

Less than Greek — Art, Perfection and Metaethics (On Berys Gaut)

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ABSTRACT. The imperfect has its own kind of attraction, and a number of recent conferences have attempted to portray imperfection, *sprezzatura* or *inachèvement* as a fundamental value of art. In *Art, Emotion and Ethics* (2007), Berys Gaut takes a different line, using two paintings of *Bathsheba* to show how physical perfection can in fact corrupt the moral message of art. This paper examines some of the presuppositions of ethicism, and concludes with an emphasis on intentionality, determinism, and the complexity of aesthetic reception.

1. Infinities...

Absolutes torment and fascinate us. Voltaire says somewhere that “the best is the enemy of the good” (*le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*), and this is because it is part of human nature to go on seeking progress and improvements however satisfied we may in fact already be. *Perfectibility* is in a sense the enemy of perfection since it defeats all hope of reasonable contentment. Wisdom should teach us to accept our lot, but we go on desiring, seeking the infinitely grand and the infinitely small, colliding particles, dividing matter into quarks and gluons, spending billions to capture traces of the Higgs Boson (which will probably end up *not* being the last particle discovered in an inquiry that has already gone far beyond our capacity for visualisation).

If all arts do indeed aspire to the condition of music, as Walter Pater once said, it is perhaps because the purity of sound seems to come close to a kind of perfection. Without reference, free of contingency, with no commitment or connection beyond its pure sensuality, sound can appear to be a potential absolute. Any work of art sharing its purity might seem to have

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the same power, and it may well be that one of the motivations behind the monochromes of the visual arts was to achieve this kind of perfection and infinity in an oblique way. Contemplating a monochrome by Yves Klein may inspire us to imagine that the same intense colour continues beyond the space and time of the museum and that its uniform purity is eternal.

One could indeed argue that Klein is subliminally giving us some Platonic Idea of Blue, but I certainly wouldn't claim that such was his conscious intention. Yet it does seem possible that many of the moves towards the "abstract" in art originated in some desire to capture purity and to reach some sort of absolute. In the realm of representation, however, one is forced to adapt to the constraints and contingencies of our world. Infinity and perfection are not part of our experience, though art can sometimes suggest these things via its own techniques and stratagems. The French art historian Daniel Arasse has amply demonstrated how the Annunciations of the Italian Renaissance manage "to represent immensity within strict boundaries, the unfigurable in the figure, the boundless within a single place, the invisible within vision."¹ But these are indeed just techniques, since the world is everything that is the case, and it is not the case that infinities and absolutes and perfections are part of our common experience: *Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*.² One might want to play a bit with Wittgenstein's first proposition, transforming it into *Die Welt ist alles, was der Unfall ist*. In another words, the world is that "idiotic" collection of accidents, approximations and pure contingencies that we call the *real*. As I'm using it here, the term "idiotic" comes from the French philosopher Clément Rosset. Rosset points out that, in its original sense, the term "idiotic" has to do with singularity and uniqueness; his argument, in various volumes, is that reality is indeed unique and that we should refrain from peopling our ontologies with useless and groundless "doubles", fictive entities and concepts that have no real application.³

Yet we do feel the need to postulate these doubles, just as we feel the

¹ My translation of 'représenter l'immensité dans la mesure, l'infigurable dans la figure, l'incirconscriptible dans le lieu, l'invisible dans la vision'. See D. Arasse, *L'Annonciation italienne, Une histoire de perspective*, Paris: Hazan, 1999, 12.

² L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ogden, C.K., ed., London, Routledge, 1922, 1996, 31.

³ Clément Rosset, *Le Réel et son double*, Paris: Gallimard, 1976, 1984.

need to imagine absolutes and ideals. They are not part of our experience, they end up torturing us, but we go on conceiving them nonetheless. As far as corporeal beauty is concerned, for example, relatively explicit ideals and standards have been predefined. Different periods have had different values, of course, but we all know that, in Western culture, a core idea of physical beauty has come down to us from Greek sculpture. This norm of Greek elegance is part of our heritage; it is present in expressions such as “He’s a real Adonis” or “She’s like a Greek statue” or in the expression “to have a Greek figure”. As an ideal, the Greek figure is indeed quite ideal, because it has been translated into mathematics, and we all know that math is as pure as the Pure Idea or as the music of the spheres. To be handsome “like a Greek statue” is not just a metaphor, since the whole thing can be calculated and measured according to strict rules. Unsurprisingly, the Internet offers nowadays a number of websites enabling the hapless surfer to compare himself to the Greek ideal [FIGURE 1].

Greek Proportions

Greek Proportions Calculator
This fun "calculator" goes back to ancient times. The Greeks used these measurements to determine what the "ideal" male should look like and is represented over and over again in literature and art through the ages.

Simply measure your wrist circumference, which can be done by measuring just below the hand where it bends. Important: these results are just to give you a clue of what was considered to be an ideal body. Every body type is different and is in now way considered to be accurate.

Find your Greek Proportions

Wrist Size: ☒ cm ☐ Inches

Your ideal body measurements are

Chest Size:	43.5
Forearm Size:	12.6
Waist Size:	30.5
Thigh Size:	23.1
Hip Size:	37.0
Calf Size:	14.8
Biceps Size:	15.7
Neck Size:	16.1

[Other Tools & Calculators](#)

FIGURE 1. http://fr.fitness.com/tools/greek_proportions/

I suggest not visiting any of these websites after a banquet dinner or any heavy meal.

2. Less than Greek: The Attraction of the Imperfect

The world is everything that is the case, and we are human, all too human. We do erect absolutes that depress us, but we also feel the need to sing praises of the ordinary. Our imperfections are the measure of our humanity. They are the proofs of our sincerity, our authenticity, and are often sources of value. For a collector, an imperfection on a stamp or a coin increases its rarity and thus its value. Other imperfections are far from rare; indeed, it is often thanks to the small foibles we find in others that we finally manage to feel some kind of sympathy or even tenderness for them.

The imperfect has its own strange kind of attraction, and there are numerous artistic examples of its power. I shall provide the reader with a few disparate or even ungainly illustrations of the phenomenon, in order to show how common this effect is. I begin with an anecdote about Frank Sinatra. Rumour has it that, during the studio recording session, the famous crooner forgot the lyrics of the last stanza of *Strangers in the Night*. What came out was simply “doobeedoobeedoo”. This ended up being the final version of the song. Indeed, the very imprecision of the performance was what increased the value of the cut. It proved the authenticity and the immediacy of the recording; it transformed the idealised and distant crooner into an “Ordinary Joe”, “a guy like you or me”, as they say, a man capable of making a mistake, of forgetting, perhaps from fatigue or emotion (and we should note that such imperfections are often used in art as signs of intense emotion).

In an analogous vein, one art historian has pointed out a paradoxical aspect of Michael Moore’s documentaries. According to this critic, Moore’s films have a number of obvious technical defects – basically episodes of sloppy shooting unintentionally producing what is sometimes called “baring the device” by literary historians.⁴ Most documentaries are rather

⁴ See the unpublished conference summarised in Giovanni Careri & Bernhard Rudiger, *Face au réel : éthique de la forme dans l’art contemporain*, Paris, Archibooks/ENBA de Lyon, 2008, 20.

slick, but Moore actually is quite amateurish at times. Yet it is these very imperfections that guarantee the authenticity of the works. This is not unlike the strategy used by fictional films based on what is presented to our willing suspension of disbelief as an example of “found footage”. In a work such as *Blair Witch Project* (1999), the unfinished, imperfect, and unpolished aspect of the film is meant to be taken as “proof” of the veracity of the events.

Such imperfections seem to teach us that truth is not a matter of artifice and that salvation lies in simplicity. This goodly message goes back at least to Biblical times, and it can be found as well in Shakespeare in a famous scene from *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia’s suitors have been asked to choose between three caskets – one of gold, one of silver, one of lead. It is of course the simplest item, the humble lead casket that will enable Bassanio to win Portia’s hand:

...thou meagre lead,
Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught,
Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence;
And here choose I; joy be the consequence! (III, 2, 104-107).

To slide from the sublime to the ridiculous, we can note that Shakespeare’s advice has been confirmed by Steven Spielberg in one of the final scenes of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989). Our hero saves the world, his father and himself by choosing the most ordinary cup among a dozen or so vulgar and shiny receptacles claiming to be the Holy Grail. In these last two examples, value does not come from imperfection itself – but we are made to understand that the natural, the unsophisticated and the rudimentary lead to everlasting grace.

I turn now to Chet Baker, or more exactly to Rodgers and Hart, in order to move the demonstration on towards Berys Gaut and my main arguments. The initial question is this: Can one fall in love with physical imperfections? Is there an actual attraction in deviation from the norms of beauty? Can one be mesmerised by a vaguely abnormal shape? The answer is a resounding Yes, if we are to believe the lyrics of *My Funny Valentine*:

My funny valentine,
Sweet comic valentine,

You make me smile with my heart.
 Your looks are laughable, un-photographable,
 Yet, you're my favorite work of art.

Is your figure less than Greek?
 Is your mouth a little weak?
 When you open it to speak, are you smart?
 But, don't change a hair for me.
 Not if you care for me.
 Stay little valentine, stay!
 Each day is Valentine's Day (1937)

The world is everything that is the case, and our physiques are often comically absurd. This ballad seems to claim that we smile at them with our hearts and that this "less than Greek" figure is in fact the source of our profound love. In other words, the imperfection is what gives its special character to our favourite work of art.

3. Gaut and Ethicism

In an influential study of the connections between art and morality, Berys Gaut spends much time on two paintings illustrating the story of Bathsheba, *Bathsheba at her Bath with King David's Letter* (1654) by Rembrandt and, dating from exactly the same year, *Bathsheba with King David's Letter* by his pupil Willem Drost. The differences between the two paintings are used by Gaut to build a theory of the ethical effect of art, notably by opposing the plastic perfection of Drost's Bathsheba to the gravity of Rembrandt's. To be more precise, Gaut will be using these two paintings to defend what he calls ethicism, a position he wishes to distinguish from autonomism, moralism and immoralism. We can briefly recall these distinctions. According to moralism, the aesthetic value of a work of art is identical to its moral value. Autonomism holds that there is no relation whatsoever between moral and aesthetic values. Finally, immoralism

claims that it is precisely the transgressions and ethical defects of a work of art that gives it its value. After examining these three positions in detail (and I am of course simplifying to some extent), Gaut presents ethicism – his own position – which he defines as follows:

*[Ethicism] holds that an artwork is aesthetically flawed in so far as it possesses an ethical flaw that is aesthetically relevant, and conversely that an artwork has an aesthetic merit in so far as it possesses an ethical merit that is aesthetically relevant.*⁵

Gaut is going to reject autonomism and to use the two Bathsheba paintings to establish this automatic and intrinsic link between art and morality. Here is the Rembrandt version [FIGURE 2]:



FIGURE 2. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Bathsheba at her Bath with King David's Letter*, 1654. The Louvre, Paris.

⁵ Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, Oxford, OUP, 2007, 10. I have discussed these and related issues in different articles and volumes, including *L'Emprise des signes* (with Jean-Jacques Lecercle – Paris, Seuil, 2002), 'Olafur Eliasson et la métaéthique de l'art,' *Nouvelle Revue d'Esthétique* no. 6, 2010, 101-112 and "Ethics, Science and Literature, or Is there Madness in this Reason?" in Baumbach, S., Grabes, H., & Nünning, A., *Literature and Values*, Trier, Germany, WVT, 2009, 55-66.

And this is how Drost renders the same scene [FIGURE 3]:



FIGURE 3. Willem Drost, *Bathsheba with King David's Letter*, 1654.
The Louvre, Paris.

According to Gaut, the Drost version is *morally* inferior to the portrait painted by his master because this second Bathsheba is tainted by an explicitly erotic dimension: "... there is a strong element of seductiveness present, a sense of being available, ready and willing for sexual adventure."⁶ Gaut claims that Drost is using light in this painting to direct "the viewer's attention more firmly on the young flawless body of a woman probably in her early twenties" and more particularly to "her left breast, modelled by the strong shadow underneath it", the effect of which is "to round out the breast, to give a sense of its weight and volume, to render it almost palpable." This produces an impression which is confirmed by "the redness

⁶ Gaut 18.

of the nipple” and the placement of her chemise which “enhances the arc of the naked breast”, with the “translucent cloth” that “barely covers the nipple of the other breast, conveying a sense that the garment might be brushed away with just a touch of the hand by a curious spectator who might thus expose her upper body completely to her view.”⁷

Gaut finds all of this rather upsetting:

Of the power and quality of this picture there is no doubt, but there is also something disturbing about it, which casts a shadow over its merit. [...] this is Bathsheba as willing object of the viewer’s sexual attention, a Bathsheba who is aware of the gaze on her, and who returns it with considerable interest. [...] In short this is Bathsheba as seen through King David’s eyes, the object of his lust, willing, interested...⁸

For Gaut, the beauty of the woman and the lighting that underlines her sexual attraction prevent us from contemplating the moral message of the tale. Her corporeal and sexual perfection is thus an ethical defect of the painting; at a deeper level of analysis, this beauty is thus an imperfection. Instead of making us think of Bathsheba’s unhappy fate as a victim of illicit desire, Drost’s version “in the way in which it represents her, aims to recreate that very same sexual interest in the viewer.”⁹

Rembrandt’s Bathsheba, on the other hand, elicits our sincere empathy. With her figure less than Greek, as Baker would put it, she inspires no immediate lust: “there is little doubt,” writes Gaut, “that by modern standards she is not as conventionally beautiful as is Drost’s Bathsheba” (21). Oddly, Gaut goes on to claim that she does correspond to “Rembrandt’s standards of beauty”, yet it would be better for Gaut’s subsequent argument for him to follow the 1811 judgment he mentions that “labels her firmly as ‘deficient in beauty’” (21). Though for some reason he tries to convince us that the Rembrandt Bathsheba remains “erotically charged” (23), his main point is that her physical imperfections are what give the painting its moral depth. This Bathsheba does show the marks of time:

⁷ Gaut 18-19.

⁸ Gaut 19

⁹ Gaut 20

... the effect is dependent on the nature of Bathsheba's body: Bathsheba is perhaps in her thirties, a decade older than Drost's model, and her body gives a sense of having been lived in, displaying some of its wear and tear in the carefully traced folds of the skin... (22)

These details, these blemishes, are obstacles to a purely lascivious gaze; her less than Greek figure "invites us to empathise with her, to imagine what it is like to be in her situation" and thus we are able to pay her "a moral attention that is cognisant of her suffering" (23). For Gaut, the physical or sexual or "plastic" imperfections of Rembrandt's model transform his painting into a more moral work and thus (according to the precepts of ethicism) into an aesthetically more successful work than Drost's pure eroticism.

4. The Complexities of Aesthetic Reception

In a sense, the corporeal imperfections of Rembrandt's Bathsheba have the same effect as Sinatra's *doobedoobedoo* or Bassanio's leaden casket: defects, blemishes, forgetfulness, rusticity or lack of sophistication all serve as reminders of our loveable weaknesses; they underline our touching humanity. One might however wish to admire Rembrandt's version without adhering to ethicism, without necessarily condemning Drost, and without being convinced that Gaut has actually demonstrated any necessary link between morality and art. One could even go so far as to claim that he betrays both disciplines with his analysis of the two Bathshebas. Various specialists have already formulated many arguments against moralism or ethicism in general, and Peter Lamarque has pointed out some of the specific fallacies in Gaut's thesis.¹⁰ I will take a slightly different line by underlining how any such dialectic of perfection and imperfection, in its application to the two versions of Bathsheba, might have a certain number of *performative* or pragmatic implications.

To underline these performative implications, I am going to propose a less simplistic reading of the Drost version, not because I sincerely believe

¹⁰ On the circularity of Gaut's argument in defence of ethicism, see P. Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2009, 294.

that this reading corresponds necessarily to the artist's intentions, not because I find the reading inevitable, but simply because the *possibility* of the reading reveals certain aspects of aesthetic reception that are neglected by Gaut. For the sake of the argument, let us suppose that the ethicist is right to underline the intense sexuality of Drost's version. I am willing to admit that a spectator attracted to female bodies might be vaguely aroused by the painting. But is it not possible that this effect is intentional? Can we not imagine that the effect is part of a moral process, a vicarious experience, that is even more complex than the empathy produced by the Rembrandt version directly? It may well be that Drost is also warning us of the dangers of impulsive sexuality; in his own way, he may be denouncing the lustful gaze. We could claim that he is even more efficient than Rembrandt. His denunciation, one could argue, is indirect and involves several stages of our response. Drost arouses us by the perfect beauty, he provokes this lustful gaze, and in so doing, he does indeed transform us all into King Davids, as Gaut himself remarks (19, 23). The aroused spectator becomes as guilty as David was. But that may be precisely the point. If the purpose of the painting is to make us *conscious* of our lustful gaze, if we then feel uncomfortable about what is happening to us, if we feel this guilt in an intense and personal way, then we will have learnt the moral lesson from the inside, so to speak. The aroused but nevertheless lucid spectator may quickly end up thinking: *I should not react like that!* By going through these stages, he has an even better idea of the danger of impulsive sexuality (if there is indeed such a danger...). In other words, Gaut removes from artistic experience all of the self-consciousness, all of the lucidity, all of the interpretation and re-interpretation involved in our interaction with the work of art. Again, I am not trying to claim that my reading reveals the actual intentions of Drost. But the ethicist should at least recognise that aesthetic reception is generally a complex process involving a great number of levels and ramifications that both provoke and rely on a conscious and intelligent response.

Secondly, it is not at all clear that Gaut's demonstration has in fact established the validity of ethicism. Suppose we agree that Drost's *Bathsheba* does nothing more than arouse us without teaching us a moral lesson. The painting is therefore inferior to Rembrandt's *as an illustration of the Bible*. But where is it written that every painting must serve as this kind of il-

lustration? Where is it written that such a purpose defines all aesthetic endeavour? Without going into all of the detail of Gaut's analysis, it is easy to see the circularity of his approach. Having stipulated (and never really demonstrated) that every work of art *must* have moral import, having chosen for his demonstration two narrative works that fit in nicely with a moralising view of art, he has no trouble showing the ethical merits and demerits of each painting. Could he do the same job with a monochrome by Klein or a Prelude by Bach? Any theory of the relationship between art and ethics ought to be able to deal with non-narrative or non-referential art without treating it as some kind of second-class citizen. Any theory of art in general should be able to explain the operation and value of the abstract. In the final pages of this paper, I intend to show how a dialectic of perfection and imperfection might be connected to the concepts of determinism and intentionality that, in my opinion, regulate the artworld. These notions will enable us to have a clearer idea of the relationship between art and ethics.

5. Determinism and Intentionality

Gaut hoped to push us towards a paradoxical conclusion where the plastic perfection of Drost's Bathsheba produced the moral imperfection of the painting, whereas the physical imperfections of Rembrandt's model yielded moral perfection by giving us a human and touching Bathsheba, thus inspiring our compassion rather than our desire. Of course, in Gaut's view, the physical imperfection of the model was not an imperfection of the *painting*. On the contrary, it can be seen as a sign of Rembrandt's own humanity.

Whatever we decide, with respect to both Rembrandt and Drost, we need to examine the concept of intentionality to understand in what cases a willing "imperfection" can be the proof of artistic excellence. Certain famous art historians have explicitly or implicitly postulated what seems to be a sort of artistic *principle of plenitude*. In metaphysics, this principle states that, in an infinite and eternal universe, anything that *can* happen eventually *will* happen. In the hermeneutics of someone like Daniel Arasse, an analogous principle seems to be operating. For Arasse, everything in a painting is necessarily motivated by a choice; every detail counts

and the perfection of the painting is defined by this total mastery. The work of art is composed of an infinity of nuances; our reception of it can always be further refined, and, if we have the time and the lucidity, we will eventually discover the Higgs Boson at the heart of each element of a masterpiece. The presupposition of art historians such as Arasse is that there is a mystery behind every work; everything has a meaning, and there will always be a new element of information that we will be able to extract from the infinite number of objects and relations embodied in the work. The same idea exists in literature. Here is what Peter Lamarque calls the *Functionality Principle*:

It is always reasonable to ask of any detail in a literary work what literary or aesthetic function that detail is performing. The principle applies across all the arts. As Roger Scruton has written: 'Art provides a medium transparent to human intention, a medium for which the question, Why? can be asked of every observable feature, even if it may sometimes prove impossible to answer'.¹¹

But if art is "a medium transparent to human intention", then actual imperfection, imperfection *per se*, will never be a value. An imperfection that is intentional and that is successfully carried out proves, on the contrary, the mastery of the artist. These principles of plenitude and of functionality point to an ideal of determinism and intentionality that has little to do with some current fashions in French aesthetics. Recent conferences or volumes on the "unfinished", on imperfection, or on "*Sprezzatura*" as being the essence of art seem to deny the role of intention and mastery.¹² But even if it can never attain absolute perfection, the work of art is by definition a product of intentional thought; its very spontaneity (if that is what it is aiming at) is itself the product of a metareflection. Any intentional imperfection thus becomes a higher-order quality of the work. We should therefore distinguish between such examples and those accidental imperfections that are indeed weaknesses. Such weaknesses are inevitable, since

¹¹ Lamarque 204.

¹² For a discussion of the notion of *sprezzatura*, see Ronald Shusterman, 'Désinvolture et agrammaticalité : quelques 'maisons témoins' en visite libre', in B. Lafargue (dir), *La Désinvolture de l'art*, *Figures de l'art* 14, P.U.P., 2008, 235-247.

artists are not Gods, since perfection is not of this world, and since there are necessarily accidents and contingencies in the human, all too human.

But it is indeed this *ideal* of determinism, intentionality and perfection that defines our vision of art. Leopold Bloom formulates this idea rather succinctly in the eighth episode of *Ulysses*. In the midst of some idle word play with a few proper names and adjectives, he suddenly stumbles upon a surprisingly fit combination: “See? It all works out,” he exclaims.¹³ Alas, it *doesn’t* all work out, not everything has a mystical meaning that we will one day grasp. But we like to think that it all works out, and art is a realm where we can try to achieve such perfection.

I will take as my final example a work and a context that show how this demand for meaning and for determinism characterises our artworld. The following piece is not by an established artist; it can nonetheless help us understand what is going on:



FIGURE 4. <http://reunion.orange.fr/news/reunion/six-etudiants-diplomes-100-de-reussite,626176.html>

This installation by a French art student was produced as part of her exam requirements and presented during her *viva* to a jury of five comprising

¹³ J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, Oxford, OUP, 1998, 147.

two art school professors, two artists, and one university professor. This particular candidate only got the second highest result possible. Her plaster castings of various abdomens, which she disposed around the workshop in a manner inspired no doubt by Annette Messager, provoked a number of criticisms and questions on the part of the jury. *Are we supposed to stand inside the castings? Are the clothes glued inside the castings the actual shirts worn by the people who were moulded? Why is the sexual identity of each person eliminated? Does the height of each casting correspond to the actual height of the person involved?* The motivation of these questions is obvious; they bring us back to Arasse or to Bloom's *See? It all works out*. Every time the candidate was able to answer our questions, every time she could give convincing reasons for what she had done, she gained a few points. Each time she was unable to explain the detail of her work, her final grade went down a bit.

Such questions should seem familiar to all of us. To ask (for example) if the height of the castings corresponded to the subjects cast was simply to apply one of the most common values operating in art nowadays, that which implies that the transcription of reality is an end in itself. But, more fundamentally, the simple act of asking *Why?*, the impulse to ask this sort of question, involves inserting her work into a *Lebensform* where determinism and exhaustiveness are intrinsic values. Ideally, everything should indeed have a reason, everything should have a *telos*, everything in the work should be carried out to the conclusions of its own internal logic. When a work of art is intended to exemplify carelessness, spontaneity, or rusticity, it will be judged by the *perfection* of the carelessness it manages to convey. There is thus a meta-perfection of the imperfect logically inherent in the pragmatics of our artistic exchanges. The only true imperfection or carelessness will be that of the truly unsuccessful work, but such a work will not deserve our prolonged attention.

6. From Ethics to Metaethics

The world is everything that is the case, and our artists have their limits as well. There is no such thing as perfection, but perhaps our artworld comes as close as possible to this ideal. This world is a constructed activity or institution where expression is as determinate as possible – even

when this determination concerns the superficially careless or unfinished or imperfect. This realm of determinate expression is perhaps as close as we can get to the ideal. My final example has shown what it means to play the game called *criticism*. To ask the artist why her castings were hung at a particular height was to make her conscious of choices open to her; the question implicitly reminded the jury as well that art is about such decisions and choices. To ask these questions is to understand the nature of an intention; to experience how such an intention operates and what issues are involved. To engage in such criticism is to value as an end in itself the search for the systematic. More importantly, it is to experience the *form* and *nature* of such an activity. To experience the *form* of judgment is not necessarily to be conscious of some particular ethical trait or some concrete moral value – as Gaut would have it – but to explore the nature of judgment itself. To experience the form of judgment is to know by acquaintance how evaluation feels and how it works. We experience all of this every time we fashion a work of art. We undergo an analogous process every time we contemplate a finished piece. It is this knowledge by acquaintance of a dialectic of meaning and judgment, it is this self-conscious experience of the form of evaluation and interpretation, that I call the metaethical effect of art.

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