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EDWARD S. CASEY

Expression and Communication in Art

THE PHENOMENON OF EXPRESSION is one of the most elusive objects of philosophical description. It is not unambiguously clear what kind of object expression is, or even whether it is an object at all. The very term *ex-pression* seems to suggest a process rather than an object: an exteriorizing of an inner content. Both the process and the content defy customary "objective" description; standards of exactitude and rigor demanded elsewhere in philosophy or science appear to be inapplicable to such an indeterminate phenomenon. Whether it is reducible to a process or not, an expressive phenomenon such as a gesture, a cry, or a painting has an adumbrative aspect that cannot be neglected in any adequate description. The penumbral quality of expression eludes the tenterhooks of a traditional empiricist approach as well as a method of eidetic insight.

In this plight, the move is frequently made to limit description to the manifest content of expression, banishing any latent content to the realm of the unknowable. One version of this move is found in recent ordinary language philosophy; linguistic expression is located in behavioral patterns of "utterance," which occurs within a context of social conventions. As Austin writes: "There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances."¹ An "inner process," as Wittgenstein said, "stands in need of out-

ward criteria."² Variations on this theme can be seen in such otherwise diverse philosophers as Wilfrid Sellars and Stuart Hampshire.³

Another form of the move toward the manifest and objective is found in certain versions of phenomenology. When Husserl discusses "expression" (*Ausdruck*) in *Ideen I*, he links it with "logical signification," that is, with the fully explicit, the conceptual, the objective, with the realm of Logos or language in its universal character.⁴ The analytic criteria of conventionality and publicity are replaced by notions of pure conceptuality and explicit meaning. In both cases, however, we may observe a tendency to narrow the phenomenon of expression to its most objective, specifiable dimensions. There is nothing noxious about this recourse to objectivity, especially in the case of language. For language, whether in its ordinary or in an ideal form, is a kind of expression that must possess certain objective rules of interpretation and of syntax; these and other factors make possible the sedimentation and transmission of meaning on which interpersonal communication depends.

But it can be questioned whether other forms of human expression depend to such a degree as does language on determinate rules, contents, or contexts. These other forms of expression include myth, gesture, and art. None is accurately classifiable as "language" except in an extremely attenuated sense. This is largely because in these instances expression is predominantly *tacit*. The expressive phenomena which we encounter here do not essentially possess the

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kind of dimensions which can be made fully overt or explicit. Such overtness and explicitness are permanent and necessary features of ordinary and ideal languages; this is especially the case if we assume that the destiny of verbal language is indeed linked with Logos as the basis for conceptual objectivity.

We should also notice that the phenomenal surface of language differs markedly from that found in gesture, myth, or art. The felt surface of language does not in itself typically engage our attention; what is presented to us phonically or in print—the “vehicle”—is normally surpassed and even suppressed as we attend to the specific meaning conveyed by this vehicle. Contrastingly, in mythic, gestural, and aesthetic phenomena our attention is riveted directly onto the phenomenal surface; what we are looking for happens at or on this surface, not beyond or behind it. The expressive meaning is not experienced as detached from the presented gesture, myth, or work of art; it is felt as inherent in the phenomenal surface. This surface is apprehended as an intentional, not an actual, object.⁵ As a consequence, the aesthetic object cannot be either as arbitrary or as determinate as the corresponding object in linguistic expression. The aesthetic object is not a mere point of transition, but something essentially intransitive. Our attention is arrested at the phenomenal surface of this object; it is detained, or rather retained, there by an adhesion of consciousness to what is felt or seen. This surface is the primary expressive phenomenon; even though it is an intentional object, it can no longer be said to be “objective” in the sense of standing over against us as does a resistant perceptual object. Even the “psychic distance” required by some art forms does not entail the objectivity of the phenomenon in any way strictly comparable to the objectivity which functions in language or in mere perception. This does not mean that the experiences of art, myth, or gesture are wholly “subjective” or purely personal; in fact, our adhesion to the presented surface precludes any total assimilation of the object by the self.

In this paper I shall restrict myself to the

phenomenon of expression in art, and largely to a prevalent form of its misinterpretation. Expression in art has often been understood in terms more appropriate to verbal expression, as if the latter formed a paradigm case for all types of expression. This occurs most conspicuously when aesthetic expression is confused with communication, as we shall see. Of course, there are other ways in which the linguistic model subtly infects our understanding of artistic expression—for example, by leading us to look for a “hidden” meaning not present in what we shall call, following D. W. Prall, the “aesthetic surface.”⁶ All too many theories of art make this transphenomenal move, only to discover in the end that a return to the phenomenon as originally presented—i.e., to the aesthetic surface itself—is necessary. Since my emphasis will be on this “return to the phenomenon,” my approach will be phenomenological in a sense broad enough to encompass, though critically, the pioneering efforts of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.

A final preliminary note: the aesthetic surface is not necessarily superficial; it may possess its own peculiar depth. The amount and kind of depth depend primarily on import and its mode of integration into the aesthetic object. *Import* is meaning or significance as it is experienced in art: meaning without the typical conceptual properties of abstractness and universality. It is sense as incorporated into the aesthetic object; we could equally well call it “expressive meaning,” that is, meaning that forms part of the expressiveness of a given phenomenon.⁷ In any event, it is import that constitutes the depth dimension of the aesthetic surface. This surface has at least two other crucial dimensions: the perceptual and the affective. The perceived in art is the structural or formal aspect of the surface; it is the most explicitly specifiable element, even though its complete description is not always possible. Feeling or affective quality is the connective tissue of the aesthetic surface; it is a sensuous tonality that characterizes the aesthetic object as a whole. But it characterizes by individualizing—by infusing the object with a unique affective tone.

I

There is a recurrent tendency to connect, and even to identify, expression and communication in art. Thus Martin Foss states flatly that "expression in the field of art is always communication."⁸ Joseph Margolis has observed recently that "the theory of expression tends to encourage us to think of fine art and the appreciation of fine art in terms of a communicative pattern between artist and spectator."⁹ This tendency is not confined to contemporary aestheticians: John Dewey claimed that "because the objects of art are expressive, they communicate."¹⁰ Indeed, one discovers already in Plato the idea that truly expressive art communicates, almost in spite of itself, a specific message. In general, it has been the more austere and moralistic interpretations of art that, from Plato through Sartre, have most emphatically stressed its communicative aspect, often placing expression in the service of communication. Yet even theories relatively unburdened by moral preoccupations have understood art as a form of communication, whether of thoughts or of feelings; thus Kant, who limits art to being a "symbol" of morality, nevertheless links expression and communication in art.¹¹

One reason for this pervasive though ultimately perverse view of art is, as I have already suggested, a misleading use of linguistic models for understanding aesthetic expression. Since language clearly communicates—indeed, is the chief means of communication between human beings—expression is held to do something similar. "Art, like speech," said Tolstoy, "is a means of communication."¹² Of course, such a bald assertion must be further qualified, for art cannot communicate exactly as language does or it might become superfluous. Hence Tolstoy adds that "whereas by words a man transmits his thoughts to another, by means of art he transmits his feelings."¹³ We may take this as a classic statement of the thesis that expression in art is an activity of quasi- or paralinguistic communication. We must examine more closely the assumptions and implications of such a contention.

One assumption which we can reject immediately is that language is limited to con-

veying thoughts, and art to transmitting feelings. On the one hand, no one can deny that there is expressive language (as in poetry) or emotive language (as in a cry) whose content is primarily affective, not intellectual. Even if the ultimate *telos* of language is conceptual, it may still retain the capacity to convey and evoke emotions. In a sense, it *must* keep this capacity, since emotions are not always adequately expressed by gestures—as we know from the trying experience of viewing a foreign film whose language is wholly unknown to us. On the other hand, art is not limited to feeling for its content; it may also possess import. Admittedly, the latter is not strictly conceptual in character, but neither can it be reduced to, or identified with, feeling or sentiment.¹⁴

We should pay special attention to the model of communication which Tolstoy and others assume to function both in art and in language. *Transmission* is the key term used in describing this model, and it implies a sending of something across or through a medium to reach a certain specific destination. There are three critical elements in this act of transmission: a content transmitted, a medium through which the content is transmitted, and the object at which the transmission is aimed. Tolstoy spells this out explicitly at another point in his discussion in "What is Art?":

To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art.¹⁵

Leaving aside the question of what "evoke" means here, we may observe the main consequence of the three-term analysis of expression as communication: the relative devaluation of the middle term, which becomes merely a medium or means for conveying feeling from artist to spectator. This devaluation is already a clue that something has gone wrong with the analysis. For aesthetic experience is focused on the aesthetic surface—in short, on the very "movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms" which Tolstoy sees as the mere means to something further. In aesthetic experience itself, however, they are apprehended as in-

herently attractive in themselves. Whether it is feeling or thought on which we focus, we contemplate it as *ingredient* in the aesthetic surface, not as merely conveyed by it. The locus of what is expressed resides in the expressive object itself, not behind it in the artist's intentions or beyond it in the spectator's reactions. We might call this phenomenon of surface presentation "frontality," provided this term not be paired with a complementary "posteriority." Aesthetic frontality has been emphasized in diverse ways, from the hieratic Egyptian profile to "hard-edge" and "op" art, but its meaning in the present context is simply that the aesthetic surface presents itself as irrevocably frontal; even the unseen sides of a three-dimensional sculpture present themselves as potential "fronts." This means that our aesthetic attention is directed primarily to the presented surface. Thus the "transmitted" content is seen more truly as *intromitted*—sent from within the aesthetic object, not merely conveyed by or across it.

Yet even the metaphor of "sending" is questionable, since what is sent is normally considered to be a message of some sort. The model of transmission especially encourages the interpretation of content as message. Thus Roger Fry writes: "If we take an analogy from the wireless—the artist is the transmitter, the work of art the medium, and the spectator the receiver . . . for the message to come through, the receiver must be more or less in tune."¹⁶ Such a message or *communiqué* may contain a thought or a feeling; but in either case it will possess a definite form, so that it can be sent or imparted intact. On the communication model, there is a tendency to consider aesthetic content as something quite determinate, even when the term *message* is not explicitly used. Merleau-Ponty appears to succumb to this temptation when he writes that "aesthetic expression confers on what it expresses [i.e., its content] an existence in itself, installs it in nature as a thing perceived and accessible to all."¹⁷ At least this is not to claim, as Tolstoy and Fry would, that the communicated content exists as determinate *before* the act of expression. Instead, Merleau-Ponty wishes to underline the way in which the

content *becomes* determinate by embodiment in the aesthetic object during and through the expressive act. In itself, this is certainly correct: if anything is determinate in art, it is the embodied feeling or thought, not its disincarnate forerunner or separable message.

The main problem with Merleau-Ponty's move, however, is that it ends by misinterpreting the nature of the aesthetic object itself. No longer viewed as an ephemeral medium, the object is given an actuality that it does not possess as experienced, that is, as an intentional object. It is said, for example, to be a continuation of the body's expressivity: "the expressive operation of the body, initiated by the slightest perception, is expanded into painting and into art."¹⁸ But if the work of art is an extension of the body, it is at most an intentional or perhaps imaginary extension—not in the sense of a phantom projection but of an object with a capacity to awaken or revive our kinesthetic and synesthetic powers.

More commonly, however, the aesthetic object is interpreted as a mere perceptual object, e.g., as a "vehicle" or "support" for non-material content or value.¹⁹ The burden of objectivity is thus shifted from the message to the medium itself, and we end with a doctrine of expression as a property of perceptual qualities. This result is seen in the writings of Rudolf Arnheim, who claims that artistic "expression is an inherent characteristic of perceptual patterns . . . [and] its manifestations in the human figure are but a special case of a more general phenomenon."²⁰ In this view, the expressive medium is given objectivity through a reduction to its perceptual determinants; even the body's expressiveness, seen as primary by Merleau-Ponty, is held to be derivative from the putative perceptual absolute found in perceptual patterns.

What is missing from an interpretation such as Arnheim's is an adequate appreciation of the distinction between the sensuous and the perceptual in art. The sensuous is the affective dimension which accounts for the cohesiveness of the expressive, as well as for the feeling of continuity between aesthetic object and spectator. The latter *feels* as well as perceives art; what he perceives

are certain structural patterns, but he *feels* their impact and tension. Affective content in art cannot be reduced to perceptual givens. The perceived must mingle and blend with elements of affect and import to compose the complex aesthetic surface; the perceived is not merely the empirical support for this surface, and it is not the sole basis for the intransitive character of the aesthetic object. It is only one element among others equally crucial.

II

Thus far, we have observed two ways of construing the thesis that expression in art is a form of communication. First, the phenomenon of art is seen as analogous to language, hence as possessing a determinate content transmitted through a diaphanous medium. This content may be viewed as pure feeling, as with Tolstoy; but it is even more frequently interpreted as thought in the form of a moral truth, as in Plato or Sartre. In general, the more determinate the content, the less important the medium is held to be; the acme of expressive communication would be reached if the medium were to become wholly transparent or even to disappear altogether. But there is a second view of communication whereby the analogy with language is muted, and the medium is raised into special prominence. Expressivity is located squarely within the perceptual patterns of the medium, as in Arnheim's contention, and it is this expressivity that is said to be communicated to the spectator. This interpretation has the merit of not confusing "what is expressed" with something mental or conceptual, but it tends to reduce the expressed to the perceptually determinate, as we saw in the statement from Merleau-Ponty. This is the position of extreme perceptual objectivism in art; the aesthetic object becomes a transcendent perceived particular. The role of feeling is neglected—not only the viewer's or artist's feeling but more crucially the sensuousness that permeates the aesthetic surface as a whole. This sensuous factor cannot be equated with what is perceived; on the contrary, the perceived is only the

structural element within which the sensuous appears.

These two primary forms of the communication thesis are sometimes combined in a third view. The aesthetic object is seen as both perceptually expressive in itself and yet also as indicative of a transphenomenal content. The medium retains a certain substantiality only to become a sign for this ultimate "meaning" of the work. Such a meaning is not conveyed to the spectator directly (as in the ideal of the first view) but *as indicated* by the perceptual medium. Thus the medium becomes the medium *for* the message in the sense that all indicative signs stand "for" their designatum. The medium acts as what Tolstoy, in another passage, calls an "external indication": "Art begins when one person, with the object of joining another or others to himself in one and the same feeling, expresses that feeling by certain external indications."²¹ On this view, expressivity in art becomes a phenomenon of indication, in which content is communicated indicatively by the perceptual ("external") medium.

To understand why this claim is false, we need to know more about the nature of indication. Husserl provides an acute analysis of this basic sign-function in the first of his *Logische Untersuchungen*. Husserl sees indication as a relation of sign-reference between one term, of whose existence one has present perceptual knowledge, and another term whose existence is known or presumed on the basis of the first. Thus the indicative relation is indexical or denotative, the existence of one term serving to convince the sign-interpreter of the existence of the other. If such a relation were to be found in art as Tolstoy claims, the aesthetic surface would have to be interpreted as a perceptual object indexically pointing to another object (which could itself be perceptual or conceptual in character). The only link between the two phenomena would be an act of "association" whereby the one motivated us to believe in the other.

Yet nothing like this occurs in our experience of genuinely expressive art. There is no indexical, hence external, relation either within the aesthetic object or between this object and some other object. Instead, all

significant elements in aesthetic experience are apprehended as copresent and copresented. At most, the various aspects or elements resemble each other iconically—in an act of reciprocal *mimesis*—but they do not denote one another. Only if the sensuous surface were converted into a hard *perceptum* or if the import were transformed into a pure concept, would we begin to have a situation in which indication could occur in art. But this would mean the destruction of the aesthetic surface. Whatever the origin of the elements in this surface, once they are part of the aesthetic object they must all exhibit a common sensuousness for expression in art to be possible. This sensuousness acts as an indelible monogram and cannot be distorted or reduced without losing the unique affective quality that provides the aesthetic object with its characteristic coherence. The intrusion of the indicative relation into this rich qualitative texture would mean the disintegration of a seamless whole.

We should also observe that if Husserl is correct, all communication is indicative in nature; and strictly speaking, communication is restricted to language. Thus he writes that “in communicative discourse all expressions function as indices.”²² As a result, any attempt to interpret art as communicative in nature will fail, for it will always involve the more or less pronounced effort to force indication into the heart of expression. Yet the two are incompatible in art—a fact we realize each time we are confronted with the grosser forms of Socialist Realism. Only in language and (less explicitly) in gesture can expression and communication coexist successfully. And while communication is a legitimate and necessary feature of language and gesture, it is a falsifying and even corrupting presence in art, diverting art from its proper purpose: expression.

III

The communication theory of art dies hard. It tends to reappear under guises more sophisticated than Tolstoy's simple transmission model or his related view that the work of art is an indicative sign. One of the most frequent of these guises is that of

manifestation. Croce, who rejects the notion of communication in art as belonging to mere “technique” and hence to the “practical” sphere, nevertheless contends that artistic expression includes “every sort of manifestation.”²³ D. W. Gotshalk defines expression as “a kind of objectification or objective manifestation of whatever is said to be expressed.”²⁴ In contrast with communication, manifestation as a term has the merit of de-emphasizing the notion that art merely transmits a given content to the spectator. Instead, it stresses the presentational character of the aesthetic object. The model for manifestation is often an act of “disclosure” which may (a) take time in which to unfold; (b) require extensive interpretation; (c) retain some unapprehended aspects even following disclosure. This view of manifestation lies at the heart of many theories of art as possessing symbolic, metaphysical, or ontological significance. Heidegger's interpretive essays on Hölderlin are among the more extravagant examples of this type of approach.²⁵

Yet the idea of art as manifestation is subject to the same basic error as the theories of art as communication examined above. For manifestation is itself a form of indication understood in the broad Husserlian sense of *Anzeige* to which we have appealed. In fact, it is a modification of the communicative act. This is most clearly seen in Husserl's further analysis of verbal communication, where there is said to be a mutual manifestation between speaker and hearer of their respective “psychic experiences” (*Erlebnisse*). Such experiences form the content of manifestation: a content indicated by the spoken or written words of discourse. These words are taken as “distinctive signs” (*Kennzeichen*) of psychic content. But manifestation, so conceived, would be as destructive of the aesthetic surface as was the original thesis of communication. The autonomy of this surface is denied in analyzing it into signs designating otherwise inaccessible inner experiences.

On Husserl's view, in expression proper no such signs are necessary; all indicative relations of association or motivation disappear. A signification (*Bedeutung*) animates the expression. This signification is a self-

sufficient content; there is no further primary reference to something else (though there can be secondary references). Expression in its pure state occurs prototypically in silent monologue, where all one's psychic acts are experienced "at once" (*im selben Augenblick*). In such a state, all manifestation, even to oneself, becomes unnecessary because one is already fully revealed to oneself. This means that the perceptual factor, bound up with all indicative signs, may even be eliminated:

that which is to serve as an index (a distinctive sign) must be *perceived* by us as existent (*da-seiend*). This holds especially for expressions in communicative discourse, but not for expressions in solitary discourse.²⁰

Therefore, manifestation is inexorably bound up with communication (we communicate by means of manifesting our psychic states), and both phenomena are indicative by nature. They both lack what only pure expression possesses: an intrinsic signification or meaning. This meaning *animates* the expression. Lacking this animation, communication and manifestation are dependent on perceptual existents in the form of indicative signs; hence they are empirically mediated in character. The mundane substantiality of these signs is a surrogate for the immediacy and direct animation of pure expression, which can deploy itself freely in the imaginary.

For this reason, expression in art is itself never pure. The perceptual component can never be wholly eliminated as in interior monologue. What can and must be bracketed, however, is the perceptual component apprehended as an indicative sign. This exclusion of the indicative sign-relation from art applies both to its apparent denotative aspect (e.g., in representational painting) and to its authentic connotative aspect (by which the aesthetic object may possess a plural import). The aesthetic surface is neither an isolated indicative sign nor itself a species of indicative sign-language. It is not even "self-designating," if this term is taken to mean a re-introduction of the indexical relation in terms of self-reference.²⁷ Rather, the aesthetic surface is an autonomous texture of presented import, feeling, and per-

ception in which all reference is (a) internal and (b) iconic in nature. The principal legitimate sign-relation is one of mutual resemblance between elements within the aesthetic surface. If this reciprocal similarity is consummately successful, the work of art presents itself as an icon of itself—i.e., as a self-resembling sign in which the terms are no longer radically distinct but potentially identical. A coalescence of similarities tends toward, even if it never fully achieves, iconic self-identity.²⁸

IV

In speaking of communication and manifestation in art, we have been able to make only indirect references to the role of the *other*. I would like now to consider the apprehension of the other viewed as a possible analogue to the contemplation of the aesthetic object. This analogy has been exploited by a number of aestheticians. Mikel Dufrenne likens the aesthetic object to a "quasi-subject" because of its near-human expressivity; the aesthetic object is seen as an analogue of a human face or body.²⁹ R. G. Collingwood compares the experience of art to the speaker-hearer relation in spoken discourse: just as thought can be reconstructed on the basis of the appropriate sounds, so the work of art can be "re-enacted" by the spectator on the basis of certain "impressions." Collingwood calls this process one of "communication," though he cautions that it is not a matter of mere transmission.³⁰ The assumption is made that the impressions, also called "psychical feelings," function much as words do: that communicating with, and apprehending, the other are events parallel to what happens in the experience of art as expressive. Dufrenne makes much the same assumption. But is the assumption valid?

I do not believe that it is. It is true that the aesthetic object and the other both possess an expressivity which we sometimes call by the same name: "physiognomic." By this, we presumably mean that expressive features in a work of art may have a strikingly human "look," although there may be no recognizably human object present or depicted. Thus we might catch ourselves say-

ing that a certain abstract expressionist painting is suffused with a frenetic quality quite similar to the personality of someone we know. Of course, the descriptive terms of the analogy are often imprecise, since physiognomic characters are notoriously difficult to name with precision. But it is undeniable that on occasion we may feel a "community of essence" between a person (often the artist himself) and a painting. What must rather be denied is that the aesthetic object always, or necessarily, possesses a distinctly physiognomic aura. It may be felt as non-human altogether, as in certain of Tanguy's desolate surrealist landscapes. Thus the physiognomic is by no means a permanent trait of art, which can be expressive in other ways.

There is a more fundamental respect, however, in which confrontation with art differs from confrontation with the other. This is found in the fact that the other possesses a privacy and inwardness denied to the aesthetic object regarded as a surface with no aesthetically relevant interior. Yet the other's interiority is inalienable, even though we cannot feel his experience from within. There is no direct or privileged access to the other's "inscape"; only the other can live his own psychic acts immediately and simultaneously. Hence *we* can approach these inner acts in the other only indirectly, by inferring their existence from certain indicative signs. The necessity for such signs is the result of the radical non-presence of the other's *Erlebnisse* to us; we need the mediating clues provided by written or spoken language, by certain bodily gestures, clothing habits, etc. Only these *manifest* the other. As Jacques Derrida remarks, "if communication or manifestation is essentially indicative, this is because the presence of the other's *Erlebnis* is refused to our originary intuition."³¹ In art, however, we have no need of such clues, for there is nothing interior or hidden to be revealed. Indication is absent from aesthetic expression because it would fulfill no function there; in fact, its encroachment upon expression represents, as we have seen, the destruction of the latter.

Another way of viewing the basic difference between the aesthetic object and the

other is in terms of how we perceive the two phenomena in question. In the case of the other person, what we perceive is taken as a sign of something inherently non-perceptual—i.e., inner thoughts and feelings which on principle can *never* become objects of perception. When we perceive the aesthetic object, however, the perceptual element is not taken as a sign or even as a symbol of something unperceivable, but as a constituent part of the aesthetic surface. In the latter, feeling and thought are rendered sensuous, hence can coexist with the perceived in a common affective whole. Thus perception is indispensable in art, but its aim is exhausted in what is concretely presented, whereas the perception of the other typically transcends the presented toward what Husserl calls the "appresented."³² The appresented supplements the directly presented because of the unavailability of the other's *Erlebnis*. By contrast, the work of art is capable of self-presentation, that is, an open disclosure of its surface without any significant undisclosed residue. Hence appresentational supplementation is not necessary.

This point can be made without invoking the elaborate trappings involved in Husserl's theory of the analogical "transfer of sense" that occurs in perceiving the other. All we need observe is that interpersonal expression in language or gesture is not only incomplete but inevitably indicative as well. The other can never express himself with his "whole being."³³ Bodily gestures are never totally expressive because they aim constantly at an exteriorization; as Merleau-Ponty said, they "recuperate the world," making "what they aim at appear *outside*."³⁴ This means that in the case of the other's gesture the perceptual element is never made wholly congruent with the affective or thought dimensions; rather, the perceptual tends to achieve a determinateness that is exterior in character, as if the phenomenal crust could somehow restore or at least signify its inner core. It is this very exteriority that is subdued, if not entirely eliminated, in art—without a compensating interiority being required. The perceived remains, but not as an exteriorizing or *out-standing* factor. It merges with the other

ingredients of the aesthetic surface. In this way, it avoids playing an indicative role, allowing aesthetic expression to emerge from the surface as a whole.

The relation to the other, by contrast, is always marked by the indicative. Thus Husserl revealingly sought pure expression precisely in the suspension of this relation, in "the solitary life of the soul."³⁵ For pure expressivity to occur, the relation to the other must be bracketed, since the irrevocable non-presence of the other's inner self demands indicative mediation. It is in this sense that "the relation to the other as non-presence represents the impurity of expression."³⁶ We should add that if *pure* expressivity is to be found in the self-presence of the transcendental ego,³⁷ a corresponding *sheer* expressivity is present in art, from which the perceptual component cannot be wholly removed. But it can be removed qua indicative, and we may conclude that art is like a "quasi-subject" not in its physiognomic character but rather in the very absence of indicative relations. Neither the transcendental ego nor the work of art needs the mediation of indicative signs to realize their distinctive forms of presence.

V

But if expression in art can thus be "sheer," it cannot be total. Even if sensuousness (operating through temporal and spatial schemata) is capable of unifying the notional and perceptual components of the aesthetic object into a single, continuous aesthetic surface in which expression is undefiled by indicative relations, the resulting expressiveness is not *totally* expressive. A sheer phenomenon is not necessarily a total phenomenon. In fact, a total expression would be, through its very excess, *inexpressive*. Expression in art requires resistance, limitation, *form*—hence a certain incompleteness. Expressive animation in art operates only against and within the aesthetic medium; this medium, whether it is conceived as predominantly perceptual, imaginal, or affective, cannot be eliminated to reveal *die Sache selbst*. The only "thing itself" in art is the sheer aesthetic surface,

and this retains an abiding "coefficient of adversity."³⁸ Dewey claimed that "to express is to stay by, to carry forward in development, to work out to completion."³⁹ But such completion is not possible in aesthetic expression; if it were, art would be no longer necessary; it would be merely a historical gesture annihilating itself in its very accomplishment.

It is at this concluding point that we must distinguish aesthetic expression from the givenness of an essence. An essence in the Husserlian sense possesses full self-presence and intuitive plenitude; thus it is capable of giving itself "in person." Such total self-givenness is not an inherent feature of the aesthetic object. It would be more accurate to speak of "self-presentation" in art, recalling that the "self" in question is only a quasi-self. In any case, the aesthetic surface does not present itself with the "originary evidence" of an essence, and there is no "adequate insight" that could grasp it as a total phenomenon. The role of the perceptual component may be modified through an "aesthetic reduction" of the indicative and the distracting, but it can never be wholly removed so as to reveal an intuitive content belonging to the sphere of Logos. Husserl's analysis in *Ideen I*, suggestive as it is with respect to expression in art, assumes throughout that expression, once fully achieved, belongs to "the original medium of the Logos."⁴⁰ Expression is "integral," that is, total, when it "places the seal of conceptual signification on all of the synthetic forms and matters of the underlying level."⁴¹

This may indeed be the case with regard to language, but in the aesthetic surface signification is not so much delimiting as delimited. In this phenomenon, signification exists in the form of import, and import is fused with the other pervasive elements. The animated expressiveness of the whole is held tensionally at the surface; it is not allowed to escape from this surface toward a separate conceptual domain. Structure or form in art comes largely from the perceived, not the conceived; but perceptual presence is itself exceeded by the emblematic expressivity spread sensuously throughout the felt surface. The depths of

this surface are only obliquely, never transparently, given; no essence, least of all an essence of expressiveness itself, is shown on or through its dense affective texture.⁴² But the expression never becomes wholly external; it does not give itself away; it never becomes entirely *express*. What Merleau-Ponty once said of language is, in this case, more descriptive of art: it cannot "detach itself entirely from the precariousness of the forms of mute expression, reabsorb its own contingency, or consume itself to make the things themselves appear."⁴³ Art holds its expressiveness within or on its surface apprehended as a self-continuous, frontal phenomenon with its own peculiar depth. This expressiveness is neither explicitly *sayable* in language nor adequately *intuitable* in eidetic insight. The voices of art are indeed the voices of silence, as Malraux said so eloquently; but these voices can also be sheerly expressive and thoroughly animated.

Therefore, if expression in art is never total, it is at least sensuously alive; and it is this affective aliveness that, drawing consciousness toward adhesion to the aesthetic surface, quickens our life of feeling. Expression in art is misconstrued as communication, but it may be interpreted as communion between the work of art and the spectator. Rare though it is, it is precisely in such an experience that expression in art is most nearly complete. Yet as it is never fully complete, genuine aesthetic expression cannot be assimilated to other modes of expression which, like language, are capable of contextual or conceptual objectivity and which can thus play a role in communication or manifestation. Truly expressive art does not communicate; it possesses neither the basis (indicative sign-relations) nor the content (the "message") of communication. Its sensuousness provides the foundation for contemplation and, ultimately, communion. The latter defies objective description, since in this experience the aesthetic object qua object dissolves. We are left not so much with a process as with a continuous phenomenon in which consciousness and aesthetic surface momentarily coalesce. Nothing is transmitted or even manifested

in this compresence. At best, a vivid communion takes place: an experience in which aesthetic expression is most fully realized.

¹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 26.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1: 580.

³ See, for example, Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) pp. 73-77; Hampshire, *Feeling and Expression* (H. K. Lewis, 1961), *passim*.

⁴ *Ideen I*, sec. 124-27.

⁵ For this distinction, see J. N. Findlay, "The Perceptuous and the Poignant: Two Aesthetic Fundamentals," in *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967): 13.

⁶ See D. W. Prall, *Aesthetic Judgment* (New York: Crowell, 1929), *passim*.

⁷ On the concept of "expressive meaning," see Paul C. Hayner, "Expressive Meaning," in *Journal of Philosophy* 53 (1956): 149; and my "Meaning in Art," in *New Essays in Phenomenology*, ed. James M. Edie (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969).

⁸ *Symbol and Myth in Human Experience* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1949), p. 117. Cf. the statement of L. Abercrombie: "expression in art is also communication" (in "Communication versus Expression in Art," *British Journal of Psychology* 14 [1923]: 70).

⁹ *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (New York: Scribner's, 1962), p. 29.

¹⁰ *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn, 1958), p. 104.

¹¹ *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. James C. Meredith (Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 180, 183-84.

¹² "What Is Art?" in *Tolstoy on Art*, trans. and ed. Aylmer Maude (Oxford Univ. Press, 1924), p. 278.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁴ This is the danger that lurks behind C. J. Ducasse's use of the term "emotional import" or Susanne Langer's similar "vital import"; both seem to suggest that feeling and meaning become wholly indistinguishable in the aesthetic object. I shall maintain that they *blend* without losing their singular identities. See C. J. Ducasse, *Art, the Critics, and You* (New York, 1955), pp. 52-56; S. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953), pp. 31, 52, 59, 65, as well as her *Problems of Art* (New York, 1957), pp. 59-60.

¹⁵ "What Is Art?" p. 173; in italics in the original. See also M. Heidegger's similar analysis of communication in *Being and Time*, trans. C. Robinson & J. Macquarrie (New York: Harper, 1962), pp. 197-8, 205, 211-12.

¹⁶ *Last Lectures* (Cambridge, 1939); quoted by E. H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* (New York: Phaidon, 1965), p. 56.

¹⁷ *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 183; cf. M. Heidegger, p. 266.

¹⁸ *Signes* (Gallimard, 1960), p. 87; *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), p. 70.

¹⁹ I am thinking especially of Max Scheler's concept of Träger as this has been applied to aesthetics by Eugen Fink in his essay "Vergegenwärtigung und Bild" (esp. sec. 31–33), reprinted in Fink's *Studien zur Phänomenologie* (Nijhoff, 1966).

²⁰ R. Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception* (Univ. of California Press, 1963), pp. 347–48.

²¹ Tolstoy, p. 171.

²² See E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Niemeyer, 1913), vol. II, I, chap. 1, sec. 7.

²³ B. Croce, *Aesthetic*, trans. D. Ainslie (New York, 1956), p. 8.

²⁴ D. W. Gotshalk, "Aesthetic Expression," *JAAC*, (Sept. 1954): p. 80.

²⁵ See M. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1951).

²⁶ Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. II, I, sec. 8: my italics.

²⁷ Eugen Fink employs this term in his *Studien zur Phänomenologie*, p. 72. Of course, "self-designation" does have the merit of underlining the intransitive character of the work of art; but this intransitivity should not be conceived in terms of an internal indicative relation.

²⁸ I am thinking of icon in the sense of "iconic sign" as originally formulated by C. S. Peirce in *Collected Papers*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), 2.282, 3.556, 4.448, 4.531. One could also speak here of "metaphorical self-exemplification" in following out the suggestions of Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), chap. 2. But Goodman inter-

prets self-reference in terms of denotation, as on p. 59 n; see also p. 4 f.

²⁹ See Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), I: 197, 200, 249, 255–6, 291, 302, 306 f., 408–9.

³⁰ *Principles of Art* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), p. 140.

³¹ *La Voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 43.

³² See *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. D. Cairns (Nijhoff, 1960), sec. 50–54.

³³ As Pauline Kael claims of Greta Garbo in her review "In Vain" in the *New Yorker*, Jan. 11, 1969, p. 64.

³⁴ *Signes*, p. 84; *Signs*, p. 67; my italics. Cf. M. Heidegger, "What is expressed is precisely . . . Being-outside" (*Being and Time*, p. 205).

³⁵ *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. II, I, sec. 8.

³⁶ J. Derrida, p. 44.

³⁷ For this notion, see Husserl, *Ideen II* (Nijhoff, 1952), p. 105.

³⁸ This term, first used by Gaston Bachelard, is developed by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (Philosophical Library, 1956), pt. 4.

³⁹ J. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 64.

⁴⁰ Sec. 126.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² I am thinking here of Bernard Bosanquet's use of the term "expressive a priori" in *Three Lectures on Aesthetic* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), chap. 2; see also Mikel Dufrenne, *The Notion of the A Priori*, trans. Edward S. Casey (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 110–13.

⁴³ *Signes*, p. 98; *Signs*, p. 78.