

Continuity between the World and Art, and the Problem of Globalization

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By

Pedro Aullón de Haro

Translated by

Jill Buckenham and Ricardo Miguel Alfonso

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EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION OR AESTHETIC BASIS

The idea of a constant and living fabric or process between the world and art as part of it, somehow symbolising and interpreting it, has superseded the derivative and subordinating notion originally upheld by classic and traditional aesthetics to define the relationship between art and Nature through the concept of mimesis. From this ancient and influential concept, which had enormous, even cosmic value, the meaning of the “autonomy” of art has come to be identified in modern times with anti-mimetic practice. Although this may seem paradoxical, photographic art in fact denies any mimetic concept. Between the world and art there is a relationship not of imitative superposition, nor of a mere chain of representation and therefore simple causal subordination, but rather one of an intra-world, of continuity in terms of realities that are effective by themselves and are continuous and sometimes even adjoining in the same way that other realities may be. It is a case, then, of *coordinatio*, of the coexistence of one regime and its order, although not to the same degree or in the same way, and therefore not with the same kind of meaning. Art, which is expression or language, does not imitate the world but interprets it. In the extent to which it does imitate it, that imitation would be accidental and therefore essentially irrelevant. Art fulfils its natural function insofar as it interprets or possesses the perspective of the interpretative potential of the known world as a whole (including the imaginable world) and thus has a second mode of meaning—interpretation—and a second mode of constituent identity, *techné*. Dreams are a different matter, they are natural fiction, similar to artistic or intentioned fiction produced at will, and it is an

exceptional example of the continuity of the world and its parts. But dreams create, prophesy and sublimate and possess their own oneiric logic that might be the absence of normal logic in the exact sense and is in principle removed from art's highly self-conscious and self-contemplating activity, even though both of them in the end, at least in some sense, are ways of interpreting the world¹ in general.

It is well known that a physical process of material continuity as a metaphysical process of spiritual continuity is conceivable and has been conceived, and it could be said that together they possess cosmic value. This duality runs parallel to the rationalist sensible/intelligible dichotomy or the form/content dichotomy in art. Yet it could be said that language in an originally natural way and then art artificially together form the most perfect synthesis of matter and spirit. In fact, if the distinction between *physis* and *techné* is seen in terms of the world as a whole, human beings would represent the most complete synthesis in the sphere of the former and art the most complete synthesis in the sphere of the latter. In any case there is no pyramid of relationships in principle between nature or the world and art, as that would mean a hierarchy in a regime of subordinations. This of course does not mean that we should not agree to exercise a subsequent, methodical, disciplinary hierarchical discrimination such as the one referred to earlier of the artistic synthesis of subject and spirit.

Kant, imbued with ambition for idealist originality, sanctioned the idea that the genius, the artist, is nature and does not imitate it but acts like it, but he does not observe that in determining the agent cause, the understanding of how the artistic work came to be, is left unresolved. The same is the case with the end cause, since the endless purpose that he argues is an aspect of the new theoretical reality put forward in contradiction to classicist and generally teleological doctrine, but not of the constant peculiarity of the parts

¹ It will be seen that there is no problem at all with the concepts we have of the idea of "the world". For a full historic interpretation of the problem, see the second part of Martin Heidegger's *Introduction to Philosophy* course.

of the world that are works of art. In other words, the Kantian argument is about modern art in a contradictory relationship with ancient art, inserted into a new era, but not of art itself in the world on the margins of a causalist concept. This means that, when separating ethics and aesthetics as a necessary condition for the autonomy of the latter, Kant has to end up by alleging that anyway, there will always have to be an ultimate relationship, however small, between morality and aesthetic ideas. In fact, the case is that morality is already a second degree relationship with the rest of the world, the same as art, and that they both, evidently, have intra-world relationships like any other parts of the world, in degree, although of course not in mode or meaning, since it has to be understood that the world as a whole is made up of other lesser worlds or parts of that whole. There is, then, in Kantian terms, a certain arbitrariness and vacillation, also clear in the consideration of artistic beauty as *adhoerens*, unlike natural or free beauty, *vaga*. It might be thought that from here Adorno jumps in to argue that between natural beauty and artistic beauty there is dialectic traffic consisting of domination, and that artistic beauty, what is objectively dominated in a work, transcends this domination thanks to this objectivity by escaping from it as it would change the aesthetic behaviour of natural beauty in productive work that has material work as its model.²

The tradition of thought, from Greece and Asia to Neoplatonism, rationalism and modern physics, has taken on board the idea of continuity in the world. Continuity presupposes regulating and harmonising abilities. I would add that the most distinctive continuum of human activity, apart from the primary one of perpetuating the species, is verbal language. I shall adopt the descriptive and objectivist criterion that the fabric or process of the continuity of the world and of things as a whole is made up of *physis* and *techne*, its results. Discontinuity is understood as merely

² Th. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Spanish ed. Madrid, Taurus, 1980, p. 106).

the extreme level, of absence, as an unrealised possibility within the general regime of continuity. The aesthetic entity of *physis* and *techne* can be understood as an aspect of quality of degree. The specification of the continuity of *physis* and *techne* is naturally followed by the specification of the continuity of the arts with each other as parts or worlds of the intra-world of *techne*, that is, literature, visual arts and music, which in turn form their own *continuum*...

Considering the aesthetic object is part of the activity of *theoría*. Looking or considering, the original *theoreo*, contains, via the dual possibility of mental operation and contemplative vision, the formula covering the full arc of aesthetic confrontation. Aesthetics, therefore, is not an applied philosophy, but corresponds by principle with *theoría* in its full dual potential, and the difficulty has mainly consisted precisely in the loss of a part of it. This contemplative line of vision is the one that leads to Plotinus and remains stable in Neo-platonism.

The object of aesthetic *theoreo* has to be the whole of the known world, *everything in existence*, as what criteria could be used to select part of the world or of life or any kind of restricted category, which nowadays is completely untenable? This does not mean that a centre or centres cannot be conceived. Although previously it was unnecessary to theorise about whether the world contains human beings or if human subjects contain the world, I shall argue that what gives a common identity to this cosmic whole is the spirit, which both gives life and receives it. In the end, the centre does not depend on the object, but it is the subject—the spirit—that is consequently also the *whole*. The question, as nearly always, consists in positioning oneself correctly and before what: before the *whole* in which it is true that we live, that is, *physis* and *techne*, nature and art, and their continuities, which also identify and interweave the life of human beings, from their empirical behaviour through to imagination and dreams. Categories of aesthetic value have to be applied to the existing *whole* to discern order and its degrees. The historical error has been in taking a category as a sole

object and making it exclusive, or, depending on the circumstances of our time, dissolving the relief of the aesthetic object in terms of artistic, never mind natural, reality. It is essential to recover Nature, the world of natural reality, as an aesthetic object. When Hegel, following the idealist process, restricted the concept of aesthetic object to art alone, he brought to an end a concept of restrictions founded on self-conscience and the absolute that should now be turned upside down by virtue of the changed relationship of human beings with nature. In its historic life, the aesthetic *whole* includes, evidently, each and every one of its moments, extreme or otherwise, from a restrictive and pyramid classification of the arts, such as in past Renaissance tradition, in which painting was elevated to the highest status, or Romanticism, which elevated music, through to an expansive and horizontal classification such as the one that creatively rules today, dominated by the lesser arts.

The *whole* is a complete and precise object, the *summa*, and since knowledge demands a well- defined and easy to grasp object, this must certainly consist in all the aesthetic qualities discernible in everything. Aesthetic objects are value categories selected by the current culture, or by individual decisions are revealed to the world (or even in private if they remain in the individual's personal experience). The aesthetic is formed in the recognition of a created value or of a naturally occurring value, corresponding to suggestive and autonomous qualities of spiritual perception, meaning that they are worth something or are identified by themselves, not in purely applied or utilitarian terms. These qualities can be present in complete, whole objects, or in partial elements, or they may merely adhere to realities that possess another entity and function or purpose, whether basic or derived. This is also the case of artistic objects that possess an extra-artistic purpose; but this adherence has to possess a significant value to the soul and therefore never be secondary. The subject's intuition and experience decide in all this.

The aesthetic, which in the end is a quality of the spirit, is revealed in the world as a *living form*, that is, it is not merely a perceptible, natural or conventionally made form. The latter is the

soulless form or the one that tends to lose its soul. The Kantian form can be taken in one sense or the other. Aesthetics has to have as its object the liveliness of the spirit, the places it inhabits, its connections and movements. It must therefore be the philosophical centre and should be understood as the higher order of the *qualitative universe* and *preferential unit of that universality*, woven into the *whole* of the connections, the continuities between nature, man and life. Aesthetics becomes the *qualitative ontology of the unit and of the whole*. Aesthetics is *the* ontology, and in this sense the first philosophy. The continuities of the *whole* are not made clear by a mere or reductionist structural description; they are subject to the common order of Nature, of man and of life. If human beings define the greatest peak, they, as significant figures, the characters and their journeys are the best example: the continuities of man, the mundane character and of life, the dreamed-of character and the heroes or characters of literature and art in movement.

CHAPTER I

NATURE AND THE WORLD AS LANDSCAPE

1

Over the last century, and very markedly during its second half, Nature has ceased to be unilaterally threatening for humankind and has become a permanent target of aggression from a technological civilization. The terrible effects of natural phenomena mean that our society faces a real threat of being unexpectedly wiped out. The situation is aggravated by the paradoxical availability of technical means for predicting such phenomena, which is at odds with hitherto accepted traditions of the rhythmic pace of nature's actions and of its sporadic violence and arbitrariness. It is now common knowledge that the massive use of hydrocarbons as a source of mechanical energy has spread a huge and disastrous web of environmental, marine, earth, climate and landscape degradation, contributing to a reaction of ecologically-minded ideologies that only now, and even then more for clearly geopolitical reasons, seem to be moving towards a long overdue replacement of oil as the dominant source of energy for transport and industry. It is a similar phenomenon to the proliferation of waste products and the resulting controlled procedure of purifying and recycling. But this process is inherently biased and very unevenly spread, as it is entirely dependent on economically stable and developed areas that promote it as well as demand it. Nature has not only become soiled but its own working mechanisms have been disturbed. One of the consequences of this is that the limpid naturalness, so to speak, of Nature and of the natural world no

longer represents a reflection of or a search for moral sense and human reunion in its true environment, and is now widely regarded as a physical and geographical exception. At its aesthetic extreme, the Kantian meaning of the mathematical sublime, of the vastness of landscape, is toned down for visual behaviour and the viewer's conscience, as well as for the exercise of artistic continuity. The same goes for the meaning of the dynamic sublime and of the havoc wreaked by violent nature; it is no longer perceptible in terms of the normal rhythm and danger of its patterns. Of course in this game, art is no longer capable of playing the role given to it by Friedrich Schiller in *On the Sublime*: offering all of nature's advantages at the same time as none of its drawbacks. The process has become distorted. The fact of the matter is that the set of vital and artistic relationships of court/village or city/country or metropolis/mountain and sea has dropped into second place because of—let's say—a deteriorated substantiality that materialises and dissolves them, in the same way that social behaviours and the idealising interpretation of artistic continuities compared to the display of their intra-worlds, the configurations of arcadia, heroic, bourgeois, etc., were dissolved. The *whole* of the order of these parts and their degrees are clearly historic, and historiographic according to metahistoric discourse, but it has its own dynamic that predates the simple or linear passage of time. Of course, a similar thing happens with the arts, parts of the world with their own relationships of historic and metahistoric continuity and in varying systems and degrees. Landscape is a relatively modern concept dreamed up in the West, centred on Nature and whose basis already appeared to harbour an artistic formula of self-conscience and interpretation of the world and of Nature itself. Today we can see that its relevance belongs partly to shared reality, to the range of combinations produced by human intervention, and partly to the memory of artistic contemplation, and consequently to the constitutive reality of the arts that this contemplation secures. So, it can be concluded that the current situation of the various concepts of landscape is one of crisis and dissolution. Geographic and

historic-documentary studies gather reports on its observation and are a form of scientific continuity, with no chance of similar repetition.

The greatest relationship between the continuity of the arts and Nature in the modern age is precisely the interpretation of landscape and Nature as something that is inhabited. Everything else is the resulting life of the beings that inhabit it. Landscape, in the first place, is relative to how it is seen, and therefore to a first way of inhabiting it. However, in referring to the great example of landscape, only a consideration of the relationship between the arts enables us to see the technical and interpretative continuity of their world and overcome its apparent discontinuities.¹ The issue of the relationships between the arts, that is, between the plastic or, better and more broadly speaking, the visual arts, and between music and literature is as ancient in Western culture as formalised culture itself. Leaving aside the two famous phrases in Greco-Latin aesthetic thought attributed to Simonides and Horatio, confined to the most evident and productive connection between poetry and painting, and the extraordinary will of Renaissance humanism to compare and identify both of these arts and the activity of their creators,² the truth is that these days agreement has still not been reached (apart from the descriptive rhetorical procedure of ekphrasis and the literary and artistic genre of the “illustrated

¹ I have already discussed what I consider to be fundamental to this issue in my article “El problema de la relación entre artes y literatura: el paisaje” (“The problem of the relation between the arts and literature: landscape”), in J. Carrete [ed.], *Tomás Campuzano y Aguirre (1857-1934)*, Santander, Fundación Marcelino Botín, 2000, pp. 39-47.

² Plutarch’s attribution to Simonides of complementarism or identificationism of painting as mute poetry and poetry as painting that speaks, which is the definitive and documentable start of this comparison, would become complicated from the secular exegesis of Horatio’s “ut pictura poesis”. For a general overview of the evolution of this and associated issues, see R. W. Lee, *Ut pictura poesis. La teoría humanística de la pintura* (Spanish ed., Madrid, Cátedra, 1982).

book”³) on the specific and unequivocal places in the great field of possible interrelations in visual arts and literature once the old humanist concept of a shared identity between truth and dignity was abandoned. The historical indecisions that have enabled the instability of aesthetics and the artistic object can appear simply astounding. In my view, the issue has to start with resolving the overall structure of the existing order and, once this is done, affirm or give detailed accounts of what exists and state new proposals or discriminations.

From a disciplinary point of view, the mutual relations between literature (especially in the restricted artistic sense) and the arts have been addressed during the contemporary era, in the 19th and particularly the 20th centuries, by the fields of Aesthetics, Comparative Literature (or comparative arts) and Literary and Art Criticism. (The case of criticism is by far the most dispersed, heteroclitic and sketchy; but they all respond to metatheoretical and applied study, and in the case of applied comparative literature and critical studies it can be seen how they are essentially confused; when they are metatheoretical they are invariably considered under the comparative heading.) The major supportive (rather than instrumental) link between Rhetoric and pictorial art has ended up by outlining the fluctuating profiles of the status and manifestations of this ancient discipline in contemporary humanities, after having come under heavy attack from the renewed linguistic and semiotic positivism that was dominant during the 20th century and is now endangered.⁴ That is, in the face of traditional doctrine and technological formalism in the recent past, there is now a much more open perspective and therefore a greater capacity for redirecting things responsibly towards a good humanist and

³ I have addressed both cases together in “Teoría del libro ilustrado” (“Theory of the illustrated book”) in J. Carrete [ed.], *Picasso y los libros*, Valencia, Fundación Bancaja, 2005, pp. 23-38.

⁴ In the field of visual arts, the pioneering rhetorical work of M. Baxandall in the early seventies in *Giotto y los oradores* (Spanish ed., Madrid, Visor) was far removed from these unfortunate formalist manifestations.

disciplinary judgement for our times.⁵ In the background to all this, there has been a great loss of verbal language and writing that must be properly addressed. The margin for abandonment has been perfectly defined in the fashion for deconstructionism and other trends that, it must be said, hardly need any specific explanation. A recent mistake is to believe that there is a “phonocentrism” at work that marginalises “writing” and that the latter is the opposite of the former. In any case, the opposite of established phonocentrism or logo-centrism is “pictorial discourse” or the design arts in general, or “visual thought” if that is how you prefer to describe it.

Getting to the root of the language problem, we can understand that the original view was formed by joining together what is mental and what is emotional.⁶ This contributes to some extent to an understanding of the entity of verbal language. The previous situation referred to concerns a non-rupture and an overall view that does not question itself and ignores relativities, but rather confirms this primeval act as a living figure. The great mystery of language, about which modern linguistics says nothing, remains intact: how matter or sound produces or transmits meaning. However, evidence must be acknowledged that graphic or visual and oral expressions are born independent, but they immediately acquire a complicated relationship and in any case they combine fully as a complete language. That is, the written construct represents

⁵ On several occasions I have wanted to draw attention, using the so-called “Jakobson trick”, to the conventional and effective value of the famous lecture and article “Linguistics and poetics” delivered by this critic for the absurd formalist view of the humanist disciplines throughout practically the entire second half of the 20th century: replace the concept of Poetics by handing it to Criticism; identifying criticism with formal Linguistics; getting rid of Rhetoric and disregarding aesthetic and historic studies. And now the question cannot be ignored: how was it possible that such nonsense was taken on board by so many people and for so long? Insofar as we are part of some sort of humanist, traditional or renewed concept, we have to find an answer to this question.

⁶ For this and what follows I shall be using my research study *El signo y el espacio*, Madrid, Centro Cultural Conde-Duque, 2002.

the oral construct, although in the final instance the latter also represents the former, contrary to what is usually believed. Writing brings together sight and the potential of the sound action, or its mental image, in the act of reading. As Humboldt thought, writing is a visible way of articulating language. The path that leads to the creation of painting and writing arises from the same original line. The tendency towards the representative line of visual understanding produces drawing, while the tendency towards the mentalist abstract line leads to the range of writing. It is a fact that Aesthetics as a discipline has not taken these major phenomena on board, still less so-called modern linguistics, which actually contradicts them. This comes from an erroneous understanding of Nature and a historic deficiency that stands in contrast to the case of Chinese culture, which has maintained the link between painting and writing through calligraphy, and the two somehow converge in the graphic representation of the landscape and undoubtedly in the idea of it. The ideogrammatical construction of this Asian language is not gratuitous, that is, it is based on a solid continuity between reality and sign, or more generally between reality and language at this level of discussion. Lastly, there is the decisive issue of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign (oral) which is certainly not (as I have explained several times) a Saussurean position but is primarily found in texts referring to Nietzsche, including chapter XVI of Lessing's *Laocoonte*, which contains the core of the structural doctrine of the linguistic sign passed on by Saussure's followers. Originally, the linguistic sign (oral) was a natural expression and on principle it is both motivated by and is the continuity of nature and the world in human oral expression. The same can be said for the written sign. Verbal language, both in its oral form and written representation and subsequently in reading, is a prodigious example of coordination and connection.

Aesthetics, apart from certain similarities in category studies, especially those dealing with the sublime and the tragic, has mainly dealt with the theory of so-called *correspondences* (from hermetic tradition and from romantic and symbolist artistic thought) and to

a lesser degree of concepts relating to *expression* and the like.⁷ Comparative literature has referred, perhaps without much success, to issues of belonging and methodology, but also to the problem of *parallelisms* and, in any case, there is an established branch dealing with the topic of this discussion.⁸ In this case, the deficiency is principally one of not having rigorously fixed the nature and connections of the “terms of comparison”, or of relation. By this I mean the issue of distance, whether it is chronological, historic and

⁷ It should be remembered that the modern-day prominence of the concept of “expression” that in my view runs through the aesthetic thought of Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Vico and Croce, has spread widely throughout the English-speaking world, thanks not only to the latter but also to R. G. Collingwood’s *The Principles of Art*. But having reached this point, I think it is appropriate to make a different observation with reference to a great theoretical aesthetic opportunity that is also relevant to the theory of the arts and to the comparatism between it and its genres. I am referring to *Philosophie des Schönen* (1887) (Spanish ed., 2001) by the post-Hegelian thinker Eduard von Hartmann, which has been used, dishonestly and without acknowledging the source, by some major critics from the point of view of critical reading (W. Iser). This field identifies one of its many openings, in particular a very mature and specific discussion of the relation between the arts beyond the merely composed arts and the problem of the musical drama led by Wagner, which he examines critically. I have made reference to this but focusing on the literary material in terms of genre theory, which is one of the most striking features of the work, in “La estética literaria de Eduard von Hartmann”, in *Analecta Malacitana*, XXIV, 2, 2001, pp. 557-580. I would add that, in my view, our current aesthetically and critically valid interlocutor is found widely in the 19th century and only sporadically in the first decades of the 20th century, before disappearing, except in very rare cases, after the period between the two World Wars.

⁸ A radically different and complementary example of this is the excellent testimony of the methodological “Excursus” on the reciprocal influence of the arts included by Ulrich Weistein at the end of his *Introducción a la Literatura comparada* (Spanish ed. Madrid, Planeta, 1975) and the elegant work culturalist and applicative of Mario Praz, *Mnemosyne. Parallelo tra le Letterature e le Arti visive*, Milan, Mondadori, 1971.

cultural or founded on the irregular nature of these terms, by virtue of which the result of the comparative exercise is in principle worth considering. The greater the distance, naturally within the sphere of coherence as the limit is set by access to arbitrariness, the greater the capacity for meaning, and therefore the greater possibility of value.

However, over and above “correspondences” and “parallelisms” (which are forms of analogy), there are other places and forms of convergence or continuity not usually recognised as such whose definitive exploration would throw light onto a perspective whose meaning is populated by Shadowy areas. In the general sense, moving on from the sterile era of Neo-positive or structural-formalist reductionism and its semiotizations, I think it is necessary to restart the discussion on the *aesthetic categories* themselves, their possible present form, their evolution and their syntax. This discussion might have its greatest relevance in the renewed comparative description of arts and literature in terms of these categories. As I have been insisting for some years, I think it is particularly urgent to return to the issue of the classification of the arts, as this would mean accepting a set of values that it would be absurd to keep undefined, as if it were all a mere progression of the same; this is not the case. Where is the fear in showing a clear theoretical hierarchy, or at the other extreme, eliminating it entirely? In the end it is only a question of acting and thinking about a particular reality of fact that should be analysed critically. At a different level of truth, I think it is essential to make statements about what we could call terminological translations between the arts. This was a tenuous difficulty at the start, but well resolved in practice by Wölfflin; after the first half of the 20th century, Arnold Hauser set out to deal with the issue in relation to concepts such as “linear”, “pictorial”, “depth” and “surface”, at the beginning of the third part of his literature, art and Mannerism studies.⁹ There is an

⁹ A. Hauser, “Origen de la literatura y del arte modernos III”, *Literatura y Manierismo* (Spanish ed.), Madrid, Guadarrama, 1974, pp. 21-23.

urgent need to define critical terms commonly and even extravagantly used in a multitude of ways across disciplines (think of the commonly indiscriminate use of the word “tone” and other similar examples). It can be stated that a wide-ranging and detailed periodological definition has yet to be made of the broad lines of this historic parallelism, of necessity representing not just the arts and literatures (now also in plural), but also of science and thought in equal measure. An overall periodological representation of all this seems more like a simple critical requisite, belonging to what I tend to call a prior epistemology, rather than a luxuriously interdisciplinary speculative requirement. This would have to be considered not in purely restrictive terms, but with the proper in-depth probing into the aesthetic thought that accompanies the process, the historic progress of things. It is essential to know and provide both theoretical and historical evidence for how, after the relative breakdown of the collusion between poetry and painting set up by Lessing in *Laocoonte*, even though it was founded on the classicist tradition, the modern in the strict sense (that, is after Neoclassicism) becomes the auditory aesthetic formula that overtakes the visual aesthetic, right until the emergence of the historic avant-garde, which reinverts, at least in practice, the regime of elements. This revolutionary process, which was actually not basically far removed from the formation of the idealist thesis on the poetic origin of languages anticipated by Giambattista Vico, reached its height in Edmund Burke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and the poeticological concept of musicality that Wilhelm Humboldt suggested to Friedrich Schiller to make a distinction between modern, sentimental and subjective poetry and the plasticity and objectivity of the old style.¹⁰

The impressionist musician Debussy and the poet Mallarmé, both of whom had close artistic connections, defined major kinds of movement between idealist development and the rupture of the

¹⁰ F. Schiller, *Sobre poesía ingenua y poesía sentimental* (On Naive and Sentimental Poetry) (Spanish ed., Madrid, Verbum).

historic avant-garde that show the modes of relations between the arts with exceptional clarity. I have already pointed out how Debussy was able to take up an efficient and exemplary musical stance to attain a grasp of both poetry and painting. This way of creating some arts within others could be understood as art's successful integration of opposites such as the Wagnerian opera and musical drama, a case of simply organising articulated arrangements. This success was traced with great perceptiveness by Eduard von Hartmann, to whom I have already referred in a footnote. In the same sense in which I commented on Debussy, a large number of European artists also worked fruitfully with musical art and by opting for citations and literary integration. The Spanish school, from Falla to Esplá, although they were less innovative, also showed that a new way of making relations between the arts had been established. Adorno was shrewd enough to get to the bottom of the contemporary music/painting analogy of atonality/abstraction, and questioned if expressionism, if Schoenberg, had abandoned tonality thanks to the influence of painting. Adorno could see the adaptation of music to painting and that its great moment had occurred in Debussy's work in France, a country in which musical production was far less developed than in Germany. This took place from the last decade of the 19th century in the work produced by Debussy, "who, with indescribable tact and the sharpest sense for the specifics of musical material, translated the advances of great painting but never falling into the habit of merely pictorial, imitative composition". The issue was concerned particularly with linking seconds rather than an "analogy between luminous effects and the attraction of higher tones lying far way or the relationship between the impressionist comma and the technique of pointed tones". This is why, in Adorno's view, Debussy raised to the aesthetic level an intention that would otherwise have remained in the customs he was used to seeing in 19th century salons: "his pieces, rarely extensive, know no continuation. In some way, they have gone beyond temporal flow, they are static, spatial". But Debussy, influenced by physics and

positivism, would try to avoid inner meaning and temporality, the simultaneousness of the gaze. In everything else, in respect of what could be defined as the next step in avant-garde radicalization, Adorno thought that Stravinsky had

taken over Debussy's intention. Only that he eliminated what was blurred, what was mediated in Debussy's music, and with it the final traces of the musical subject. When strongly opposed, but unconnected complexities, both in themselves and in their relation, were joined together, a musical style appeared, which, when Stravinsky first looked to Picasso, revealed itself to be a kind of musical cubism and later neoclassicism. The history of the development of modern music, as far as the majority of composers are concerned, and the much praised transition from the dissolution of one form to a supposed new form, arose from a pseudo-morphosis of music in respect of painting. Music did not confine itself to being driven by painting, it formed its structural composition around painting.¹¹

In my view, Schoenberg and Kandinsky shaped the great avant-garde model not only of the music/painting relationship and the complementary term of literature (which is paradigmatic but would naturally occur on several other occasions and with various authors) but also of the new status of the category inherited from "total art". This is expressed by both of them and they make it clear in their intention of creating a new stadium for theatre art in keeping with the need for a changeover, not only of romantic musical drama and in general of the old opera and all Wagnerianism, but of the impressionism exemplified by Debussy and mentioned above. They are both paradigms, not only of moving on from idealist and decadent artistic development, but also of the exceptional preservation of the transcendentalist tradition of the spirit in the frequently and limitedly playful and

¹¹ Th. W. Adorno, "Acerca de la relación entre la música y la pintura hoy" (On the Relationship of Painting and Music Today), in Id., *Sobre la música* (On Music) (Spanish ed.), Barcelona, Paidós, 2000, pp. 60-61.

insignificant artistic process of the historic avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde.¹²

If the above counts or might be counted as some of the basic issues in the study of the technical and historical continuity (and discontinuity) of the arts, it is true that at the level of construction (not of means), we can in my view discern the set of great places that refers with indisputable coherence to the shared centre of the continuous expression of the world, the arts and literature. That is, those categorizations that are shared because they belong to the order of the first subject specified by man, life and the relationship between them. In other words, the *character* (and subordinate to this the *portrait*), the *landscape*, the *life* that happens. It can probably be stated that these configurations of character and landscape belong preferably, in the art of painting, to the past, but perhaps painting, in its strict sense, is mainly an art of the past, and the contemporary arts of photography and film should also be taken into account. Sculpture, and of course, the arts of engraving and printing, technically show a similar historical evolution to painting. The only major difference is found in the lack of significance of landscape in sculpture practice, since both *haut* and *bas relief*, in which Bernini was so impressive, later fell into disuse. If opera as the great synthesis of the arts employs the dramatic literary character inserted into a musical structure, it has to be said of landscape that operatically it is, except in very few cases, a residual element, although often essential. However, music presents a different problem, in that the issue of landscape is subject to expressive forms of description, or of the evocation of descriptive suggestion, that is, to an artistic sphere that, apart from certain impressionist music and a couple of very well-known classic examples,

¹² This was expressed in the exceptional relationship between them, seen in their exchange of correspondence during the second decade of the 20th century. See A. Schoenberg and W. Kandinsky, *Cartas, cuadros y documentos de un encuentro extraordinario* (Letters, pictures and documents), Selection, prologue and notes by Jelena Hahl-Koch, with an essay by Hartmut Zelinsky (Spanish ed., Madrid, Alianza, 1987).

transgresses non-representational principles and placed at the opposite extreme of what has been called abstract or absolute music.¹³ But we also cannot forget that, as plastic creations, landscape and character go beyond figurative art, they are subtly included in certain procedures that tend towards abstraction and the extreme factor of their existence/non-existence is decisive at the point of the contemporary dissolution of artistic forms in the hands of the historic avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde. There, the so-called decomposition of Kantian form takes place, which is a formalism and a lessening or transformation of meaning.¹⁴ Later, the problem was definitively transferred mostly to the much simpler world of “set design” in the lesser arts, which in this case, generically and in order to simplify, we shall call installations, which create or reconstruct an environment, sometimes a semi-landscape, insofar as it is a constituent part of its own spatial entity.

2

In principle, the concept of landscape, as of character, is primarily connected with the world in general or ordinary reality and with artistic and literary creations. In fact, the latter need to have a certain interpretative concordance with normal reality. Landscape and character frequently coexist, according to the plan of the natural world and its artistic continuities. Landscape can include

¹³ C. Dahlhaus, *L'idée de la musique absolue* (French ed., Ginebra, Contrechamps, 1997).

¹⁴ This does not detract from, and perhaps precisely because of it, the existence of a strong spiritual search that is capable of promoting a new finding of meaning. This is the case I referred to before with Kandinsky, initiator of abstraction, and the inventor of the twelve-tone technique, Schoenberg, but particularly the poets René Daumal, Vicente Huidobro and Juan Larrea, the latter a prodigious cosmic disruptor of landscapes. In the neo-avant-garde era, after the post-war period, the plastic artist Eusebio Sempere, in whose tables and serigraphs, by virtue of subtle lines, Nature and geometry wonderfully reveal the spirit.

characters, human beings and animals, and characters can be placed in a landscape that provides a background and that contextualises and gives them meaning, that is, in recognisable surroundings. This is separate from the issue of whether pure landscape can be understood as that which is not inhabited by characters.

Landscape, in my view, can be defined as a fragment of distant or semi-distant reality that is presented as a representative whole. From the outset, any particular landscape, real or artistic and literary, corresponds to and is the result of an *electio*. It involves a decision, and in artistic and literary interpretations the *electio* is done either in an overall way or through intervention by a party or parties. The latter is pragmatic-related in respect of the supposed real correlation, or related to the pre-existing *interior design* in the artist or writer's mind and, of course, pre-existing the landscape actually shown or described by the artist or writer.

A general typology of landscape can be resolved very economically using a hierarchical taxonomy of three types: *natural landscape*, *intervened landscape* and *artificial landscape*, with the latter split into three classes, *urban*, *industrial* or *mixed*. The so-called natural landscape is amenable to integrating some kind of artificial element into it, but this must be small-sized and completely subordinate to it. Intervened landscape is that in which the hand of man has made itself felt on nature, either through change or through addition, in a significant way: whether in the form of superimposed urban or industrial elements, intervened accidents of nature, such as a quarried mountain, or landscaped gardens, etc.

Evidently, the artificial landscape has to be understood as that in which the whole, or almost the whole, at least in its most visible and significant aspects, is a product of human activity. Otherwise, landscape, which consists of what is out there, the empirical essence of what is visible in the subject's external surroundings, may in any of these cases be not only *static*, which is the normal state of things, but also *dynamic*, as in the restless movement of natural forces or industrial and urban hustle and bustle. And of

course, landscape is not only land but also sea, under the sea, in the sky, or lunar and astronomic, etc. Having said the above, it should be noted that landscape, progressively from the natural to the intervened and from there to artificial, can be either historic or contemporary. It should be borne in mind that the latter will always become historic and that, particularly in the plan of artistic construction (inserting real landscape here would be unproductive) the character of the historic refers both to the production period, whether present coinciding with the period of the consideration being made, or retrospective to the various periods that can be seen from the present moment of that consideration. A different matter, but one that probably demands the attention that its highly specialised nature deserves, is that of "ruins" that either make up a landscape or, more frequently, are part of an intervened or artificial landscape. (This clearly has nothing to do with the traditional generic distinction made between history and landscape painting.) Two classes of landscape now commonly found in artistic production must also be differentiated in general terms: landscapes in which the interpretation preserves its *likeness to reality* and those of *fantastic or imaginary creation*.

In principle, landscape, whether real or of artistic and literary creation, is presented as a unit that is nevertheless nothing more than a part or one piece of Nature's whole. In this sense, it can be understood that the theoretical problem of the whole and the parts in the example of landscape is inverted, it becomes its negative. I mean: if it is precisely the part that is the basis of the object's intensity, or a representation of the essential within it, it could be concluded that the mere sum of the possible parts would constitute an object that is far superior to the whole. Here we should observe that the question can refer to two distinct regimes that run parallel to the whole in differing ways. This is the perception of real landscape and that of literary or artistic landscape, and the fact that both form a continuity as separation or movement and what could be termed interpretation or sometimes metamorphosis. The problem, and thus its simple solution, lies in the whole coming

about in function and even in fact, by virtue of the new access of the elective and creative nature produced, a different object than the landscape as a part, a piece constituted as a unit and also independently from the possible sum of those parts. The landscape object takes place, or rather exists, in that by necessity it is part, in that it fragments and separates from a real or supposed whole that then becomes something else, abandoning what was earlier and undifferentiated.

An insightful and interesting approach to the ontology of landscape, as in all his approaches, is given by Simmel. He actually addresses the problem in Neo-Platonic terms, in great depth on the one hand but somewhat superficially on the other, at least from a fairly radical perspective like mine. He argues that landscape is a determination of the soul, a penetration of it as a form, as an object insofar as it finds itself again in the particular extent to which it has made it part of itself; it has reconfigured it spiritually and returned it as such to contemplation. Simmel postulates that the fact that a part of a whole becomes an autonomous whole in its own right compared to the whole, establishes the most fundamental tragedy of the spirit, a tragedy that has had great repercussions in modernity and has produced a rupture in the cultural process. Simmel's text is one of the few major works on this subject:

The spiritual action with which man shapes a circle of phenomena within the framework of the category of landscape seems to me to be this: a view closed on itself experienced as a self-sufficient unit, interweaved, however, with an infinitely further spread that flows subsequently, contained within boundaries that do not exist for the feelings of the divine One, of the entirety of nature, which lives underneath, at another level. The self-imposed barriers of the corresponding landscape are constantly bathed and dissolved by it; this, the separated and autonomised landscape is spiritualised by the dark knowledge of this infinite connection, in the same way that the work of a man is like an objective image, self-responsible and, nevertheless, continues to be in an interweaving that is difficult to describe with the whole soul, with all the vivacity of its author, carried by him and travelled in a still perceptible form. Nature,

which in its being and profound meaning knows nothing of individuality, is reconstructed by the gaze of man who divides it and shapes what is divided in isolated units in the corresponding individuality 'landscape.'¹⁵

Landscape is description, it represents what it is and what is in it, not as action, except for nature's own movement, or as very subordinate actions, although used as a background or context it can be the setting of what happens, of human actions, since it is part of life. With the exception of film and later electronic developments, it should not be forgotten that the visual arts lack the capacity for directly presenting the future and the order of events; this is just the strictly narrative process. In the face of this difficulty, the only option is work in series or conceived as a spatially juxtaposed succession, as done by the sculptor of Trajan's column, or as in Homer's description of Achilles' shield, which is really an early form of ekphrasis that cannot be bettered. In modern times this serial form has been developed particularly in photography, but its great tradition is found in the printing arts, especially in engraving, regarded as the most literary of all the visual arts, and also in screen-printing, including all its abstract forms. It is a path and a double artistic option excellently demonstrated by Goya and Sempere from the extreme ends of the arc of modernity.¹⁶

In literary terms, depending on the rhetorical forms of the discourse, as it is well-known, narration and description are opposed in the perfective/imperfective, conclusive/inconclusive relation, although both can coincide in the use of the "intermediate"

¹⁵ G. Simmel, *El individuo y la libertad* (Spanish ed.), ed. S. Mas, Barcelona, Península, 1986.

¹⁶ Gaston Bachelard (*El derecho de soñar*, Spanish ed., Madrid, FCE, 1985) writing on Albert Flocon's work, sees in his engravings the paradox of the slowness of the artist's line that nevertheless captures the viewer's most dynamic imagination, and how the "engraved landscape is a lesson in power that puts us into the kingdom of movement and forces" (p. 78).

imperfect verbal forms and they also possess metaphorical insertions such as the typically named present historic. This, from the point of view of the plastic, non-moving visual arts, has another sense, in some way completely inverse, since pictorial narration never stops being a chosen moment between before and after, and the portrait in terms of being generically opposite is a description that by itself is conclusive, and in any case refers more to the depth or penetration of what is being represented than to its possible future. Landscape, apart from its first and second levels, often functions in novelistic narrative as a connector of segments, but as a conciliatory, pausing or contrasting connector, even introducer, in moments during the action. The novelistic landscape has to be largely a setting, a context, unlike poetry, a genre that has easier access to more intense or essential symbolic functions, as well as the traditional, classicist and romantic "Nature sentiment". Note how Unamuno, an excellent landscapist like other authors of his generation, adopts the criterion of bringing it into both his poetry and his poetic prose but suppresses it in his novels. An extreme and convergent example of the above can be seen in another aspect, which efficiently states both the particular pictorial limits of landscape and the phenomena of genre superimposition: this is the case of battle landscapes, which could be read as an approximation to mapmaking. As will be seen in the next chapter, unlike the category of character, which belongs in principle to the world of the subject, in landscape, which at first corresponds to what is not the subject although in reality it installs itself in it, the Kantian criterion of discriminating between voluntary fictions (here of art and literature) and involuntary fictions (of dreams and dreamlike representation) which also condition each other, does not seem so relevant. This is not an impediment for the importance and specificity of dreamed landscape, or that of science fiction.