

under all circumstances — myself. But thus I am not merely in fact or in being, but also for my consciousness, the — unique.

There pertains to you more than the divine, the human, etc.; yours pertains to you. Look upon yourself as more powerful than they give you out for, and you have more power; look upon yourself as more, and you have more.

You are then not merely called to everything divine, entitled to everything human, but owner of what is yours, that is, of all that you possess the force to make your own, you are appropriate and capacitated for everything that is yours.

People have always supposed that they must give me a destiny lying outside myself; so that at last they demanded that I should lay claim to the human because I am — man. This is the Christian magic circle. Fichte's ego too is the same essence outside me, for every one is ego; and, if only this ego has rights, then it is 'the ego,' it is not I. But I am not an ego along with other egos, but the sole ego: I am unique. Hence my wants too are unique, and my deeds; in short, everything about me is unique. And it is only as this unique I that I take everything for my own, as I set myself to work, and develop myself, only as this. I do not develop men, nor as man, but, as I, I develop — myself. This is the meaning of the — *unique one*.

### 13 Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) 'To the Bourgeoisie' and 'On the Heroism of Modern Life'

These are respectively the opening dedication and the closing section of Baudelaire's extensive *Salon of 1846*. (For full bibliographical reference see llc9.) The cover of his previous Salon review had announced a forthcoming work 'On Modern Painting' which never actually appeared. It seems likely that the *Salon of 1846* incorporated material from the intended more general study. For all the ironical tone of his address 'To the Bourgeoisie', and for all the familiarity of his equation of the bourgeoisie with philistinism (see llb11), the writer's sharpest criticism is directed at the more established arbiters of sense and taste: 'the monopolists of the things of the mind'. Baudelaire had a remarkable ability to think his way through any critical position that was in danger of hardening into a dogma. In his acknowledgement of the ways in which modern societies and their cultural institutions were being positively transformed under bourgeois administration and entrepreneurship, he showed himself already a more subtle realist than the majority of those who were just beginning to call themselves Realists. The specific terms of Baudelaire's homily are echoed by Boudin in a letter of 1868 (see llb14); and they were clearly in Henri Matisse's mind in 1908, when he proposed 'an art which could be for every mental worker, for the businessman as well as the man of letters... something like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue' (see *Art in Theory 1900–1990*, llb5). 'On the Heroism of Modern Life' is a similarly double-edged text: At one level it functions as a critique of the conservatism and sentimentality of a culture that could only conceive of history painting in terms of an idealized past. At another level it offers a veiled admonition to the would-be Realist that there could be no truly modern form of painting without a strong capacity for irony and an admission of bathos. Baudelaire's challenge was to be met by Edouard Manet — though not for another decade and a half. The translation of these passages has been taken from Jonathan Mayne, (ed.), *Art in Paris*, London, 1964, pp. 41–3 and 116–19.

### To the Bourgeoisie

You are the majority — in number and intelligence; therefore you are the force — which is justice.

Some are scholars, others are owners; a glorious day will come when the scholars shall be owners and the owners scholars. Then your power will be complete, and no man will protest against it.

Until that supreme harmony is achieved, it is just that those who are but owners should aspire to become scholars; for knowledge is no less of an enjoyment than ownership.

The government of the city is in your hands, and that is just, for you are the force. But you must also be capable of feeling beauty; for as not one of you today can do without power, so not one of you has the right to do without poetry.

You can live three days without bread — without poetry, never; and those of you who can say the contrary are mistaken; they are out of their minds.

The aristocrats of thought, the distributors of praise and blame, the monopolists of the things of the mind, have told you that you have no right to feel and to enjoy — they are Pharisees.

For you have in your hands the government of a city whose public is the public of the universe, and it is necessary that you should be worthy of that task.

Enjoyment is a science, and the exercise of the five senses calls for a particular initiation which only comes about through goodwill and need.

Very well, you need art.

Art is an infinitely precious good, a draught both refreshing and cheering which restores the stomach and the mind to the natural equilibrium of the ideal.

You understand its function, you gentlemen of the bourgeoisie — whether law-givers or businessmen — when the seventh or the eighth hour strikes and you bend your tired head towards the embers of your hearth or the cushions of your arm-chair.

That is the time when a keener desire and a more active reverie would refresh you after your daily labours.

But the monopolists have decided to keep the forbidden fruit of knowledge from you, because knowledge is their counter and their shop, and they are infinitely jealous of it. If they had merely denied you the power to create works of art or to understand the processes by which they are created, they would have asserted a truth at which you could not take offence, because public business and trade take up three quarters of your day. And as for your leisure hours, they should be used for enjoyment and pleasure.

But the monopolists have forbidden you even to enjoy, because you do not understand the technique of the arts, as you do those of the law and of business.

And yet it is just that if two-thirds of your time are devoted to knowledge, then the remaining third should be occupied by feeling — and it is by feeling alone that art is to be understood; and it is in this way that the equilibrium of your soul's forces will be established.

Truth, for all its multiplicity, is not two-faced; and just as in your politics you have increased both rights and benefits, so in the arts you have set up a greater and more abundant communion.

You, the bourgeois – be you king, law-giver, or business-man – have founded collections, museums and galleries. Some of those, which sixteen years ago were only open to the monopolists, have thrown wide their doors to the multitude.

You have combined together, you have formed companies and raised loans in order to realize the idea of the future in all its varied forms – political, industrial and artistic. In no noble enterprise have you ever left the initiative to the protesting and suffering minority [i.e. the Republican faction], which anyway is the natural enemy of art. For to allow oneself to be outstripped in art and in politics is to commit suicide; and for a majority to commit suicide is impossible.

And what you have done for France, you have done for other countries too. The Spanish Museum is there to increase the volume of general ideas that you ought to possess about art; for you know perfectly well that just as a national museum is a kind of communion by whose gentle influence men's hearts are softened and their wills unbent, so a foreign museum is an international communion where two peoples, observing and studying one another more at their ease, can penetrate one another's mind and fraternize without discussion.

You are the natural friends of the arts, because you are some of you rich men and the others scholars.

When you have given to society your knowledge, your industry, your labour and your money, you claim back your payment in enjoyments of the body, the reason and the imagination. If you recover the amount of enjoyments which is needed to establish the equilibrium of all parts of your being, then you are happy, satisfied and well-disposed, as society will be satisfied, happy and well-disposed when it has found its own general and absolute equilibrium.

And so it is to you, the bourgeois, that this book is naturally dedicated; for any book which is not addressed to the majority – in number and intelligence – is a stupid book.  
1st May 1846

### On the Heroism of Modern Life

Many people will attribute the present decadence in painting to our decadence in behaviour. This dogma of the studios, which has gained currency among the public, is a poor excuse of the artists. For they had a vested interest in ceaselessly depicting the past; it is an easier task, and one that could be turned to good account by the lazy. It is true that the great tradition has been lost, and that the new one is not yet established.

But what *was* this great tradition, if not a habitual, everyday idealization of ancient life – a robust and martial form of life, a state of readiness on the part of each individual, which gave him a habit of gravity in his movements, and of majesty, or violence, in his attitudes? To this should be added a public splendour which found its reflection in private life. Ancient life was a great *parade*. It ministered above all to the pleasure of the eye, and this day-to-day paganism has marvellously served the arts.

Before trying to distinguish the epic side of modern life, and before bringing examples to prove that our age is no less fertile in sublime themes than past ages, we may assert that since all centuries and all peoples have had their own form of beauty, so inevitably we have ours. That is in the order of things.

All forms of beauty, like all possible phenomena, contain an element of the eternal and an element of the transitory – of the absolute and of the particular. Absolute and eternal beauty does not exist, or rather it is only an abstraction skimmed from the general surface of different beauties. The particular element in each manifestation comes from the emotions: and just as we have our own particular emotions, so we have our own beauty.

Except for Hercules on Mount Oeta, Cato of Utica and Cleopatra (whose suicides are not *modern* suicides), what suicides do you find represented in the old masters? . . .

As for the garb, the outer husk, of the modern hero, although the time is past when every little artist dressed up as a grand panjandrum and smoked pipes as long as duck-rifles, nevertheless the studios and the world at large are still full of people who would like to poeticize *Antony* with a Greek cloak and a parti-coloured vesture.

But all the same, has not this much-abused garb its own beauty and its native charm? Is it not the necessary garb of our suffering age, which wears the symbol of a perpetual mourning even upon its thin black shoulders? Note, too, that the dress-coat and the frock-coat not only possess their political beauty, which is an expression of universal equality, but also their poetic beauty, which is an expression of the public soul – an immense cortège of undertaker's mutes (mutes in love, political mutes, bourgeois mutes . . .). We are each of us celebrating some funeral.

A uniform livery of affliction bears witness to equality; and as for the eccentrics, whose violent and contrasting colours used easily to betray them to the eye, today they are satisfied with slight nuances in design in cut, much more than in colour. Look at those grinning creases which play like serpents around mortified flesh – have they not their own mysterious grace? [ . . . ]

Let not the tribe of colourists be too indignant. For if it is more difficult, their task is thereby only the more glorious. Great colourists know how to create colour with a black coat, a white cravat and a grey background.

But to return to our principal and essential problem, which is to discover whether we possess a specific beauty, intrinsic to our new emotions, I observe that the majority of artists who have attacked modern life have contented themselves with public and official subjects – with our victories and our political heroism. Even so, they do it with an ill grace, and only because they are commissioned by the government which pays them. However there are private subjects which are very much more heroic than these.

The pageant of fashionable life and the thousands of floating existences – criminals and kept women – which drift about in the underworld of a great city; the *Gazette des Tribunaux* and the *Moniteur* all prove to us that we have only to open our eyes to recognize our heroism.

Suppose that a minister, baited by the opposition's impertinent questioning, has given expression once and for all – with that proud and sovereign eloquence which is proper to him – to his scorn and disgust for all ignorant and mischief-making oppositions. The same evening you will hear the following words buzzing round you on the Boulevard des Italiens: 'Were you in the Chamber today? and did you see the minister? Good Heavens, how handsome he was! I have never seen such a scorn!'

So there *are* such things as modern beauty and modern heroism!

And a little later; — 'I hear that K. — or F. — has been commissioned to do a medal on the subject; but he won't know how to do it — he has no understanding for these things.'

So artists can be more, or less, fitted to understand modern beauty! [...]

The life of our city is rich in poetic and marvellous subjects. We are enveloped and steeped as though in an atmosphere of the marvellous; but we do not notice it.

The *nude* — that darling of the artists, that necessary element of success — is just as frequent and necessary today as it was in the life of the ancients; in bed, for example, or in the bath, or in the anatomy theatre. The themes and resources of painting are equally abundant and varied; but there is a new element — modern beauty. [...]

<sup>1</sup> These two types of decadence must not be confused; one has regard to the public and its feelings, the other concerns the studios alone.

#### 14 Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) 'The Individual'

Carrying the subtitle 'A Hint', this journal entry of 1847 was subsequently used as an appendix to *The point of view for my work as an author*, published by Kierkegaard in 1848. Kierkegaard contrasts his own emphasis on the individual, confronted with the demand of making deliberate and significant choices concerning his or her own existence, with both the all-encompassing philosophical rationalism of Hegelian thought (here identified as 'the system') and the complacent acceptance of received truth and religious dogma in organized Christianity. The achievement of individuality is something which 'cannot be taught'. It represents, rather, a 'moral task' and this, potentially at least, exposes the artist to life-threatening danger. The entry, reprinted here in its entirety, is taken from *The Journals of Kierkegaard 1834–1854*, translated and edited by Alexander Dru, London, New York and Toronto, 1938, pp. 227–8.

'The individual' is the category through which, from a religious point of view, our age, our race and its history must pass. And the man who stood and fell at Thermopylae was not as convinced as I am, who stand at the narrow pass 'the individual'. It was his duty to prevent the hordes from forcing their way through that narrow pass; if they got through he was lost. My duty is, at any rate at first sight, much easier and seems to place me in far less danger of being trodden down; as though I were an unimportant servant who, if possible, was to help the masses trying to go through the narrow pass, 'the individual', through which, be it noted, no one can ever go without first becoming 'the individual'. Yet had I to carve an inscription on my grave I would ask for none other than 'the individual' — and even if it is not understood now, then in truth it will be. It was with that category that I worked at a time when everything in Denmark was directed towards the system; now it is no longer so much as mentioned. My possible importance is undoubtedly linked to that category. My writings may soon be forgotten, like those of many another writer. But if that was the right category, and everything in order with that category, if in this I saw aright, if I understood aright that such was my task, neither pleasurable nor thankful, whether vouchsafed to me in inward suffering such as has certainly rarely been experienced, or whether in outward sacrifices such as not every man is willing to make — in that case I shall endure and my writings with me.

'The individual'; now that the world has gone so far along the road of reflection Christianity stands and falls with that category. But for that category Pantheism would have triumphed. There will therefore certainly arise men who will know how to distort its meaning in a very different sense (they will not have had to work to bring it to light); but 'the individual' is and remains the anchor in the confusion of Pantheism, the helibore which can sober people and the weight upon which stress can be laid, only that as the confusion grows greater and greater those who are to work with it (at the capstan — or where the weights are put on) must have an increasingly dialectical relation to it. I bind myself to make every man whom I can include in the category 'the individual' into a Christian or rather, since no man can do that for another, I vouch for his becoming one. As 'that individual' he is alone, alone in the whole world, alone — before God: then it will be easy to obey. Ultimately all doubt has its stronghold in the illusions of temporal existence, such as that one is several people or all mankind, who can in the end thus overawe God (just as the 'people' overawe the King or the 'public' overawe the alderman) and oneself become Christ. Pantheism is an optical illusion, one of the vaporous notions formed at random by temporal existence, or one of those atmospheric phenomena which it produces and which are supposed to be eternity. The point is however, that this category cannot be taught; the use of it is an art, a moral task, and an art the exercise of which is always dangerous and at times might even require the life of the artist. For that which divinely understood is the highest of all things will be looked-upon by a self-opinionated race and the confused crowd as *l'ère majesté* against the 'race', the 'masses', the 'public' etc.

'The individual'; that category has only been used once before and then by Socrates, in a dialectical and decisive way, to disintegrate paganism. In Christianity it will be used once again — in order to make men (the Christians) into Christians. It is not the category which missionaries can use in dealing with heathens when they preach the Gospel, but the category of a missionary in Christendom itself, so as to make the change, which lies in being and becoming a Christian, a more inward change. When he comes the missionary will use that category. For if the age is waiting for a hero it waits in vain. It is far more probable that a man will come who will teach them obedience in divine weakness — by making them rebel against God by putting to death the one who was obedient to God.