carriage,
Oil on canvas,
65.4 x 90.2 cm
Honore Daumier, 1863-1865
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Canons in Action,
Oil on Canvas,
50 x 60 cm
Gino Severino 1915
Museum Ludwig, Cologne

PERS 5 Freud's View of the Human Mind: The Mental Iceberg

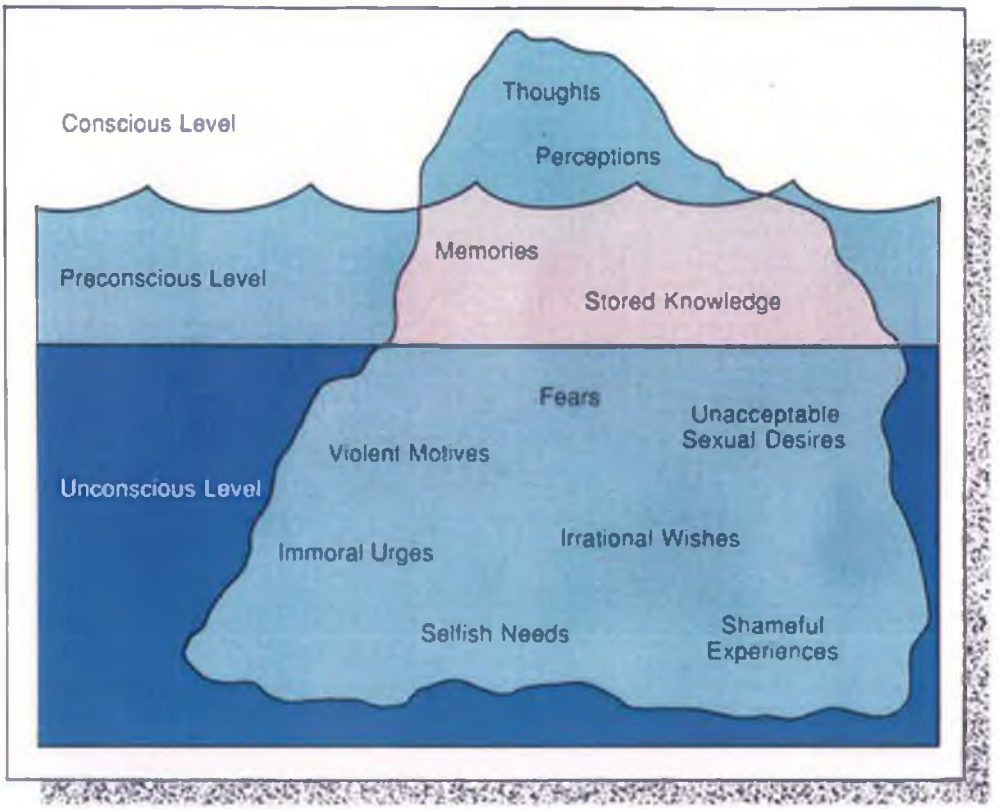


Diagram of the composition of the human mind.

Semi nude Girl Reclining.
Gouache, watercolour, and pencil heightening on paper,
45.9 x 31.1 cm
Egon Schiele, 1911
Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

Apparition of face and fruit bowl on a Beach,
Oil on canvas,
114.2 x 243.7 cm
Salvador Dali
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, USA

Corps de Dame,
Oil on Canvas,
117 x 90 cm
Jean Dubuffet, 1950
Louisana Modern Art Museum, Denmark

Untitled,
Oil on Canvas,
125.5 x 100.5 cm
Asger Jorn, 1943-44
Louisana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark

Around the Circle,
Oil and Enamel on Canvas,
97 x 146 cm
Wassily Kandinsky, 1940
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

A Bigger Splash,
Acrylic on Canvas
243.8 x 243.8 cm
David Hockney 1967
Tate Gallery, London

Shadowy Carvings of An Ancient Execution, Good Friday
Oil on Board,
120 x 90 cm
Tony O'Malley, 1992,
St. Mary's, Callan, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland