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Chosen Topic: 4. "Art is not a copy of the real world, one of the damn things is enough"

Have you ever seen a really good portrait? It usually tends to look just like the person it's supposed to picture. Now another question: Have you ever seen a really good copy? A copy usually tends to exactly resemble the original, it's basically a doppelganger. Yet in the first case, you were probably deeply impressed by the great similarity, although you would have never had problems to make out the difference between the portrait and the actual, real person. The same goes for photographs, sculptures or films for example- although they often focus on real people or situations, they are made of another material, paper and ink, stone and paint.

So here we are now, supporting Nelson Goodmans theory that Art is not a copy of the real world. Yet we still lack a definition of both terms- What is "Art"? What is "the real world"? To keep it simple, we could try to explain the latter by stating that we believe that everyone perceives the world around them in a different way. Yet we still think that all those unique perceptions share most of their elements, as human beings are able to connect with each other and work together. So let's take those principal similarities, those fundamental experiences every person makes, like gravitation and thirst for example, and call them "the real world". And then, there is "Art". For centuries people have tried to define "Art", but the only thing we know for sure up to this day is that it is a very complex term and incredibly difficult to explain. Basically, Art means something else to you than it does to me, therefore nowadays it is absolutely normal for people to exhibit things like hundreds of flies glued onto a huge canvas. You can find that one in the Guggenheim Museum of New York and it's worth an incredible amount of money. So that is Art for some people and as this point of view completely differs from what most people would consider Art, we could come to the conclusion, that if "the real world" consists of our common experiences with it, Art consists of our unique ones. Many artists state that Art is their way of expressing their feelings and turning their emotions inside out. Often they add that people don't need to completely understand how the Artist felt, yet take "the material" and interpret it their own way. If we examine those statements it turns out that Art is not only not a copy of the real world, it is actually some sort of special communication system, created by the artist and constantly changing its shape in the heads of the viewer (or listener or reader).

Therefore it is not surprising that there are so many different opinions about what Art actually is. Every single human being has a particular taste, personality and experiences, and whether we consider something a piece of Art or not depends on whether we are able to work with it and transform it in our heads. So, we could compare Art to Language. Just like there are many different languages, there are many different types and forms of Art. Actually, everyone has their own way of expressing themselves, in terms of language and in terms of Art. Although people do not always understand each other, communication is possible as long as they speak the same language. This point for example is crucial when it comes to the debate whether one piece of Art is better than the other. Although discussing quality and artistic talent is a completely different field, it is important to keep in mind that sometimes we just don't speak the language of the piece and therefore are not able to understand it. Yet does that mean that this is always the case if we don't like a certain piece of Art? Let us think about language again. If someone talks to us in a language we know, we usually understand everything he or she says. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that we like every thought this person expresses. On the contrary, usually arguing works best with people, who speak the same

language. This means, it is even likely to perfectly get the message of a piece of Art and not like it, because we understand it. If we aren't able to understand something, it shouldn't actually provoke any reaction, just as we don't usually know how to react when somebody talks to us in a language we don't speak.

Yet we have overlooked one important point- the common problem of misunderstandings. We do think, we know what the other person means, but we actually don't. Although it is clear to us, that "perfectly" understanding somebody else is very unlikely if not impossible, we can still say that communication works, because a partial understanding is possible. Nevertheless, misunderstandings happen often enough in language, so it shouldn't surprise us that the same goes for Art. Often we think, we understand the symbolism of a piece and form our opinion based on that, yet sometimes we just get it wrong, because we didn't know that the artist was trying to cope with the loss of a loved one for example. And as soon as we learn that fact, we realize that the elements, which seemed so disharmonic for us in the first place, now suddenly start to make sense. However, this is not always the case. Let's turn to language again and imagine a person, who uses words nobody else knows. That person would randomly dub things with strange names like "Blbschibupschma" for example, without a system and without actually creating an own vocabulary. Apart of thinking that he or she is crazy, everyone would stop talking to that person, as any exchange would be impossible (if he or she would stick to a certain system, it would be possible to learn it and then communicate. It does not change the fact, however, that that person would be considered as being crazy). The same goes for Art again. Although freedom plays a very important role in this field, there are certain rules an artist has to follow if he or she wants his work to be appreciated. If artists just randomly combine anything that crosses their minds, their work could not be understood by anyone. That happens very often with people, who try to imitate certain elements of other artists, without knowing their meanings. Art is based on the real world, and in order to make it accessible for people, it is necessary to keep up the connection between both.

Yet if Art would be that unique way of expressing oneself, it is natural to ask why it should be accessible for anyone else at all. Of course, it would be possible to just glue two bottles of water together and call it Art, without thinking about a topic or a message that piece of Art should be about. However, if we try to think of a similar situation in Language again, the problem should soon be clear to us. If we just blurt out two syllables, without even understanding or making any sense of those syllables ourselves, we are not actually producing Language, as we aren't expressing anything. However, as soon as we blurt out two syllables and actually mean something with that, it is possible to explain its meaning to other people. Therefore, as soon as we stick two bottles of water together, because we think it expresses our worries about the environment, we can call it a piece of Art. And that thought or feeling or experience behind the work is the base, which can be understood by at least some people. That leads us to the conclusion that the question, whether Art should be understood by anyone, is simply nonsense, as it's the nature of the thing itself to be understood.

Yet if Art is something unique, but still consists of elements a number of people know and understand, where is the difference between "the real world" which is perceived in a unique way, yet still consists of elements, a number of people know and understand? The second part of the quote, this essay is actually all about, says: "(..). One of those damn things is enough." Goodman's sentence could be understood in several ways, but let's take it like: One "real world" is enough. And actually, does not the term "real world" already exclude the existence of anything else? If we enlarge our definition of the real world and say that it covers everything a human being experiences, feels and

thinks about the surrounding, as long as those experiences, feelings and thoughts can be expressed, at least in a simplified way and understood by at least one other person, we soon realize that Art is a crucial part of our reality. Everything that can be shared exists for the community. Human beings experience the world on different levels and Art is a way of conveying inner processes, which could not be expressed any other way. As soon as those processes are turned into something perceivable, they exist for the community and therefore belong to the real world. Nevertheless, we know now that anything deprived of sense and meaning does not and although it might look like something "original", it's just a silly copy. Blbschibupschma.