

ART CRITICISM AND PHILOSOPHY.Raffaello Lionello Venturi. →

Philosophy replies to the question; what is art? The role of criticism is to find the relation between the individual work ~~XX~~ and the philosophical definition of art, and so deduce whether the work is to be accepted or rejected from the domain of art; whether it is poetry or polemics, scientific theory or propaganda or social amusement, etc.

It is not possible to do this at first sight, without complex ~~xxx~~ research. There is no fixed rule that one can apply. Criticism is not a practical activity, it needs to create itself the fact upon which it bases judgement. In other days it was enough to say that a picture was a good imitation of nature, or that it was beautiful, or that it was classical, in order to pass favourable judgement. Today we know that art is an ideal creation and not an imitation of nature, that the artistic idea has replaced the idea of the beautiful, and that God gave creative imagination not only to one epoch or one nation, but that He sends its rays wherever and whenever a genius is born.

A critic's research is first of all historical. He reconstructs ~~x~~ the process of the creation of the work, he makes a historical analysis ~~x~~ of all the component elements of the work, he defines the physical, technical moral or religious, intellectual or theoretical character of the work. He notices that these elements have generally been found by the artist in the common legacy of the civilisation to which he belongs. Often, however, some of these elements are invented by the artist himself. In that case they are the artist's contribution to the development of his civilisation. But none of this constitutes the artistic quality of the work. If, after examining all these elements, the critic finds nothing else, no imaginative residue, then the work belongs to culture and not to art. It is only when something remains that cannot be explained that one finds art. It is the moment of inspiration, imagination, intuition = call it what you will. It is the ineffable, since it is expressed once and for all in the work itself. It can be judged, but it cannot be repeated. It is this judgement which is philosophical; it reconciles an individual work of art with the universal idea of art, it is the discovery of a truth which goes beyond all historical limitation, since it belongs to humanity in general.

And as the whole of art can exist in a single work of art, critical judgement reveals the universal aspect of the individual: that which is essentially philosophical and which enables us to consider art criticism as a branch of philosophy.