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The Work of Art
in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

"Our art were developed, their types and materials established, in times very different from the present, by more laborious efforts upon things and instruments in comparison with our. But the material growth of our technique, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of the Beauvais. In all the art there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the art, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an essential change in our very notion of art." *

-Paul Valéry, *Œuvres complètes*,
"La Condition de l'artiste," Paris.

PREFACE

When Marx undertook his critique of the capitalist mode of production, this mode was in its infancy. Marx directed his efforts in such a way as to give them prognostic value. He went back to the basic conditions underlying capitalist production and through his presentation showed what could be expected of capitalism in the future. The result was that one could expect it not only to exploit the proletariat with increasing intensity, but ultimately to create conditions which would make it possible to abolish capitalism itself.

The transformation of the superstructure, which takes place

* Quoted from Paul Valéry, *Œuvres complètes*, "The Condition of the Artist," translated by Ralph Manheim, p. 112. Pantheon Books, Bollingen Series, New York, 1944.

it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic process the most profound change in their impact upon the public; mixed it to reproduce all transmitted works of art and thus to technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only better, hardly more than a sign" (op. cit., p. 228). Around 1900 effort so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal sense: "just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our predictable a situation which Paul Valéry pointed up in this recent end of the last century. These convergent endeavors made the illustrated newspaper, so did photography forewarn the speed of an actor's speech. Just as lithography virtually implied operator shooting a scene in the studio captures the images at the hand can draw, the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated so enormously that it could keep pace with speech. A film looking into a lens. Since the eye perceives more swiftly than the static functions which hitherto devolved only upon the eye-duction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which hitherto devolved only upon the eye-duction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which hitherto devolved only upon the eye-duction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which hitherto devolved only upon the eye-

With lithography the technique of reproduction reached an essentially new stage. This much more direct process was distinguished by the tracing of the design on a stone rather than its incision on a block of wood or its etching on a copperplate and permitted graphic art for the first time to put its producer on the market, not only in large numbers as hitherto, but also in daily changing forms. Lithography enabled graphic art to illustrate everyday life, and it began to keep pace with printing. But only a few decades after its invention, lithography was surpassed by photography. For the first time in the process of pictorial reproduction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which hitherto devolved only upon the eye-

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useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art.

useless for the purposes of Fascism. They are, on the other hand, different from the more familiar terms in that they are completely copied which are introduced into the theory of art in what follows would lead to a processing of data in the Fascist sense. The controlled (and at present almost uncontrollable) application of genius and genius, eternal value and mystery—concepts whose They brush aside a number of unmodeled concepts, such as creation, the superstructure than in the economy. It would therefore be conditions of production. Their dialectic is no less noticeable in these about the developmental tendencies of art under present classes society would have less bearing on these demands than proletariat after its assumption of power or about the art of a be met by these statements. However, these about the art of the what form this has taken. Certain prognostic requirements should in the conditions of production. Only today can it be indicated than half a century to manifest in all areas of culture the change far more slowly than that of the substructure, has taken more

print. The enormous changes which printing, the mechanical for the first time, long before script became reproducible by With the woodcut graphic art became mechanically reproducible others were unique and could not be mechanically reproduced. the only art works which they could produce in quantity. All art: founding and stamping. Bronze, terra cotta, and coins were knew only two procedures of technically reproducing works of leaps at long intervals, but with accelerated intensity. The Greeks something new. Historically, it advanced intermittently and in Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, requires their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for distinguishing made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-

tion. In 1914 Abel Gance exclaimed enthusiastically: "Shakespeare in the great historical film. It extends to ever new possibilities in the great historical film. It extends to ever new possibilities in the cultural heritage. This phenomenon is most destructive, ecstatic aspect, that is, the liberation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. It is inconceivable without its most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly connected with the contemporary mass movement, contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are tremendous shattering of tradition which is the object of the re-creates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction marks process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. reproduction is the art of the work of art. This is a symptom-and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical One might subsume the eliminated element in the term "aura". the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object, duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive perceived. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, stantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has ex-able all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its sub-thericity—is interested with whereas no natural object is value-case of the art object, a most sensitive nucleus—namely, its au-which passes in review before the spectator in a movie. In the not only for the art work but also, for instance, for a landscape yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. This holds duction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, The stations into which the product of mechanical repro-to be in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art, the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

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the film—have had on art in its traditional form. manifestations—the reproduction of works of art and the art of than the nature of the reproductions that these two different esser. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing

Illustration

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership. The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original.

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Chemical analyses of the paints of a picture can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical—and, of course, not only technical—reproducibility. Contrasted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so in the technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual production. For example, in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. And photographic reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision. Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway,

distance. It recedes into an ultimate retrenchment: the human all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance. In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value

most recognizable exhibitions of this new function. This much is certain: today photography and the film are the of the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental, entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious on an exhibition value the work of art becomes, a creation with a work of art. In the same way today, by the absolute emphasis of the absolute emphasis on its cult value, it was first and foremost, an situation of the work of art in prehistoric times when, by the qualitative transformation of its nature. This is comparable to the that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent With the different methods of technical reproduction of a

the mass. meant when its public presentation promised to surpass that of as great as that of a commodity, the latter originated at the moment when its public presentation of a mass originally may have been just as against the mosaic or fresco that preceded it. And even though place in the interior of a temple. The work holds for the painting there than to exhibit the statue of a divinity that has its fixed and it is easier to exhibit a portrait bust that can be sent here and go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products. With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual, several cathedrals are invisible to the spectator on ground level, remain covered nearly all year round; certain sculptures on me- are accessible only to the priest in the cells; certain Madonna mand that the work of art remains hidden. Certain statues of gods meant for the spirits. Today the cult value would seem to de- magic. He did expose it to his fellow men, but in the main it was of the Stone Age on the walls of his cave was an instrument of existence, not their being on view. The elk portrayed by the man

serve in a cult. One may assume that what mattered was that artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to value, with the other, on the exhibition value of the work. At Two polar types stand out: with one, the accent is on the cult Works of art are received and valued on different planes

another practice-object. vered. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is re- sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no ivity. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make reproduced because the work of art designed for reproducibil- pendence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art production emancipates the work of art from its parasitical de- can insight: for the first time in world history, mechanical re- do justice to these relationships, for they lead us to an all-impor- An analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must (In poetry, Mallarmé was the first to take this position.)

social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter. in the form of "pure" art, which not only denied any of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology acted with the doctrine of "art pour l'art," that is, with a theology which has become evident a century later. At the time, art re- only with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneous first deep crisis which befell it. With the advent of the first truly tures, clearly showed that mechanical means in its decline and the developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three cen- profane forms of the cult of beauty. The secular cult of beauty, remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique of the work-of-art with reference to its aura is never entirely

autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its ideal by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction transformed the universal impact of which was not undermined. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical does not diminish its importance, however, if anything, it painting versus photography today seems devout and confused. The nineteenth-century dispute as to the artistic value of

sequence of all preceding ones.
 meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become the title of a painting. The directives which the captions give it is clear that they have an altogether different character than matter. For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And film to put up signposts for him, right ones or wrong ones, no by them in a new way. At the same time picture magazines do not appropriate to them. They sit the viewer; he feels challenged and a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is currences, and acquire a hidden political significance. They depicted photographs become standard evidence for historical occasions. With it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed of a great, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value. To have withdrawn from the photographic image, the exhibition value for constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man tographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographic absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal

† *Séverin-Mars*, quoted by Abel Gance, op. cit., p. 100.
 ‡ *Alexandre Aronow*, *Cinema* 1910, p. 18.
 * Abel Gance, op. cit., pp. 100-1.

author give the film a similar contextual significance—it not an during history for purposes of comparison, nor Séverin-Mars from speaking of the film as one might speak of paintings by Fra Angelico. Characteristically, even today futuristically lack of discretion. Yet when these speculations were published, these theoreticians to read ritual elements into it—with a striking note how their desire to class the film among the "ars" forces given amount to the definition of prayer?† It is instructive to with the question: "Do not all the bold descriptions we have Alexandre Aronow concludes his fantasy about the silent film moments of their lives, should be allowed to enter its audience."‡ the most high-minded persons, in the most perfect and mysterious might represent an incomparable means of expression. Only the more real at the same time! Approached in this fashion the film Mars: "What art has been granted a dream more poetical and great cult of, what it expresses."* Or, in the words of Séverin-Mars: "What art has not yet matured because our eyes have not come back to the level of expression of the Egyptians. . . . Pictures with micrographs: "Here, by a remarkable revelation, we have theories of the film. Abel Gance, for instance, compares the film the film. Whence the insensitive and forced character of early aesthetics were mere child's play, as compared to those raised by film. But the difficulties which photography caused traditional cinema asked the same ill-considered question with regard to the entire nature of art—was not raised. Soon the film theorists whether the very invention of photography had not transformed of whether photography is an art. The primary question—Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question perceived the development of the film.

tion of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the development of the film.

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* Luigi Pirandello, *Si Gira*, quoted by Léon Pierre-Quint, "Signification du cinéma," *L'Art cinématographique*, op. cit., pp. 14-17.

the very crisis in which we see the theater. Any thorough study della who, in characterizing the film, inadvertently touches on It is not surprising that it should be a dramatist such as Pirandello actor vanishes, and with it the aura of the figure he portrays.

ingularity of the shot in the studio is that the camera is separated for the public. Consequently, the aura that envelops the

aura which, on the stage, emanates from Macheth, cannot be

actor is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it. The

create with his whole living person, yet foregoing its aura. For

the first time—and this is the effect of the film—man has to op-

era." * This situation might also be characterized as follows: for

public, and he himself must be content to play before the cam-

image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into

evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noise

stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort

wrote Pirandello, "feels as if in exile—exiled not only from the

in the case of the sound film, for two of them. "The film actor,"

is acted not for an audience but for a mechanical contrivance—

did not change anything essential. What matters is that the part

hardly impairs their validity. For in this respect, the sound film

remarks on the subject in his novel *Si Gira* were limited to the

senting someone else. One of the first to sense the actor's meta-

resents himself to the public before the camera, rather than repre-

* Franz Werfel, "Ein Sommertheaterum, Ein Film von Shakespeare und Reinhardt," *Neues Wiener Journal*, cited in Lu. 12, November, 1912.

quently the audience takes the position of the camera; its ap-

personal contact with the actor. The audience's identification

ence to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any

his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audi-

the audience during his performance, since he does not present

film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to

actor's performance is presented by means of a camera. Also, the

optical tests. This is the first consequence of the fact that the

Hence, the performance of the actor is subjected to a series of

the camera, not to mention special camera angles, close-ups, etc.

prises certain factors of movement which are in reality those of

material supplied him constitutes the completed film. It com-

quence of positional views which the editor composes from the

changes its position with respect to the performance. The se-

legal whole. Guided by the cameraman, the camera continually

actor to the public need not respect the performance as an in-

quence. The camera that presents the performance of the film

actor, however, is presented by a camera, with a twofold conse-

enced to the public by the actor in person; that of the screen

natural." *

incomparable persuasiveness all that is fairly-like, marvelous, super-

has not yet realized its true meaning, its real possibilities. . . . these

struck the elevation of the film to the realm of art. "The film

restaurant, motorcars, and beaches which until now had ob-

of the exterior world with its streets, interior, railroad station,

on Max Reinhardt's film version of *A Midsummer Night's*

outright sacred one, then at least a supernatural one. Commenting

proach is that of testing.¹⁰ This is not the approach to which cult

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For the film, what matters primarily is that the actor repre-

resents himself to the public before the camera, rather than repre-

sents someone else. One of the first to sense the actor's meta-

morphosis by the form of testing was Pirandello. Through his

remarks on the subject in his novel *Si Gira* were limited to the

negative aspects of the question and to the silent film only, this

hardly impairs their validity. For in this respect, the sound film

did not change anything essential. What matters is that the part

is acted not for an audience but for a mechanical contrivance—

in the case of the sound film, for two of them. "The film actor,"

wrote Pirandello, "feels as if in exile—exiled not only from the

stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort

he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality,

evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noise

caused by his moving about in order to be changed into a mere

image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into

silence. . . . The projector will play with his shadow before the cam-

public, and he himself must be content to play before the cam-

era." * This situation might also be characterized as follows: for

the first time—and this is the effect of the film—man has to op-

erate with his whole living person, yet foregoing its aura. For

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public, and he himself must be content to play before the cam-

image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into

silence. . . . The projector will play with his shadow before the cam-

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era." * This situation might also be characterized as follows: for

the first time—and this is the effect of the film—man has to op-

erate with his whole living person, yet foregoing its aura. For

actor is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it. The

create with his whole living person, yet foregoing its aura. For

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the first time—and this is the effect of the film—man has to op-

For centuries a small number of writers were confined by

look at the historical situation of contemporary literature.
being filmed. This claim can best be elucidated by a comparative
about Lenin or Lenin's Bourgeois. Any man today can lay claim to
himself part of a work of art as witness Veron's *Three Songs*
passed-by to movie extra. In this way any man might even find
himself, the newspaper offers everyone the opportunity to rise from
great interest among the participants, for the victor has an op-
portunity to rise from delivery boy to professional racer. Sim-
ilarly, publishers arrange races for their delivery boys. These races
outcome of a bicycle race. It is not for nothing that newspaper
of newspaper boys leaning on their bicycles and discussing the
what of an expert. This is obvious to anyone listening to a group
sports that everybody who witnesses its accomplishments is some-
thing. It is inherent in the technique of the film as well as that of

this than is the film production of Western Europe.
ever, our present study is no more specifically concerned with
some cases today's films can also promote revolutionary criticism
criticism of traditional concepts of art. We do not deny that in
accrued to today's film than the promotion of a revolutionary
tal was the labour, as a rule no other revolutionary merit can be
phony spell of a commodity. So long as the movie-market, capi-
the "personality" outside the studio. The cult of the movie star,
spends to the shrieking of the aut with an artificial build-up of
to Pirandello, grips the actor before the camera. The film re-
contribute to that oppression, that new anxiety which, according
as little contact with it as any article made in a factory. This may
heart and soul, is beyond his reach. During the shooting he has
the public, the consumers who constitute the market. This mar-
While facing the camera he knows that ultimately he will face
moment does the screen actor cease to be conscious of this fact.
And where is it transported? Before the public? Never for a
But now the reflected image has become separable, transportable.

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as the circumstance left before one's own image in the mirror.
The feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before
x

could thrive.

which, so far, had been taken to be the only sphere where art
shows that art has left the realm of the "beautiful semblance"
and be cut into the screen version. Nothing more strikingly
being forwarded of it. The frightened reaction can be shot now
at the studio again he has a shot fired behind him without his
actor can resort to an expedient: when the actor happens to be
a knock at the door. If his reaction is not satisfactory, the di-
sturbed. Let us assume that an actor is supposed to be startled by
scenes are taken. Far more paradoxical cases can easily be con-
suing fight, if need be, can be shot weeks later when outdoor
can be shot in the studio as a jump from a scaffold, and the en-
mention more obvious unstage. Thus a jump from the window
separate shootings which may take hours at the studio; not to
screen, unfolds as a rapid and unified scene, in a sequence of
installation require the presentation of an event that, on the
into a series of mountable episodes. In particular, lighting and its
elementary necessities of equipment that split the actor's work
of studio, availability of fellow players, décor, etc., there are
formances. Besides certain fortuitous considerations, such as cost
by no means all of a piece, it is composed of many separate per-
film actor very often is denied this opportunity. His creation is
stage actor identifies himself with the character of his role. The
place." "With this idea something else is closely connected. The
prop chosen for its character and . . . inserted at the proper
Arminius saw "the latest trend . . . in treating the actor as a stage
obtained by 'acting' as little as possible. . . ." In 1922 Rudolf
recognized that in the film "the greatest effects are almost always
the film, founded in mechanical reproduction. Experts have long
stage play to a work of art that is completely subject to or, like
proves that there is indeed no greater contrast than that of the

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extensions accessories as camera equipment, lighting machinery, staff assistants, etc.—unless his eye were on a line parallel with the lens. This circumstance, more than any other, renders superficial and insignificant any possible similarity between a scene in the studio and one on the stage. In the theater one is well aware of the place from which the play cannot immediately be detected as illusory. There is no such place for the movie scene that is being shot. Its illusory nature is that of the second degree, the result of cutting. That is to say, in the studio the mechanical equipment has penetrated so deeply into reality that its pure aspect freed from the foreign substance of equipment is the result of a special procedure, namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted camera and the mounting of the shot together with other similar ones. The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an ordeal in the land of technology.

Even more revealing is the comparison of these circumstances, which differ so much from those of the theater, with the situation in painting. Here the question is: How does the cameraman compare with the painter? To answer this we take recourse to an analogy with a surgical operation. The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heats a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient's body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician—who is still hidden in the medical profession—the surgeon at the decisive moment appears from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him.

Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality; the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web.¹⁴ There is a re-

illumination

many thousands of readers. This changed toward the end of the last century. With the increasing extension of the press, which kept placing new political, religious, scientific, professional, and local organs before the reader, an increasing number of readers became writers—at first, occasional ones. It began with the daily press opening to its readers space for "letters to the editor." And today there is hardly a gainfully employed European who could not, in principle, find an opportunity to publish somewhere or other comments on his work, grievances, documentary reports, or that sort of thing. Thus, the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character. The difference becomes merely functional; it may vary from case to case. At any moment the reader is ready to turn into a writer. As expert, which he had to become willfully in an extremely specialized work process, even if only in some minor respect, the reader gains access to authorship. In the Soviet Union work itself is given a voice. To present it verbally is part of a man's ability to perform the work. Literary license is now founded on polytechnic rather than specialized training and thus becomes common property.¹⁵

All this can easily be applied to the film, where transitions that in literature took centuries have come about in a decade. In cinematic practice, particularly in Russia, this change-over has partially become established reality. Some of the players whom we meet in Russian films are not actors in our sense but people who portray themselves—and primarily in their own work processes. In Western Europe the capitalistic exploitation of the film denies consideration to modern man's legitimate claim to being reproduced. Under these circumstances the film industry is trying hard to spur the interest of the masses through illusion-promoting spectacles and dubious speculations.

X

The shooting of a film, especially of a sound film, affords a spectacle unimaginable anywhere at any time before this. It presents a process in which it is impossible to assign to a spectator a viewpoint which would exclude from the actual scene such

simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architect-
Painting simply is in no position to present an object for si-

the masses.

a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to
no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in
early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by
large public, such as developed in the nineteenth century, is an
by a few. The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a
always had an excellent chance to be viewed by one person or
Again, the comparison with painting is fruitful. A painting has
ment these responses become manifest they control each other
and this is nowhere more pronounced than in the film. The mo-

defined by the mass audience response they are about to produce,
decisive reason for this is that individual reactions are predeter-
the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide. The
truly new is criticized with aversion. With regard to the screen,
the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, and the
the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by
The greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form,
entation of the expert. Such fusion is of great social significance.

intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the ori-
movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct,
painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin
masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso
Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the

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from a work of art.

time of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask
reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is
offer, precisely because of the thoroughgoing penetration of
comparably more significant than that of the painter, since it
temporarily man the representation of reality by the film is in-
fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for con-
painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple
mendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the

movie can be analyzed much more precisely and from more
is only an obverse of the fact that behavior items shown in a
film has brought about a similar deepening of perception. It
the spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the
along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception. For the en-
isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated
epistemology of everyday life things have changed. This book
passed more or less unnoticed. Only exceptionally may such a
those of Freudian theory. Fifty years ago, a slip of the tongue
field of perception with methods which can be illustrated by
illustrates it in a different perspective. The film has enriched our
illustrates the testing capacity of the equipment. Psychoanalysts
resent his environment. A glance at occupational psychology il-
the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can rep-
which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in
The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in

XIII

is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism.

which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque film
and control themselves in their reaction.¹⁶ Thus the same public
galleries and salons, there was no way for the masses to organize
paintings. Although paintings began to be publicly exhibited in
painting was implicated by the mechanical reproducibility of
come about is an expression of the particular conflict in which
by graduated and hierarchized mediation. The change that has
lective reception of paintings did not occur simultaneously, but
precisely counts up to the end of the eighteenth century, a col-
in the churches and monasteries of the Middle Ages and as the
as it were, against its nature, is confronted directly by the masses.
a serious threat as soon as painting, under special conditions and,
to conclusions about the social role of painting, it does constitute
today. Although the circumstance in itself should not lead one
ture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie
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and tickets. What they intended and achieved was a relentless degradation of their material was not the least of their means to achieve this uselessness. Their poems are "word salad" containing obscurities and every imaginable waste product of language. The same is true of their paintings, on which they mounted buttons and tacks. What they intended and achieved was a relentless degradation of their material was not the least of their means to achieve this uselessness. Their poems are "word salad" containing obscurities and every imaginable waste product of language. The same is true of their paintings, on which they mounted buttons and tacks. What they intended and achieved was a relentless

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* Rudolf Arnheim, *loc. cit.*, p. 138.

degraded space is substituted for a space consciously explored than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions." * Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera, one "which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, is qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown things of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar, though unclear; it reveals entirely new structural formations. The enlargement of a snap- show motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snap- curiously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and patiently by the dynamic of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the lessy. Then came the film and burst this prison-world under stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hope- robotian streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our tailors' mens and unexpected field of action. Our vacants and our met- hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieu By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden ary functions of the film."¹⁸

Building have been man's companions since primal times. Many art forms have developed and perished. Targedy begins with the Greeks, is extinguished with them, and after centuries its "rules" only are revived. The epic poem, which had its origin

* Duhamel, op. cit., p. 88.

The laws of its reception are most instinctive. which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction, represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is sorbed by it. He enters into the work of art the way legend tells follows: A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as the analysis of the film. A closer look is needed here. Distraction place. The question remains whether it provides a platform for demands concentration from the spectator. That is a common-same ancient lament that the masses seek distraction whereas art becoming a 'star' in Los Angeles." * Clearly, this is at bottom the and awakes no hope other than the ridiculous one of somebody supposes no intelligence . . . a spectacle which requires no concentration and pre-watched, worn-out creatures who are consumed by their work, the movie "a pastime for babies, a diversion for woodpeckers, partition which the movie elicits from the masses. Duhamel calls radical manner. What the object to most is the kind of participation. Among these, Duhamel has expressed himself in the most have launched spirited attacks against precisely this superficial responsible form must not confuse the spectator. Yet some people fact that the new mode of participation first appeared in a dis-part has produced a change in the mode of participation. The parts transmitted into quality. The greatly increased mass of participation works of art issues today in a new form. Quantity has been

were kept inside the moral shock effect."*

* Georges Duhamel, *Œuvres de la culture*, Paris, 1922, p. 21.

This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which, like all shocks, should be cushioned by heightened presence of mind.¹⁹ By means of its technical structure, the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect.²⁰ Images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. The spectator's process of association in view of these images." * The spectator's process of association in view of these I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving notes this circumstance as follows: "I can no longer think what nothing of its significance, though something of its structure, cannot be arrested. Duhamel, who detects the film and knows sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator. Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being according a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, hence it hit the spectator like a bullet it happened to him, thus the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of balance. From an alluring appearance or persuasive structure of sound ment was foremost: to outrage the public. tion by making works of art the center of scandal. One requirement by making works of art the center of scandal. One requirement Dadaistic activities actually assumed a rather vehement distraction was countered by distraction as a variant of social conduct.²¹ class society, contemplation became a school for social behavior; a canvas of Derrain's or a poem by Rilke. In the decline of middle-take time for contemplation and evaluation as one would before reproductions with the very means of production. Before a partial destruction of the arts of their creations, which they branded as

by politicizing art.

ties which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds such a desire that it can experience its own destruction as an art god, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympians; the consumption of "art for art," Marlin, which perception that has been changed by technology. This is evident: expect war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense "art for art—never war," says Fascism, and as Marinetti abolished in a new way.

century bombs over cities; and through gas warfare the art is trenched; instead of dropping seeds from airplanes, it drops in- of daining rivers, society directs a human stream into a bed of claims to which society has denied its natural material. Instead nology which collects, in the form of "human material," the and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is a rebellion of tech- in the process of production—in other words, to unemployment tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization istic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the elemental forces of society. The horrible features of imperial- technology has not been sufficiently developed to cope with the that been mature enough to incorporate technology as its organ. The destructiveness of war furnishes proof that society has not will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war. cesses in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy productive forces is impeded by the property system, the in- of today's war appears as follows: If the natural utilization of serve to be accepted by dialecticians. To the latter, the aesthetics This manifesto has the virtue of clarity. Its formulations de- literature and a new graphic art . . . may be illumined by them." principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new others . . . Poets and artists of Futurism! . . . remember these nation fights, the smoke spouts from burning villages, and many new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical for-

1. Of course, the history of a work of art encompasses more than this. The history of the "Mona Lisa," for instance, encompasses the kind and number of its copies made in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.
2. Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity. To develop such differentiations was an important function of the trade in works of art. The invention of the woodcut may be said to have struck at the root of the quality of authenticity even before its flowering. To be sure, at the time of its origin a medieval picture of the Madonna could not yet be said to be "authentic." It became "authentic" only during the succeeding centuries and perhaps most strikingly so during the last one.
3. The poorest provincial staging of Faust is superior to a Faust film in that, ideally, it competes with the first performance at Weimar. Before the screen it is unprofitable to remember traditional contents which might come to mind before the stage—for instance, that Goethe's friend Johann Heinrich Merck is hidden in Mephisto, and the like.
4. To satisfy the human interest of the masses may mean to have one's social function removed from the field of vision. Nothing guarantees that a portraitist of today, when painting a famous surgeon at the breakfast table in the midst of his family, depicts his social function more precisely than a painter of the 17th century who portrayed his medical doctor as representing his profession, like Rembrandt in his "Anatomy Lesson."
5. The definition of the arts as a "unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be" represents nothing but the formulation of the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image. True to its nature, it remains "distant, however close it may be." The closeness which one may gain from its subject matter does not impart the distance which it retains in its appearance.

ject on the high altar. This refiguration devalued Raphael's picture to which forbid the use of paintings exhibited as objects as cult objects. The reason for this exile is to be found in the Roman times of the film industry. Thus, viewed from the outside, the sound film because it merged new capital from the electrical industry with that of the film industry. Only because it again brought the masses into the theaters but also production of the sound film brought about a temporary relief, not film capital to speed up the development of the sound film. The in- distributed property structure by sheer force led the endangered distances which, on a larger scale, led to an attempt to maintain unity of both phenomena is attributable to the depression. The same important to focus on this connection with fascism than on this re- sided with the fascist emphasis on national interests. It is more at first: audiences became limited by language barriers. This con- film, to be sure, a setback in its international distribution occurred its way, had to reach an audience of nine million. With the sound a film. In 1927 it was calculated that a major film, in order to pay instance, might afford to buy a painting no longer can afford to buy the production of a film is so expensive that an individual who, for but virtually causes mass distribution. It enforces distribution because production. This technique not only permits in the most direct way Mechanical reproduction is inherent in the very technique of film literature and painting in external condition for mass distribution.

6. To the extent to which the cult value of the painting is secu- larized the ideas of its fundamental uniqueness lose distinctness. In the imagination of the beholder the uniqueness of the phenomena which hold sway in the cult image is more and more displaced by the empirical uniqueness of the creator or of his creative achievement. To be sure, never completely so; the concept of authenticity always transcends mere genuineness. (This is particularly apparent in the collector who always retains some traces of the fetishist and who, by owning the work of art, shares in its ritual power.) Nevertheless, the function of the concept of authenticity remains determinate in the evaluation of art, with the secularization of art, authenticity dis- places the cult value of the work.

7. In the case of films, mechanical reproduction is not, as with literature and painting, in external condition for mass distribution. Mechanical reproduction is inherent in the very technique of film production. This technique not only permits in the most direct way but virtually causes mass distribution. It enforces distribution because the production of a film is so expensive that an individual who, for instance, might afford to buy a painting no longer can afford to buy a film. In 1927 it was calculated that a major film, in order to pay its way, had to reach an audience of nine million. With the sound film, to be sure, a setback in its international distribution occurred at first: audiences became limited by language barriers. This con- sidered with the fascist emphasis on national interests. It is more important to focus on this connection with fascism than on this re- sided with the fascist emphasis on national interests. It is more important to focus on this connection with fascism than on this re- sidered with the fascist emphasis on national interests. It is more important to focus on this connection with fascism than on this re-

8. This polarity cannot come into its own in the aesthetic of Idealism. Its idea of beauty comprises these polar opposites without differentiating between them and consequently excludes their polar- ity. Yet in Hegel this polarity announces itself as clearly as possible

indicates that Hegel sensed a problem here.

Likewise, the following passage from *The Philosophy of Fine Art* through it has already gone beyond its principle as art."

of the soul. . . . Fine art has arisen . . . in the church . . . al- cented with the work as an object, for it is but a spiritual support to man through its beauty. *Worshipping, concretely, is con- also something nonspiritual, merely external, but its spirit speaks might even be disturbing. In every beautiful painting there is for worship, but it could do without beautiful images. These "images were known of old. Poetry at an early time required them within the limits of Idealism. We quote from his *Philosophy of Fine Art*:*

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"We are beyond the stage of reverence for works of art as di- vine and objects deserving our worship. The impression they produce is one of a more reflective kind, and the emotions they arouse require a higher test. . . ."—G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philo- sphy of Fine Art*, trans. with notes by F. S. B. Osmaston, Vol. 1, p. 11, London, 1910.

The transition from the first kind of artistic reception to the sec- ond characterizes the history of artistic reception in general. Apart from that, a certain oscillation between these two polar modes of re- ception can be demonstrated for each work of art. Take the Sistine Madonna. Since Hubert Grimme's research it has been known that Grimme's research was inspired by the question: What is the pur- pose of the molding in the foreground of the painting which the two cupids lean upon? How, Grimme asked further, did Raphael come to furnish the sky with two cupids? Research proved that the Madonna had been commissioned for the public lying-in-state of Pope Sixtus. The Pope lay in state in a certain side chapel of St. Peter's. On that occasion Raphael's picture had been fastened in a niche-like background of the chapel, supported by the coffin. In this picture Raphael portrays the Madonna approaching the papal coffin in clouds from the background of the niche, which was demarcated by green draper. At the obsequies of Sixtus a pre-eminent exhibition of Raphael's picture was taken advantage of, some time later it was placed on the high altar in the church of the Black Friars as Piccirilli. The reason for this exile is to be found in the Roman times which forbid the use of paintings exhibited as objects as cult ob- jects on the high altar. This refiguration devalued Raphael's picture to

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17. "The work of art," says André Breton, "is valuable only in so far as it is vibrated by the reflexes of the future." Indeed, every developed art form anticipates three lines of development. Technology works toward a certain form of art. Before the advent of the film there were photo booklets with pictures which fitted by the outlook upon pressure of the thumb, thus portraying a boxing bout or a tennis match. Then there were the slot machines in bars, their picture sequences were produced by the turning of a crank. Secondly, the traditional art forms in certain phases of their development strenuously work toward effects which later are effortlessly attained by the new ones. Before the rise of the movie the

ultimate demanded universal knowledge, and he did not even shrink claim of a Leonardo to whom painting was a subordinate goal and the Vandyck writes: "What could be further from us than the strange and perspective, of mathematics, meteorology, and chromatology. least of new scientific data. Renaissance painting made use of anatomy tested not least on the integration of a number of new sciences, or at tion. The incomparable development of this art and its significance Renaissance painting offers a revealing analogy to this situation. The incomparable development of this art and its significance

18. Renaissance painting offers a revealing analogy to this situation. The incomparable development of this art and its significance

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14. The boldness of the craftsman is indeed comparable to that of the surgeon. Luc Durain lists among specific technical sleights of hand those "which are required in surgery in the case of certain difficult operations. I choose as an example a case from ophthalmology; . . . the so-called endonasal perceptive procedure, or This mode of observation is obviously not progressive.

15. First published in 1914.

16. *Boydell's Magazine*, A. T. Boydell's (London, London, 1914).

17. *Boydell's Magazine*, A. T. Boydell's (London, London, 1914).

18. *Boydell's Magazine*, A. T. Boydell's (London, London, 1914).

19. *Boydell's Magazine*, A. T. Boydell's (London, London, 1914).

20. *Boydell's Magazine*, A. T. Boydell's (London, London, 1914).

21. *Boydell's Magazine*, A. T. Boydell's (London, London, 1914).

22. *Boydell's Magazine*, A. T. Boydell's (London, London, 1914).

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Darius' performance used to create an audience reaction which Chaplin later evoked in a more natural way.

Thirdly, unexpected social changes often promote a change in reception which will benefit the new art form. Before the movie had begun to create its public, pictures that were no longer immobile captivated an assembled audience in the so-called Kaiserparlorama. Here the public assembled before a screen into which stereoscopic pictures were mounted, one to each beholder. By a mechanical process individual pictures appeared briefly before the stereoscopes, then made way for others. Edison still had to use similar devices in presenting the first movie strips before the film screen and projection were known. This strip was presented to a small public which started into the apparatus in which the succession of pictures was rolling off. In-identally, the instruction of the Kaiserparlorama shows very clearly a dialectic of the development. Shortly before the movie turned the reception of pictures into a collective one, the individual viewing of pictures in these swiftly rounded establishments came into play once more with an intensity comparable to that of the ancient priest holding the state of a divinity in the cells.

18. The theological archetype of this contemplation is the awareness of being alone with one's God. Such awareness, in the heyday of the bourgeoisie, went to strengthen the freedom to shake off clerical tutelage. During the decline of the bourgeoisie this awareness had to take into account the hidden tendency to withdraw from public affairs those forces which the individual draws upon in his communion with God.

19. The film is the art form that is in keeping with the increased threat to his life which modern man has to face. Man's need to expose himself to shock effects is his adjustment to the dangers threatening him. The film corresponds to profound changes in the behavior apparatus—changes that are experienced on an individual scale by the man in the street in big-city traffic, on a historical scale by every present-day citizen.

20. As for Darius', insight important for Chaplin and Futurism are to be gained from the movie. Both appear as deficient attempts to art to accommodate the perception of reality by the apparatus. In contrast to the film, these schools did not try to use the apparatus as such for the artistic presentation of reality, but aimed at some sort of alloy in the joint presentation of reality and apparatus. In Chaplin,

the pretension that this apparatus will be structurally based on optics plays a dominant part; in Futurism, it is the pretension of the effects of this apparatus which are brought out by the rapid sequence of the film strip.

21. One technical feature is significant here, especially with regard to newsreels, the propagandist importance of which can hardly be overestimated. Mass reproduction is aided especially by the reproduction of masses. In big parades and monster rallies, in sports events and in war, all of which nowadays are captured by camera and sound recording, the masses are brought face to face with themselves. This process, whose significance need not be stressed, is intimately connected with the development of the techniques of reproduction and photography. Mass movements are usually dissected more clearly by a camera than by the naked eye. A bird's-eye view best captures gatherings of hundreds of thousands. And even though such a view may be as accessible to the human eye as it is to the camera, the image received by the eye cannot be enlarged the way a negative is enlarged. This means that mass movements, including war, constitute a form of human behavior which particularly favors mechanical equipment.