

This is "the stage". Look at the name on the .rar. Today communication "creates one's self" (Ciphers of Regression). I will fight against rationality and any pretensions to it. Enlightenment ("service economy") is by necessity hindering judgment (via the excuse "to service"). There are no questions of being, unless it's the single pure condition.

I don't know much about post-war art.

Pre-war art.

Art of any century.

Or contemporary art.

In the following paper I will avoid discussions of "critical metaphysics", taking instead one axiom of life (Only a fool never changes his mind - L.S.):

- ✓ *One might even say that, in this vertiginous race, the images appear, as the mind's sole means of steering. The mind, little by little, becomes convinced of the supreme reality of these images.*

I simply note that art is of the image. Then the question is of density (complicity, the overextension of one's image, the poseur), as images circulate in varying degrees ("speech", the configurations of "sense"), and through exhaustion how to break the opportunists, to the point beyond, ecstasy ("the spark"). This is the improper forum to speak. Little by little, I want to speak.

- ❖ *By the same token, we possess at any moment only a single distinct configuration of reality, whose coordination is a matter of will. (Account must be taken of the depth of the dream. For the most part I retain only what I can glean from its most superficial layers. What I delight in contemplating most about a dream is whatever sinks back beneath the surface when awake, all I have forgotten concerning my previous day's activities, dark leaves, dense branches. In reality, similarly, I prefer to fall.)*

If we go back to the original terms, on the one hand, there is surface of reality and on the other the depth of dream or fantasy. This pair corresponds to the positive configuration, accounted for, and its poetic re-configuration, deeply unaccounted. The way out of the single reel is in dream (by falling in reality). I believe "criticality" is the single distinct configuration. Today there are basically two slogans in consensus (originally "Surrealist" as you have said eloquently in class) in the name of "dissensus":

- ◆ *It's no bad thing that the images ultimately disconcert it, since to disconcert the mind is to place it in the wrong.*
- ◆ *His sole defence lies in claiming that he does not view himself as the author of the book, the said book being no more nor less than a ... [] ... concoction which precludes any question of merit or lack of it on the part of the person who signs it*

For our professional sakes, there is the wrong (e.g. Ranciere, Badiou, et al) and its predecessor the void (e.g. Deleuze, et al). Both have complex forms. It was even originally alluded to, the fact that there is a "disproportion" between the "defense" and the "illustration" of such a return to the source of creativity.

- ❖ *It is irrelevant whether there is a degree of disproportion between this defence and the illustration of it that follows. It was a matter of returning to the sources of poetic imagination, and what's more, of staying there. Not that I pretend to have done so. It would be to take a great deal on oneself to wish to establish oneself in those remote regions where everything at first appears so troublesome, all the more so if you wish to lead someone else there. Besides, one is never quite sure of really being there. If you are taking all that trouble, you are also tempted to stop elsewhere. The fact remains that an arrow now points in the direction of those regions, and that to attain the true goal only depends on the traveller's powers of endurance.*

The only fact is that any venture back into the source of poetic imagination is ultimately based on "staying there", to "lead someone else there", and "never quite sure of really being there". There seems to be a *de facto* arrow which guides the traveler today, but only on the surface, i.e. guided by the currency of the image, one's "speech" (the "pretend to have done so"). The moment the arrow is included within the perceptive reality, the traveler enters the realm of causes and effects (He says "We know, more or less, the road travelled.") For example, "the problem with 'classification'" is natural to anyone who enters a 4-year program in the field of "arts/theory":

- ❖ *If a bunch of grapes contains no two alike, why do you need me to describe this grape among others, among all others, to make a grape worth eating? Our brains are dulled by this incurable mania for reducing the unknown to the known, to the classifiable.*

It would seem the "incurable mania" is applying these "known unknowns" (buzzwords) for the sake of buzzing one's "creative self".

- ❖ *The desire for analysis wins out over feeling. It results in lengthy statements whose persuasive force derives from their very strangeness, and only impress the reader by recourse to an abstract vocabulary, which is moreover quite ill-defined.*

If the analysis is desire itself, i.e. the cost-benefit analysis of one's career, a market-oriented configuration on the "critical" field (XY's opinion of Z), it is strictly "anti-market" in rhetoric ("no BMWs") but any code of "cool" is nearly equivalent in the terms of the enormous abundance of value conferred in one's own field. The professional has adapted a language in order for it to maintain a readership, which underpins its survival, accruing interest on its

"cool". For example, when dropping the word *Stimmung* in a hyphenated clause of a close reading of a marginal text or a "cultured" (e.g. read through Twitter) re-reading/mis-reading of a crucial moment in the history of pre-professionalized thought, who is impressed? What are the underlying definitions of its persuasion? What is abstract, the subject matter analyzed or the analysis? There is always the same email template for the next issue of e-flux. The lengthy statements of a Sternberg or Verso book bring back to mind the reason why is reading it. It's the same people reading them.

- ❖ *If the general ideas proposed for discussion by philosophy to date signaled thereby their definitive incursion in a wider domain, I would be the first to rejoice. But till now it has been mere sophisticated banter; the flashes of wit, and other mannerisms vie in hiding from us true thought in search of itself, instead of focusing on achieving success.*

Only the most improper, wrong exercise of such rhetoric attains the full force of its deep hidden power. If there is any kind of resonance today in the polemic proposed (the rapid-fire slogans of wrong, void, etc), then there is hope today of having at least reached an assessment ("the sophisticated banter") of our conditions by not just using them for buzz. If the arrow supersedes the reality, then the arrow has a power to guide (within a realm of dream).

- ❖ *It seems to me that every action carries within itself its own justification, at least for one who has had the capacity to commit it, that it is endowed with a radiant power which the slightest gloss is certain to enfeeble. Because of the latter, it even, in some sense, ceases to exist.*

You need only say what another told you to say! Often, if not all of the time, one can speak past the all points addressed here in the order of "getting by". Capital presupposes its position on a plane, while "the dream" is in climbing the mountain, getting on top. In order to consider the indirect factors at stake in the composition of a performance on today's "stage", we have to consider the lengths to make the product. In order to correct these slogans, I propose that we re-configure from the source (possibly within the very same lines) by recognizing that a different person is talking right now here in the arena, we both are in. The true split ("There is a man sliced in two by the window") is as "radiant", like the "arrow", for as long as there was the "the lightning flash".

- ❖ *It is as if one were still running towards one's salvation, or perdition. One revisits, in the shadows, a precious terror. Thank God, it's only Purgatory.*

Consider some case studies of "the stage":

part c some prerequisites for rediscovering beauty

- 1** Slow down. A form of meditation, the contemplation of sublime, marvellous beauty takes time.
- 2** Stop multi-tasking. We are not computers – not, at any rate, when it comes to the really important things in life. Focus.
- 3** True beauty shouldn't be confused with the simply attractive. Beware of Beauty-Lite. As Breton said, 'Only the marvellous is beautiful'. If it doesn't bowl you over, then it's not the real thing.
- 4** Dump the assumption that true beauty exists only 'out there' in some exotic place or 'back then' in history. There is beauty in the here and now of our everyday lives. (In the film American Beauty, the young video maker finds marvellous beauty in a film of a plastic bag – garbage - being blown around and around in the wind.)
- 5** Trust your own instincts. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder – your eye is as good as anyone else's. Maybe better. What the ancient Greeks or today's designers, artists and 'experts' think is or isn't beautiful is of no relevance to you or me. If you find something to be marvellous then it is. (Again, the plastic bag in American Beauty).
- 6** Let beauty sweep you up like a tornado in Kansas and set you down in some magic kingdom (which, very likely, is still Kansas but seen with new eyes). Become the plastic bag blowing effortlessly in the wind. Go with the flow.
- 7** Stop working at it. Enjoy.

- *Dream finds itself reduced to a parenthesis, like the night.*
- *If the depths of our spirits contain strange forces capable of supplementing those on the surface, or waging victorious war against them, there is every reason to seize on them, seize on them and then, if needs be, submit them to the control of reason.*

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(II)

appreciating beauty means losing control



The problem (as Breton was well aware) is that opening ourselves

to encounter full on the power of sublime beauty can be an overwhelming experience involving a loss of control over ourselves, our emotions, our decorum.

For centuries within the West this potentially destabilizing encounter with sublime beauty was cast within

the dictatorship of beauty



Why should this interest us here? Because if beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then it raises the question of whose eye is doing the beholding.

To promote and energize a rediscovery of beauty in our own era it is essential that we appreciate that it is our own and not some ancient and elitist vision of beauty which we are rediscovering.

To really rediscover beauty we need to also reinvent it and that is only possible once we begin to question

(III)

- *Analysts themselves have everything to gain from it. But it is worth noting that the means of conducting such an enterprise is not defined a priori, that until further notice, it can be taken to be the province of poets ... and that its success will not depend upon the paths, more or less capricious, which are followed.*
- *It becomes conscious of limitless expanses where its desires are made manifest, where for and against are constantly diminished, where its obscurity does not betray it.*

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to me ▾

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to me ▾

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(IV)

- *But we, who are free from any attempt to filter, who in our works have made ourselves silent receptacles filled with echoes, modest recording instruments who are not hypnotised by the designs we trace, perhaps we serve a yet nobler cause.*
- *It falls to him alone to belong to himself completely, that is to maintain the host of his desires, daily more formidable, in a state of anarchy. Poetry teaches him to do so. It bears within itself a perfect compensation for the miseries we endure.*
- *The marvellous is not the same in all ages; it participates obscurely in some kind of general revelation of which only the particulars reach us: romantic ruins, the modern mannequin or any ... capable of stirring the human sensibility for any length of time.*

The poet Andre Breton, in his Surrealist Manifesto proclaimed 'Let us not mince words . . . the marvellous is always beautiful, anything marvellous is beautiful, in fact only the marvellous is beautiful.' Today we typically bandy about words like 'marvellous' or 'sublime' with little if any sense of their true meaning – from 'we had a marvellous time' to 'this pasta is sublime' reducing everything to a lowest common denominator not at the end of the day much different from 'nice'. Like our vocabulary, our experience is also constantly, increasingly devalued.

*When everything is
'awesome,' nothing
truly is.*

What the always fiery Breton was trying to kick and cajole us to understand – and, even more importantly, to experience for ourselves – was that beyond the merely attractive, the pretty, the cute, the nice there can be a marvellously, awe-inspiring, jaw-dropping sublime beauty which (like a drug or a magic potent) has the power to transport us to another dimension - that spiritual dimension which is so often missing in our lives today.

By seizing on our spirit, what the analysts have to gain from the poets is everything, by making explicit the miseries we endure, to recognize point-blank the order so unnecessary in order to express, all of the implicit materials involved in performing on "the stage".

Great souls that mock Reality with remorseless sneers,
O saints and satyrs, searchers for infinitude!

The split is the pure basis of Surrealism. If Surrealism is a true originary source of creativity, then the Man split in the window is confronted with the two realities. The Man who doesn't compare the two, but instead juxtaposes them has the power to reveal the source of the Poetic Absolute (through the aesthetic):

◆ *I believe in the future resolution of these two states, seemingly so contradictory, of dream and reality, in a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, so to speak. That is the quest I am about, certain not to find it, but too heedless of death not to weigh a little the joys of its possession.*

Through one's ecstasy, the Absolute has the power to cleanse the "inner self" in the midst of the "closest foe".

And our hearts float about in the purest of ecstasy,
How distant you seem to be, perfumed Elysian fields!

But the green paradise of those transient infantile loves,
The strolls, and the songs, and the kisses, and bunches of flowers,
The viols vibrating beyond, in the mountainous groves,
With the chalice of wine and the evening, entwined, in the bowers,
But the green paradise of those transient infantile loves.

That innocent heaven o'erflowing with furtive delight,
Than China or India, is it still further away?
Or, could one with pityful prayers bring it back to our sight?
Or yet with a silvery voice o'er the ages convey
That innocent heaven o'erflowing with furtive delight!

From the perspective of the Absolute, there is One plane, where the void has the gravitational power to move every point in orbit. But the claim to the single overhead perspective, the power to analyze our conditions (Enlightenment) is the very wrong of today (Professionalism).

For our true sake, in order to better articulate, let us consider the world that is ours, "the stage", the reality composed of mountains. For the professional there is the scalable mountain outside, which one climbs in the struggle for success, to create an aura of itself (e.g. the circulation of its image, "speech"). But this public mountain is closed to the field of experiences in the world (outside) because of its pretension to a position on top (aura).



(Outside)

While scaling the mountain, the professional experiences a struggle in no greater or lesser magnitude to one within its very self. The massive weight of the world pinnacles at an underlying point of fear, equally closed in transparency to the public:



(Inside)

Instead of the reality, consider the split of dream that has been characterized classically by two strange forces:

- ◆ *The mind which plunges into surrealism relives with exaltation the best part of its childhood.*
- ◆ *For such a mind, it is a little like the conviction with which a person drowning reviews, in less than a moment, all the insuperable events of his life.*

Rather than assuming the device of the void, where the only wrong is the assumption of its position on the plane, we pursue the insanity of "the child" as an inversion of the "split" in the reality of "speech" (e.g. the slogans).

- ◆ *Not only does the mind display, in this state, a strange tendency towards disorientation (a tale of lapses and errors of all sorts the secret of which is beginning to be revealed) but what is more it seems that when the mind is functioning normally it does no more than respond to suggestions which come to it from the depths of that night to which I commend it. However well balanced it is, its equilibrium is a relative one.*

The important word is "relative". The equilibrium that could very well be the reality itself (the professional) can be scaled, chopped, and screwed to a point where it attains the improper "inner life" only proper to "the child": the experience of ecstasy through a "public self" of fear, breaking out of stasis.

And scents there are, like infant's flesh as chaste,

- ◆ *Charming as the stories may be, adults would consider it demeaning to nourish themselves on fairy-tales, and I would agree they are not suitable for them. The web of adorable unrealities requires to be spun a little more finely, the older we get, and one is left waiting for that species of spider...But the faculties do not change radically. Fear, the attraction of the unusual, chance, the taste for the extravagant, are devices which we will never summon in vain.*

We would not write-off "the child" as a mere script that would be the same "problem of 'classification'" known to all professionals in reality. The power to reveal the Absolute happens through "chance", "the unusual", but most importantly, "fear":

- ◆ I am not lost, since I fear them.

If we consider the split in dream ("the child" and "death"), we have an entirely different landscape. To the outside, this "inner life" is completely open about the struggle. The mountain always publicly falls into its ignorance, to a constant point of fear.



(Outside)

Everyone can sense the child's terror of getting stuck by lighting, but its deeply misunderstood, the child is fearful, but only within, its own experience of "death" itself.



(Inside)

If there is any hope of "staying there" in the "poetic imagination", "the child" latches onto the "closest foe" which is classically characterized as the idea or "The Woman"

- ◆ *Who can say that the angle at which this idea which stirs it is presented, what it loves in that woman's eye, is not precisely what ties it to dream, binds it to the data which through its own fault it has lost? And if things were otherwise, what might it not be capable of? I would like to grant it the key to this passage.*

Through the dream of itself within the other,

- ◆ *It becomes conscious of limitless expanses where its desires are made manifest, where for and against are constantly diminished, where its obscurity does not betray it.*

"The flash" of "lightning" washes away all the struggles in the name of only one name, the purity that is Absolute.

Let's consider the case studies in light of our better articulated terms:

First off, the Generality of Art (Sculpture) looks so bad that it starts to look good (Particular). This fact is not so much the positive configuration of generalities by the public, but the frivolous marginality proper to today's taste-makers (Professionals). The Particular has an aura only at a moment until it becomes a Generality, whereupon any chance of a Return calls upon the taste-makers inextricably bound with the production of aura.

(When the address is glaringly in favor of creating aura (e.g. "Bourriaud"), it seems deeply unoriginal to speculate about a shift to say "Post-Production" given a relative adjustment - "service economy", human capital, Enlightenment, etc - in the underlying basis of life)

Rather than search through the generalities of art with a recently acquired taste-set, walking a path all too familiar, one finds ecstasy at the originary source.

When a "child", it seems all activity related to the spectatorship of art is tightly bound with "music".

At least from my perspective, once and now as "the child":

(II) has particularized at a moment
but is definitely not generalized enough (I, III, V)
if ever, to experience a Return in taste now

(IV) still retains some particular semblance of aura
while starting to point, if not already undergone,
a casting light upon the underworkings of the creation of aura

People:

- ❖ *In the absence of tics contracted through dealings with others, he can pronounce spontaneously on a small number of subjects;*
- ❖ *So we render with integrity the 'talent' lent to us. You may as well talk to me of the talent of that platinum ruler, that mirror that door, or the sky above.*

The Poetic Absolute would not recourse to nth degree re-generations of "Surrealism" (e.g. Robert Beatty).

(A poet's soul that wanders in the gutter,
With the jaded voice of a shiv'ring ghost).

It would seem the only improper way to reach the lightning bolt is at the top of the mountain, but not the mountain of reality, the mountain of dreams, where lies at the top, a gateway that is conducive to conducting the ecstatic field.

By assuming the role of spectator,

- ❖ *We have no talent*

Proper titles become improper by their relative relation to the spectator.
The desire becomes not analysis but sublimation itself:

- ❖ *And just as the length of the spark increases to the extent it does when traversing rarefied gases, the surrealist atmosphere created by automatic writing, which I desire to place within reach of everyone, is especially conducive to the production of the most beautiful images.*

Let me end with a comparison from these lines of the source:

- ❖ *Soupault's being less static than mine, and if I allow myself this mild criticism, from the fact that he had committed the error of placing at the top of certain pages, and no doubt in a spirit of mystification, a few words by way of title.*
- ❖ *I must, on the other hand, do him justice, in that he was constantly, and forcefully, opposed to the least re-touching, the least correction, of any passage of this kind which appeared at all ill-conceived. In that, he was indeed absolutely right.*
- ❖ *(I believe, more and more, in the infallibility of my thoughts with respect to myself, and that is more than reasonable. Nevertheless, with this thought-writing, where one is at the mercy of the first distraction from outside, 'ebullitions' may occur. It would be inexcusable to pretend otherwise. Thought, by definition, is overpowering, and incapable of detecting itself in an error. The blame for such obvious weaknesses must be placed on suggestions that reach it from outside.)*
- ❖ *It is, in fact, very difficult to assess the various elements present at their true value, one might even say it is impossible to appreciate them at first reading. On writing them, these elements are, to all appearances, as strange to you as to others, and naturally you are wary of them.*
- ❖ *Poetically speaking, they strike you above all by a high degree of instantaneous absurdity, the quality of this absurdity, on closer examination, being to make room for everything admissible, legitimate in the world: the disclosure of a certain number of properties and facts no less objective, in the end, than all the rest.*

I'm a spectator (broodthaers-draft1).

- ◆ The time is coming when it will decree an end to money and itself will break heaven's bread for the earth! ...Farewell to absurd choice, dreams of the abyss, rivalries, endless patience, the flight of the seasons, the artificial ordering of ideas, the balustrade of danger, the time for everything! Only let us take pains to practice poetry. Does it not fall to us, who are already living, to try to make that which we propose for our much wider field of enquiry, prevail?