

T H E
AGE OF
FRAGMENTATION

I. Art As a Vehicle Of Modern Thought

- A. Impressionism (Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Sisley, Degas) and Post-Impressionism (Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Seurat): appearance and reality.
 - 1. Problem of reality in Impressionism: no universal.
 - 2. Post-Impression seeks the universal behind appearances.
 - 3. Painting expresses an idea in its own terms as a work of art; to discuss the idea in a painting is not to intellectualize art.
 - 4. Parallel search for universal in art and philosophy; Cézanne.
- B. Fragmentation.
 - 1. Extremes of ultra-naturalism or abstraction: Wassily Kandinsky.
 - 2. Picasso leads choice for abstraction: relevance of this choice.
 - 3. Failure of Picasso (like Sartre, and for similar reasons) to be fully consistent with his choice.
- C. Retreat to absurdity.
 - 1. *Dada*, and Marcel Duchamp: art as absurd.
 - 2. Art followed philosophy but came sooner to logical end.
 - 3. Chance in his art technique as an art theory impossible to practice: Pollock.

II. Music As a Vehicle of Modern Thought

- A. Non-resolution and fragmentation: German and French streams.
 - 1. Influence of Beethoven's last Quartets.
 - 2. Direction and influence of Debussy.
 - 3. Schoenberg's non-resolution; contrast with Bach.
 - 4. Stockhausen: electronic music and concern with the element of change.
- B. Cage: a case study in confusion.
 - 1. Deliberate chance and confusion in Cage's music.
 - 2. Cage's inability to live the philosophy of his music.

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- C. Contrast of music-by-chance and the world around us.
 - 1. Inconsistency of indulging in expression of chaos when we acknowledge order for practical matters like airplane design.
 - 2. Art as anti-art when it is mere intellectual statement, divorced from reality of who people are and the fullness of what the universe is.

III. General Culture As the Vehicle of Modern Thought

- A. Propagation of idea of fragmentation in literature.
 - 1. Effect of Eliot's *Wasteland* and Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* compared; the drift of general culture.
 - 2. Eliot's change in his form of writing when he became a Christian.
 - 3. Philosophic popularization by novel: Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir.
- B. Cinema as advanced medium of philosophy.
 - 1. Cinema in the 1960s used to express Man's destruction: e.g. *Blow-up*.
 - 2. Cinema and the leap into fantasy: *The Hour of the Wolf*, *Belle de Jour*, *Juliet of the Spirits*, *The Last Year at Marienbad*.
 - 3. Bergman's inability to live out his philosophy (see Cage): *Silence* and *The Hour of the Wolf*.

IV. Only on Christian Base Can Reality Be Faced Squarely

Questions

1. Explain what "fragmentation" means, as discussed by Dr. Schaeffer. What does it result from? Give examples of it.
2. Apart from the fact that modern printing and recording processes made the art and music of the past more accessible than ever before, do you think that the preference of many people for the art and music of the past is related to the matters discussed by Dr. Schaeffer? If so, how?
3. "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds... With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." Emerson wrote this over a century ago. Debate.
4. How far do you think that the opinion of some Christians that one should have nothing to do with philosophy, art and novels is a manifestation of the very fragmentation which is characteristic of modern secular thought? Discuss.

Key Events and Persons

Beethoven's last Quartets: 1825-26

Claude Monet: 1840-1926

Poplars at Giverny, Sunrise: 1885

Paul Cézanne: 1839-1906

The Bathers: c.1905

Claude Debussy: 1862-1918
Wassily Kandinsky: 1866-1944
Arnold Schoenberg: 1874-1951
Picasso: 1881-1973
Les Demoiselles d'Avignon: 1906-7
Marcel Duchamp: 1887-1969
Nude Descending a Staircase: 1912
T.S. Eliot: 1888-1965
The Wasteland: 1922
John Cage: 1912-1992
Music for Marcel Duchamp: 1947
Jackson Pollock: 1912-1956
Karlheinz Stockhausen: 1928-
Sartre's Nausea: 1938
Beauvoir's L'Invitée: 1943
Camus' The Stranger: 1942
Camus' The Plague: 1947
Resnais' The Last Year at Marienbad: 1961
Bergman's The Silence: 1963
Fellini's Juliet of the Spirits: 1965
Antonioni's Blow-Up: 1966
Bergman's The Hour of the Wolf: 1967
Buñel's Belle de Jour: 1967

Further Study

Perhaps you have seen some of the films mentioned. You should try to see them if you haven't. Watch for them in local art-film festivals, on TV, or in campus film series. They rarely return nowadays to the commercial circuit. The sex and violence which they treated philosophically have now taken over the screen in a more popular and crude form! Easier of access are the philosophic novels of Sartre, Camus and de Beauvoir. Read the titles Dr. Schaeffer mentions. Again, for the artwork and music mentioned, consult libraries and record shops. But spend time here—let the visual images and the musical sounds sink in. Listening patiently to Cage and Webern, for example, will tell you more than volumes of musicology.

T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland* (many editions, usually in collections of his verse).

Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (1961).

H.R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (1970).

Donald J. Drew, *Images of Man* (1974).

Colin Wilson, *The Outsider* (1956).