Research Article

Vitor Guerreiro*

Between Magic and Amusement: A Collingwoodian Perspective on Political Art

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Abstract: In this article I enquire into the notion of 'political art', by drawing on ideas from R. G. Collingwood's often neglected *Principles of Art*. I show that his characterisation of 'expression' reveals what I call the 'Narrow Aretaic Structure' (NAS), distinguishable from a 'Wide Aretaic Structure' (WAS). Whatever satisfies NAS satisfies WAS, but not vice-versa. Though we have reasons to call 'art' anything satisfying WAS, Collingwoodian 'art proper' must also satisfy NAS. I then suggest that the distinction between WAS and NAS is more interesting than the distinction between art and non-art and even as a criterion for 'aesthetic' (though this is not my main issue). The main issue is articulating a view of when the 'politicalness' of 'political art' is relevant in light of its being art, or, in Collingwoodian terms, 'expression' (under the NAS model). Collingwood allows us to give an alternative answer to these questions; one that does not appeal to 'messages' in art and their hypothesised effects on the audience. In other words, an answer that avoids the consequentialist 'template', which is restricted to the WAS model. As case studies, I use some of Aleksander Deineka's 'Socialist-Realist' mosaics, as well as other examples of political artworks, and the recording of a work song.

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> an artist who is not furnished, independently of being an artist, with deep and powerful emotions will never produce anything except shallow and frivolous works of art. […] It is clear, then,

***Corresponding author: Vitor Guerreiro**, Universidade do Porto Faculdade de Letras, Instituto de Filosofia da Universidade do Porto Via Panorâmica Edgar Cardoso s / n, 4150-564, Porto, 4150-564, Portugal, E-mail: vguerreiro@letras.up.pt

> on my own premisses, that an artist with strong political views and feelings will be to that extent better qualified to produce works of art than one without.
> (Collingwood 1981, p. 279)

> … there is far more mileage in a Collingwoodian approach to the problem of expression than is generally acknowledged
> (Hopkins 2017, p. 373)

1 Introduction

I address here the following problem: what exactly is 'political art'? What makes political art political? Is the political aspect of political art ever *relevant to its being art*, by contrast with the 'politicalness' of something else which also happens to be political in some way? In doing this, I draw on R. G. Collingwood's philosophy of art, because I think his peculiar brand of 'expression theory' provides the conceptual tools for a truly interesting alternative answer.

Let us break the problem down with examples. Some art is from Sicily as well as from the 20th century (e.g. paintings by Renato Guttuso). But being from Sicily and the 20th century doesn't make such things artistically interesting. It is the other way round: what lends interest to the category '20th century Sicilian painting' (and its further subcategories) is whatever interesting artistic properties things in that category have, even though having those properties in turn has something to do with the socio-historical context. For instance, quite a lot of art in the 20th century is properly labelled 'fascist' or 'communist'; but to say of a painting that it is 'fascist'[1] or 'communist'[2] is not informative about how it works as a painting;[3] in other words, it doesn't clarify in what ways a fascist or a communist painting differs from a fascist or a communist flag or uniform.

Collingwood is not a philosopher who has enjoyed much favor either recently or in the past. For instance, as Aaron Ridley rightly pointed out, Collingwood is a conspicuous absence from Stephen Davies' otherwise scrupulous and exhaustive work on theories of art, especially those with currency in 20th century analytical aesthetics (Ridley 1997, p. 272, fn. 2; see Davies 1991). The reasons for this neglect, I

1 An example of the sort of thing I am thinking of is Alfredo Ambrosi's *Aeroritratto di Mussolini aviatore* (1930).

2 A good matching example would perhaps be Aleksander Samokhvalov's panel on Soviet sports, for the pavilion of the USSR, in the Paris International Exhibition of 1937.

3 Whether or not a painting is 'art proper' or 'falsely so called', in Collingwood's terms, it is nonetheless, and in any case, a painting.

believe, are a combination of factors. One of those factors is the influence exerted by Wollheim (1980) famous criticism of the 'Ideal Theory', which he attributed to Collingwood, lumping his philosophy of art together with Croce's under the designation 'the Croce-Collingwood Theory', a practice initiated by Hospers (1956). Another factor is surely the strawman reading of Collingwood's concept of expression, according to which since art is expression then emotions are always the subject of any artwork. I will not delve here into those criticisms or how they misrepresent Collingwood's thought. For a compelling discussion of that topic, see Ridley (1997, 1999, 2002), Kemp (2003), and David Davies (2008).

The aspects of Collingwood's thought that interest me here are the following: i) the distinction between magic, entertainment, and 'art proper', as special cases of the distinction between art and craft; ii) the concept of expression; iii) the concept of 'corruption of consciousness'; iv) the cooperation between artists and audiences; v) the *aretaic* structure of expressive action,[4] awareness of which I owe to Collins (2014). I focus on these aspects in the attempt to generate some insight on the issue of political art.

2 Art and Craft

One of Collingwood's fundamental distinctions is between *art* and *craft*. He makes this interesting claim: theorists of art since Plato and Aristotle have given us theories of craft rather than theories of art, and that is still how people in Collingwood's time (and our time, if he's right) fundamentally think of art (Collingwood 1981, p. 19). But craft and art are not the same, even when they overlap.[5] One and the same object may be simultaneously craft and art, but what makes it art is not what makes it craft and vice-versa. This claim is based on a cluster of six characteristics of craft that art (as art) is said to lack (Collingwood 1981, pp. 15–17): a) a distinction between means and end; b) a distinction between planning and executing; c) reverse relation of means to ends in planning and execution; d) a distinction between raw material and finished product or 'artefact'; e) a distinction between form and matter; f) a hierarchical relation between the various crafts. Of these, Ridley (1999, pp. 10–12) highlights

4 By 'aretaic structure' here I mean the identity between 'doing *x*' and 'doing *x* well' (to express and to express well are the same); and the fact that the 'end result' that is aimed at in expression is not separable from the 'heuristic path' leading up to it. The latter constitutes the former, and this makes it incompatible with any consequentialist framework. 'Doing well' is not a means through which one maximises whatever good is promoted in the end result.

5 "… in ordering a portrait, the patron is ordering not a work of art but a likeness, the painter in supplying his demand may have given him more than be bargained for: a likeness and a work of art as well." (Collingwood 1981, p. 44)

(a), (b), and (d) as the most important. It is easy to see why. But I will put the matter in a way different from Ridley's.

The sort of activity Collingwood identifies with 'art proper' conspicuously evades what I call the 'template' of consequentialist reasoning (a realisation I owe to Collins (2014)): in such reasoning, a 'basic good' is maximised by the employment of means adequate to that task; the means are known to be good or bad, better or worse, because the end result is contemplated beforehand, complete in itself; and the employment of these or those means has no bearing on the nature of the end result, on what it is (a coffee machine materialised by a genie of the lamp would be just as good as a fine factory produced coffee machine – it would play no role in how one would assess the coffee coming out of it. Because the end is previously given, it can be planned in advance, 'maximised', enter a 'utility calculus'. The 'template' for 'art proper' is quite another. It is what I will call 'aretaic in the narrow sense'. This is an important contribution, by Collingwood, to the characterisation of *purposeful action* (Ridley 1999, pp. 32–33). The sort of action he identifies with 'art proper' (the action which is constitutive of the work of art) is purposeful but its purpose is *not specifiable independently of the action itself*. One discovers the purpose as one carries out the action, or, better yet, one gradually clarifies the purpose as the action develops. Instead of 'means' we have a 'heuristic path' (i.e. one of exploration, inquiry, and discovery), which is not disposable once the 'end result' is achieved: the artist's exploration of the medium's limits and possibilities is to be 'read from' the work. The latter is not just the tokening of an abstract pattern but more like an 'outcome-of-action' (action which is also thought) such that the action is there, in the way a carving tool and its driving gestures are present in the marks left by the tool (i.e. like Peircean indices).[6] This form of purposeful action is 'a productive activity which is not technical in character' (Collingwood 1981, pp. 151–152), i.e. *creation* (as opposed to *fabrication*), not in the inflated romantic sense of the word, but in the same plain sense that 'creating a disturbance' (Collingwood 1981, pp. 128–129) is, likewise, productive *and* non-technical.

Since I discuss the 'aretaic structure' of this action below, I will not delve more into it now. What I say above suffices to bring Collingwood's distinction into a focus that will be useful for our query into the political in political art. Now that we have specified the core characteristics distinguishing craft from 'art proper' in terms of normative pull (i.e. consequentialist versus aretaic), let us look closer at the main forms of craft that Collingwood claims are often mistaken for art, and why.

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6 This image of the 'carving tool' and its marks and driving gestures should not incline us to a purely physical reading of it. Thinking about the structure of a verse or a line of music can reveal the struggle of the artist with the medium, no less than the observation of carved surfaces or canvases.

3 Magic and Amusement

In *Principles of Art*, Collingwood specifies three types of 'craft' that tend to be mistaken for 'art proper': representation, magic, and amusement. However, since many works of amusement and magic are also representations, and perhaps it may be argued that *all* such works involve representation somehow, I will speak of magic and amusement as the two fundamental types of craft often associated with and mistaken for art, leaving out such things as 'mere' representations that are neither. A caveat: the sense in which representation is said to be a craft is as the *production of a likeness*. A portrait can be good as a likeness of someone and utterly lacking in interest beyond that very fact. In Collingwoodian terms, this will not make the portrait bad *as art*. There will be no art there to be bad, since a likeness that fails to be good as a likeness is a failure of a different sort than the failure to be 'art proper'.

It is important not to understand 'representation' here in terms of 'naturalist depiction'. Collingwood (1981, p. 55) is most clear about this, with his example of the 'modern traveller' and the "conventional modern artist with a mind debauched by naturalism" trying to "reproduce the emotional effect of a ritual dance" (which *counts* as 'producing a likeness', and is already one of the senses of *mimesis*). The most sensible thing to do would be to reproduce the patterns of the dance (i.e. the patterns traced by the moving bodies of the dancers), without the dancers – something he believes to be an achievement of much so-called 'primitive' (magical) art. A crucial aspect contained in this passage concerns the role of emotion: the reproduction of an emotional effect, i.e. the arousal of a previously defined (as in fully specified) affective state, is for Collingwood as much 'craft' as the reproduction of visual likenesses. This means that theories of musical expression such as the arousal theory, the resemblance theory, or combinations thereof, are, for Collingwood, theories of craft, not art, since 'expression' is *not* to be confused with the (re)production of emotional effects in adherence to the means-ends template.

The sense of 'representation' explained above does not preclude a far richer sense, in which even Collingwoodian 'expression' could itself be seen as a special case of representation. This is another point at which he would perhaps baulk, but nevertheless coheres with what he claims 'expression' to be: the honest effort (i.e. struggling against the temptation to 'bowdlerise' or 'disown' one's feelings) to make the affective aspects of our experience (the latter's recalcitrant particularity) more tractable, more intelligible to ourselves and others, to tame the opacity of the 'what it is like' of experience, or, in Collins' apt words, to make 'available for the understanding' the sensations and emotions involved in experience, i.e., what

Collingwood calls the 'psychical level' of experience (Collins 2014, p. 10).[7] Collingwood distinguishes this from 'intellectual' understanding (conceptualisation or knowledge-that). One way of characterising it would be as 'imaginative understanding',[8] given the prominent role of the imagination in this process. In Collingwood's tripartite scheme, the imagination mediates between the 'psychical level' and the level of 'intellectual understanding'. It is beyond the scope of this article to develop a detailed view of imaginative understanding, but for a discussion of objectual understanding versus knowledge-that in its application to art, see Guerreiro and Cadilha (2024). Also, for an interesting and compelling account that elaborates and expands on Collingwood's ideas, see Hopkins (2017), who sees imaginative understanding as the fitting of actual sensations and affects into patterns (or 'profiles') of possible such sensations and affects (I return to this idea later). In any case, a key feature of this process is that imaginative understanding is not 'conceptual' or propositional knowledge. As Collins rightly puts it:

> The phrase 'imaginative understanding' is meant here to distinguish the kind of understanding that is the goal of art spectatorship from purely intellectual or rational understanding. It is not primarily a matter of the spectator having 'knowledge-that' a work of art they encounter is expressing a certain emotion, but a matter of the spectator understanding this emotion 'feelingly', i.e. having an understanding of what it is like to feel it. (Collins 2014, p. 138)

The point, closer to Collingwood's terminology, is to give us 'a certain thing', not 'a thing of a certain kind'. Unlike intellectual understanding, which generalises, imaginative understanding, and thus expression, individualises (but see Hopkins 2017, p. 369).

If magic and amusement are the same in respect of being craft, what distinguishes them? The answer is that amusement is meant to discharge emotional energy within the act of experiencing the object of amusement, while magic directs the emotional energy towards practical life. So, the devotional aspects of 'religious art', for instance, are meant to be felt beyond the experience of the object (e.g. a sacred icon; a religious painting); the political aspects of 'propaganda art' are likewise to be felt beyond the experience of the piece and often draw explicitly on the conventions for religious art. In contrast, the model for amusement is to be found in Aristotelian

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7 "This level of experience, at which we merely feel, in the double sense of that word, i.e. experience sensations together with their peculiar emotional charges, I propose to call the psychical level." (Collingwood 1981, p. 164)

8 This is not an expression used by Collingwood. He speaks of 'imaginative experience' or the 'imaginative level of experience'. The imaginative level is the level of consciousness, where we become aware not only of sensations and feelings, but also of ourselves as the subject of those sensations and feelings, and the affective charges attending them. In calling the mental operation of bringing sensations and affects to consciousness 'imaginative understanding', I am following Collins (2014, pp. 124, 138) and Hopkins (2017).

catharsis: the 'tragic emotions' of pity and fear are meant to be aroused and discharged, so that they will not interfere with the everyday life of the society (Collingwood 1981, p. 66). Another paradigm case would, of course, be pornography and 'pornographic art' (Collingwood 1981, p. 84). Pornography shares with the catharsis of tragedy the common element that defines amusement, regardless of whether both are able to sustain other functions as well (see e.g. Levinson 2005).

Just to complicate things a little, I will now introduce the notion of 'political amusement', a category that is absent from Collingwood's *Principles*. My example of this is a 2015–17 Turkish soap opera whose plot is set in the 17th century – *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* ['Magnificent Century: Kösem'],[9] which is about the life of the most notorious of 'Valide Sultan' or mother of the Sultan. It is very well made amusement, and it is not propaganda in any of the obvious ways. It has a political subject matter, but also another, perhaps less usual way of being political: by the fact that it was state supported and made at a time when the idea of the Ottoman Empire played a sensitive role in Turkish government policy and in the global political context of the last decade. In other words, it is amusement with a magical purpose: it invites people to identify with the Ottoman legacy (in contrast with the dynamic set by the foundation of the Turkish Republic) by being amused at a television series. And here we have a hybrid of magic and amusement.

4 Aretaic Structure

Consider Ernest Sosa's (2007, p. 22) example of the archer who hits the bull's-eye, where her performance exhibits the 'AAA structure: accuracy, adroitness, aptness'. A shot is apt when it is accurate *because* adroit,[10] not when it is merely accurate, nor just accurate *and* adroit (I will call this an *aretaic structure*, since it defines what it is to *perform virtuously*). Now, take this example of the archer as a model for any human activity that shares that structure. The 'accuracy slot' in 'aptness = accuracy by way of adroitness' becomes a placeholder for any value aimed at in the pursuit of a practice, i.e. whatever counts as 'hitting the bulls-eye' in that practice.[11] The 'adroitness' slot can be filled by immense technical skill, wit, cunning, inventiveness, ingenuity or whatever virtues might characterise, say, what Binkley called an 'indexer' (e.g. someone who creates 'art' by selecting objects in the right way, rather

9 Şahin, Y., Yula, Ö., Bıçakçı, N., & Yılmaz, S. (Writers), & Tosun, Ç., Baykal, M., Akaydın, Y. A., Tan, Z. G., & Koloş, D. (Directors). (2015–2017). *Magnificent Century: Kösem*. Tims Productions.

10 That accuracy and adroitness may come apart, especially on account of *bad luck*, is the structural analogue of the Gettier Problem in Virtue Epistemology.

11 For instance, 'hitting the bulls-eye' could consist in making an elegant, delicate vase; or it could consist in making a game as addictive as Tetris upon its release; etc.

than shaping them or fashioning them) (Binkley 1977, pp. 274–276). No amount of stipulative redefinition on our part is going to eliminate the ubiquitous tendency to call 'art' any human activity amenable to be described in this vocabulary. Where the purpose of an activity can be achieved by way of adroitness and this is valued much higher than its achievement by sheer luck, the word 'art' and its cognates will find their place. No such use will be more or less legitimate than any other, under the AAA-Structure. For reasons that will become clear later, I will call this the 'Wider Aretaic Structure' (WAS).

Now take this 'template' and apply it to any of the extant theories of art. What each of these theories does is to fill in the 'accuracy' slot with whatever achievement its theorists consider to be interesting and worthwhile: beautiful representation, emotional expression, 'significant form', etc. But these are just some of the endless ways that humans value the things they make (endless forms of 'hitting the bullseye'), regardless of whether or not these things are (also) 'artefacts' (i.e. products of 'craft' with which, in Collingwood's view, 'art' may overlap though it *need not*). Because this is a fact about human beings, there will always be 'counterexamples' to anyone's favourite definition of 'art'. One can always generate new theories of art by filling in the 'accuracy' slot differently, with whatever it would be valued by human beings under the WAS. I am not saying this is what we *should* do. I am saying that this is what philosophers of art *have* been doing: all those whom Collingwood ascribes a 'craft theory of art', but also most philosophers of art since.

The presence of the WAS will always provide us with 'intuitions' to *fittingly* apply the word 'art'. Another way of making my point is to say that whether or not Collingwoodian expression is essential to or definitive of art, I think it is a real phenomenon that is interesting in its own right. Accordingly, this is what I will be focusing on.

What Collingwood proposes as the core of art, i.e. 'art proper', is a form of achievement which we know not what it is until we go through the process of achieving it. We don't know what form 'hitting the bullseye' will take in each case until we have done it. If we do know it beforehand then we are engaged in something else other than 'art proper'. According to Collingwood we are engaged in 'craft'.[12] Also, his way of conceiving the value of 'art proper' is, as David Collins has shown, *aretaic*[13] as opposed to consequentialist. The good of 'art proper' is not a form of 'basic good' that we attempt to maximise *by* doing certain things well. Rather, doing

12 However, to engage in craft is to engage in something that fits the WAS and so is vulnerable to intuitions that make 'art' an appropriate descriptive term for it. And even Collingwood knows that art and craft, as he characterises them, overlap. There can be craft in the absence of what he calls 'art proper' and the latter is possible in the absence of craft elements – which is compatible with the fact that they overlap most of the time (Ridley 1999, pp. 10–17).

13 A term which both Collins and I consider more apt than 'virtue-theoretical'.

those things well *is* the value we are after. What I am trying to get at with this is that the form of Collingwood's reasoning can be adopted as a framework for a theory that differs from his own in more or less subtle ways. A theory that fits this framework is, to that extent, Collingwoodian, even if not strictly adhering to the letter of Collingwood's thought. Perhaps his emphasis on emotion is not remotely as important as his way of conceiving the value of the activity in aretaic terms. Collingwood proposes a specific form of achievement for what he calls 'art proper' – the expression of emotion (where 'expression' is really a form of 'imaginative understanding' and 'emotion' is to be construed broadly, to encompass diverse aspects of human experience) – and a specific form of failure in that activity – the corruption of consciousness.

Collingwood's critics have zeroed in on 'emotion' and 'things in the head' when, I contend, the true core of the theory is the *aretaic structure of expression*. What is most interesting about this aretaic structure is that it is narrower than WAS. Let us call it the 'Narrow Aretaic Structure' (NAS). Why is it 'narrow'? Because it lays *further* conditions upon those set by WAS. Whatever satisfies NAS also satisfies WAS, but the reverse is not necessarily true. Both the WAS and the NAS allow us to generate theories of art. What Collingwood dubs 'technical theory of art' fits the WAS model; what he calls 'art proper' *also* fits the NAS model. Now we see more clearly why the aretaic structure is more interesting than the focus on emotion. It is that which truly marks a difference between Collingwood's theory and other theories of art. This may not suffice to eliminate the human tendency to describe as 'art' anything that merely fits the WAS, replacing it with the following distinction: a practice satisfying NAS is 'art proper'; whatever satisfies *only* WAS is 'craft'. However, it has the interesting consequence of drawing the line along the divide between *types of action*, whose structure in turn follows a divide between approaches to aretaic theory. And here is another interesting consequence: as long as we understand the distinction in terms of action and aretaic structure, it doesn't matter much what we do with the word 'art'. We can afford to call things that satisfy only WAS both 'craft' and 'art'. We may call 'art proper' whatever satisfies NAS, but 'proper' here no more restricts the use of 'art' in other contexts than 'mimetic' in 'mimetic arts' does. The term 'proper' just becomes shorthand for 'in the narrow aretaic sense'.[14]

Consider magic and amusement again. To distinguish them from 'art proper' (expression in the narrow aretaic sense) we may say that they are forms of craft, not art. That is one approach. However, it seems equally plausible, without loss, to use

14 Now some readers will surely want to chime in: 'Well, *that* is tantamount to a standard essentialist definition!' However, it is *not*! Any attentive reader of Collingwood's *Principles* will remember the astonishing remark on page 285: "Every utterance and every gesture that each of us makes is a work of art." I will not deal with the interpretation of this claim here, but mention it only to remember that *expression in the narrow aretaic sense* (i.e. Collingwoodian expression) will cover more than philosophers of art committed to the standard definitional project mean to cover by 'art'.

terms like 'magical art', 'amusement art', and 'art proper' (where 'proper' just stands for 'in the narrow aretaic sense'). This is what Collingwood does anyway: the terms 'magical art' and 'amusement art' recur throughout his book. Furthermore, most of the time, these three categories overlap with each other. Narrow aretaic elements may always coexist with elements of magic and entertainment. In reality, these distinctions are not clear-cut; they lie on a continuum with no sharp boundaries, often bleeding into one another.

A "strange hybrid distinction" (Collingwood 1981, p. 24) among those characteristic of craft (as opposed to 'art proper') which is mentioned by Collingwood (though not emphasised by Ridley) is that between form and content (he mentions it as a variant of the distinction between form and matter). Unlike Ridley, I think that distinction is very important, and perhaps absolutely crucial. Regardless of which term assumes the role of 'means' and which the role of 'end' (in orthodox Marxist aesthetics, the one that was embodied in Soviet state policy, and, before that, in the declarations of AkhRR,[15] form is *at the service* of content), the logic is that of craft. Furthermore, privilege of content assumes the logic of craft through the side of magic; privilege of form assumes the logic of craft through the side of amusement. If this sounds preposterous, we should emphasise that the normative structure of amusement, as described by Collingwood – the 'effect' or 'end result' of amusement art, as opposed to magical art, is to be exhausted in the experience itself, and not prolonged into practical life. Both construe art as craft and both flow from the distinction of form and content. 'Art proper', i.e. genuine expression, is neither, even when it overlaps with magic or amusement in the same object. Genuine expression is not captured by consequentialist normativity; but there is a craft-concept of expression which consists in expression being reduced to resemblance of contour or arousal of emotion or some other affective state. However, there is a huge difference between being enraged or calmed by music, and realising, by following the music with understanding, that "rage may internally evolve into peaceful acceptance" (Zemach 2002, pp. 173–174).

The disconnection and separateness of means and ends, planning and execution, raw material and finished product are nullified when transitioning from a WAS aretaic model to an NAS aretaic model. The WAS model covers the skills or 'faculty virtues' (it is a 'reliabilist' aretaic model)[16] required by both forms of craft *as well as* genuine

15 Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia: a group of Soviet artists in the 1920s, who assumed the 'ideological struggle' against 'formalism' and artistic experimentation as 'Western' and 'bourgeois', and eventually acquired the patronage and protection of State power, which meant a crackdown on their avant-garde rivals. Aleksander Deineka, of whose work I will speak briefly as a case study, belonged to the OST group, 'Society of Easel Painters', which he co-founded.

16 Thus, it is amenable to the consequentialist normativity that governs craft, as opposed to 'art proper' as Collingwood sees it. It goes without saying that Collingwood never thought of the question in these terms.

expressions, but only the NAS model captures genuine expression in its specificity. This explains the pull to call the mosaics in Kievskaya metro station[17] 'art' even when we can tell the difference between them and genuine expression. Thinking of expression as merely 'resemblance and arousal' is to force-fit it into the WAS model. By contrast, under the NAS model, expression is a cognitive act, far richer than merely recognising emotions through resemblance of 'contour' or arousal. Collingwood's own criticism of 'aesthetic emotion' theories (Collingwood 1981, pp. 116–117) adds depth to this: either the 'aesthetic emotion' is one peculiar emotion among the various kinds of emotion experienced by artists, which they then *select for expression*, or it is just "the specific feeling of having successfully expressed ourselves". (Collingwood seems to be describing here a higher-order emotion, whose objects are successful acts of genuine expression). If the former, since artists "cannot begin the work of expression by deciding what emotion to express", then a formalist theory appealing to a special 'aesthetic emotion' leaves us flat out in the WAS model; it is a theory of craft. If the latter, then "the emotional charge on the experience of expressing a given emotion" (Collingwood 1981, p. 274), *any* emotion, which *a fortiori* includes political emotions, can be an "aesthetic emotion" when it is genuinely expressed. Being expressed (under the NAS model) is the same as acquiring the status of 'aesthetic'. This delivers an interesting 'map' of 'aesthetic reality'. The difference between 'aesthetic' and 'non-aesthetic' lies primarily in the distinction between types of action (not 'mental states' but actions, even though these actions involve mental states), viz, expression under the WAS model and expression under the NAS model. Derivatively, that difference pertains to objects (artworks) whose status as 'aesthetic' is connected to those actions. As Collingwood (Collingwood 1981, p. 324) puts it: "The aesthetic activity is an activity of thought in the form of consciousness, converting into imagination an experience which, apart from being so converted, is sensuous."

The NAS model then has more interesting consequences for how we think of that most elusive of philosophical creatures, the 'aesthetic'. Apply to objects what has been said about 'psychical' emotions, and what we get is this: no property or aspect of an object is 'aesthetic' unless it is the intentional object of a mental state which in turn is the object of a genuine (NAS) activity of expression. And this entails further that we cannot know what properties or aspects of a work are 'aesthetic' until we undergo the activity of imaginative understanding that Collingwood calls 'expression'. Those aspects are only revealed to us as we perform our collaborative (and constitutive) role of audience. This is a more interesting criterion than those relying on a previously defined 'aesthetic mental state' (e.g. aesthetic experience, aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic emotion, etc.) or a set of previously defined 'aesthetic properties'. But just as expression makes *any* emotion 'aesthetic' (which is here just a way of referring to imaginative

17 Public art in Moscow. An example I will use further ahead, in contrast with mosaics in Mayakovskaya metro station, also in Moscow.

understanding under the NAS model), likewise, any property of an object becomes 'aesthetic' when it is the intentional object of an experience shared through expression or imaginative understanding. A corollary of this is that one cannot know the form of an artwork independently of the process of imaginatively understanding it. Under the NAS model, the process by which artistic form is revealed in experience is inexhaustible.

Something else which is easy to miss as a fundamental aspect of Collingwood's view, given the 'individualistic psychology' that permeates our way of thinking about the arts, is the collaboration between artists and others: other artists, performers, and the audience. It is interesting to note that the root of Collingwood's animosity towards cinema, at a time when Panofsky had already published his essay on style and medium in the moving pictures, is not the manifestation of 'aesthetic conservatism' we might expect. He rejected cinema because in his view it eliminates the collaborative role of the audience in constituting the work of art (i.e. expression in the narrow aretaic sense) – an issue with which I will not deal here. Collingwood conceives of expression as an activity which is most emphatically not a 'masturbatory discharge' of the individual genius (the harsh terminology is mine), of which the audience would be a mere "licensed eavesdropper, overhearing something that would be complete without him" (Collingwood 1981, p. 322), but is rather, and *always*, a *collective*, essentially cooperative action. The metaphor Collingwood uses for the role of the audience is that of a 'sounding-board' in the absence of which a speaker loses grip on whether or not she is making the right choices, not because she has the previously determined end of pleasing the audience with ready-made 'effects', but because she can't know herself what it is she is expressing without the audience as a 'sounding-board'. No writer can write well, nor can a painter paint well if she doesn't internalise this 'sounding-board', learning how to factor herself out as a subject. She is not simply outpouring her private feelings but sharing her own imaginative understanding of what her audience "wants to say but cannot say unaided." (Collingwood 1981, p. 312) The collaboration between artists and audience is the most important political aspect of Collingwood's philosophy of art, while the 'corruption of consciousness' and its 'remedy' (expression) are its most important ethical aspect. Expressing an affective state is coming to know what it is that we feel, which changes the feeling itself. One doesn't achieve this alone, just as one doesn't learn a language alone – nor does one make up a language alone.[18]

In sum, political art as 'art proper' cannot be the means to an end, magical or cathartic, even if it *also* happens to be an artefact with some magical or cathartic function. It must be the "translation into imaginative form" (Collingwood 1981, pp. 274, 279) of what it is like to be the subject of a shared experience of the world, from a specific point of view.

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18 Collingwood (1981, p. 275): "The artistic activity does not 'use' a 'ready-made language', it 'creates' language as it goes along."

5 Political Art

When we hear about 'political art', what most readily comes to mind is the sort of thing that Collingwood called 'magic', or 'magical art' as opposed to 'art proper'. In other words, we immediately think of propaganda, 'committed art', 'art with a message', etc. If a paradigmatic case were needed, we could give the following: a mural painting by Max Lingner titled *Aufbau der Republik* (1952/53), located in the former House of Ministries of the GDR, in Berlin (Figure 1). It is reminiscent of illustrations in religious brochures of a certain kind (in fact, what it depicts could be

Figure 1: Max Lingner, *Aufbau der Republik* (1952) (photos by author). Public domain.

seen as a religious procession). Political art of this sort is just one example of what Collingwood called 'magic'. Whatever is meant to produce an emotional effect to be continued in practical life is 'magic' in this sense. There are emotional effects – adherence to an ideology or worldview, edification, emulation, admiration, fortitude, perseverance, etc. – which is the work's function to arouse and sustain beyond the boundaries of the individual audience member's experience of the work.

It is thus tempting to think that 'political art' is either magic, in the sense of propaganda or protest, or amusement with a political subject matter, perhaps also with a further, magical aim coexisting with its function as amusement. This gives rise to a dichotomy: even if 'art proper' and 'political art' overlap, the political element must be either magic or amusement (in a broad sense that includes 'refined' forms of hedonism). However, I would like to call attention to forms of art being political that break the strict dichotomy between magic and amusement.

In 1918, Paul Nash, a soldier in World War I renowned for his representations of the war's horrific and catastrophic aspects, created a painting titled *We are Making a New World* (Figure 2). This painting clearly fits the description of 'political art', but it does not constitute 'magic' in the Collingwoodian sense. It depicts the sun rising behind garnet-coloured mountains, over a dismal landscape of mud and moss, sometime after a battle has taken place. It is an image of desolation, wreckage, and pollution. Nature is there, following its unwavering course, but it appears sullen, poisoned, and indelibly tainted. Human presence is merely spectral, suggested by the shapes of dead tree

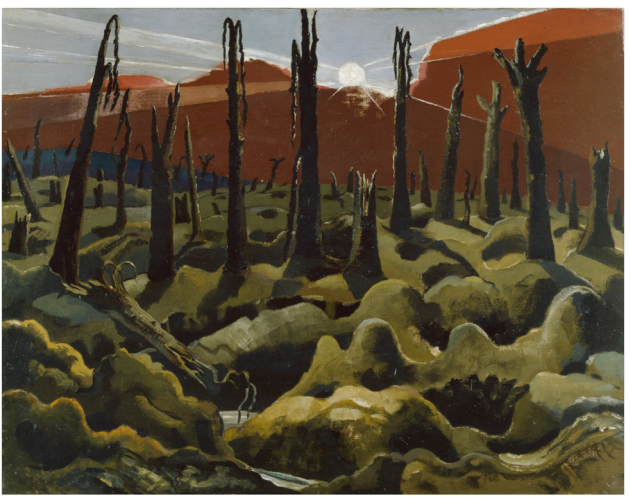

Figure 2: Paul Nash, *we are making a new world (1918)*. Imperial War Museum, London. According to the Wikipedia article on this painting, reproductions of the painting are in the public domain.

stumps and snags covering the landscape. The posture of some of these trees, the tallest, simultaneously evokes stretched corpse-like arms or tombstones, arranged in a pattern also reminiscent of a stone circle or menhirs.[19]

In stark contrast with Nash's work is another depiction of the horrors of war: one of the celebrated paintings of Socialist Realism by Aleksander Deineka, who was a central figure in the 'movement'.[20] Part of what makes him an interesting figure is that his embrace of Socialist Realism was wholehearted and not cynical. The painting I am referring to is *The Defence of Sevastopol* (1942).[21] One can clearly see here the 'magic' at work: this is a painting aimed at producing the emulation of civic virtues and all idealised features of the 'soviet man'. I would venture to say there is in this picture something of Thomas Cole's *Destruction* (in his series *The Course of Empire*) and Jean-Léon Gérôme's paintings of gladiators – what Gillian McIver (2023, pp. 32–47) called, respectively, the 'apocalyptic sublime' and the 'spectacular sublime' – quite in keeping with the peculiar way in which Socialist Realism continues 19th century historical painting. While it may be open to discussion whether Deineka's painting is *entirely* dominated by its magical function, it is nonetheless clear that this is its dominant function, while in Nash's painting the dominant force is not the functionality of magic but something else altogether. Experiencing it engages us in a focused effort of discovering what this experience is.

Two further contrasting examples of this kind are the mosaics in Moscow metro stations Kievskaya (1954), designed by A. V. Myzin (Figure 3), and Mayakovskaya (1938), with a series of 35 mosaics designed by A. Deineka (execution by V. Frolov)[22] and titled *Days and Nights in the Land of the Soviets* (Figure 4).

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19 Testifying to the painting's richness and density, as I recently discovered by chance, photographs of a desolate landscape in one of the most polluted places on Earth – Norilsk, the site of a city built by Gulag prisoners in the 1930s – eerily resonate with Nash's painting.

20 At least in the Soviet Union from 1934 onwards (and after WW2 in satellite states of the USSR), all the way up to the years of *Perestroika* (despite a relative waning during Nikita Khrushchev's *Thaw*), Socialist Realism is perhaps not aptly described as a 'movement', for this implies a dynamic adversarial relation with other movements, which were abolished in 1932. Socialist Realism was established by state decree, accompanied by a crackdown on rival movements. The adversarial element is restricted to relations with the West and its art movements. Of course, things are always more complex in reality, and the artistic life of the Soviet Union was more nuanced than what one would believe it to be, looking only at state decrees and sanctioned exhibitions. One striking example is provided by John Berger in his book about Ernst Neizvestny (Berger 2011) and his notorious exchange with Khrushchev at the Moscow Manege.

21 https://en.rusmuseum.ru/collections/painting-of-the-second-half-of-the-xix-century-beginning-of-xxi-century/artworks/a-defence-of-sebastopol/?sphrase_id=384792#rmPhoto/0/.

22 Some of the Myzin mosaics in Kievskaya can be seen here: https://news.metro.ru/f31.html. For 32 of the 35 Deineka-Frolov mosaics in Mayakovskaya, see: https://www.metro.ru/stations/zamoskvoretskaya/mayakovskaya/ceiling/

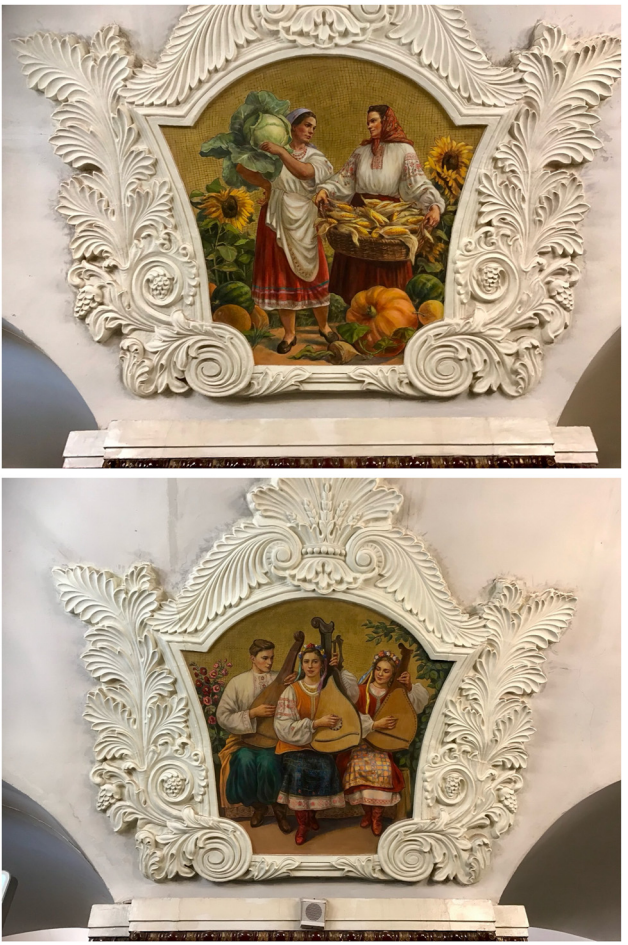

Figure 3: Kievskaya metro station mosaics. (Photos by author).

They seem to me to embody the difference between something which is purely 'magic', and something which, though also discharging 'magical' functions, has a spark of something else,[23] despite *both* belonging to the 'school' of Socialist

23 I would like to emphasise a few of the mosaics, by number: 2, 6, 23, 24, 28, 30 (the presence of dark clouds is always interesting as an acknowledgement that dark clouds exist!). In the third episode of his 2009 documentary for the BBC, *Art of Russia*, art critic Andrew Graham-Dixon focuses specifically on mosaic 6, which depicts a parachutist at the moment of pulling the chord. He delves on the "fresh-faced expression" of the parachutist and observes that these mosaics are "probably among the few genuine master pieces of art produced under the tyranny of Stalin." Shortly before that, he remarked:

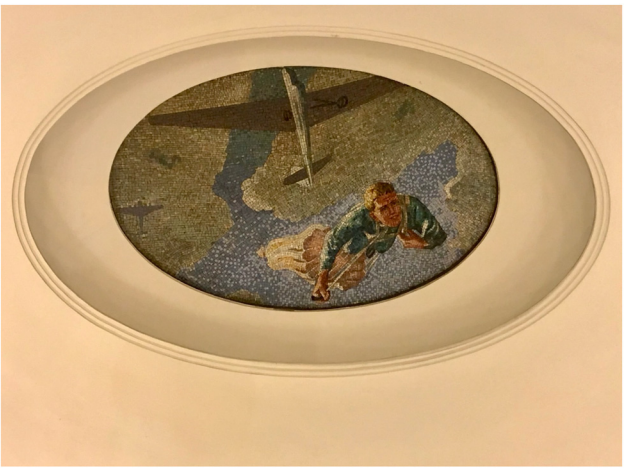

Figure 4: Mayakovskaya metro station mosaic. (Photo by author).

Realism.[24] The searching light of the imagination shines forth through them, meaning: something in them was not entirely given beforehand and exhausted in the maximisation of a predetermined intended effect; it doesn't just hammer onto your mind a fixed and closed idea. It is able to trigger an inquiring relation between you and the work, so you don't quite know what the mosaics are expressive of until you go through that process. What they are expressive of develops together with that process, continuously: your experience is a part of it, there are not two separate things here. And this can only happen if the work is such that it allows it to.

What was said above notwithstanding, 'magic' is not a term of abuse in Collingwood's view. On the contrary, reading the *Principles* one is made keenly aware that he is quite a fan of magic (but see also Collingwood 1940, 174). At one point he claims that "in a civilization that is rotten with amusement, the more magic we produce the better" (Collingwood 1981, p. 278). He says this in connection with his remarks on rural England and forms of life that were progressively destroyed by the industrial revolution. Such remarks may seem to have terribly conservative overtones, but one can also think of the role that the 'folk revival' had in left wing 1960s and 1970s British political culture, with figures like Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. It is quite clear that

"I wonder if it is not a case of … adversity, even under such a terrible tyrant as Stalin, sparking a considerable artist into making a truly great piece of work."

24 Well known for its 'magical' strictures on the process of artistic expression, which must be *dynamic* if it is to be expression at all.

Collingwood's hostility is directed against amusement (or rather a state of affairs where amusement is the dominant cultural form), or rather against the cultural effects of addiction to amusement in tandem with a wholesale destruction of 'magical art'. And although his main target, what he calls *radix malorum* (the root of all evil), is the 'corruption of consciousness', which he equates with 'bad art', he takes care to distinguish both forms of craft, i.e. magic and amusement, from bad art. Magic and amusement are not ways of making art badly: they are something else. Although there seems to be a connection between the cultural predominance of amusement and some form of 'corruption', amusement is not the same thing as bad art and so is not the same thing as the 'corruption of consciousness'. We can use our previous examples to clarify this: consider again the mosaics in the train stations. The contrast is not meant to suggest that the mosaics in Kievskaya station are 'bad art' or that they represent the 'corruption of consciousness'. On the contrary: if my assessment of the mosaics in Mayakovskaya station is adequate, *they* are the sort of thing that *can* be 'bad art', since failed expression, i.e. the 'corruption of consciousness', can only occur as the outcome of an activity whose proper aim is expression. The mosaics in Kievskaya are not failed attempts at expression: they are strictly magic.[25] Like the Lingner mural, they are hollow injunctions. If it is to be bad art, you need a soul there to be perverted.[26] This perversion occurs when the artist 'cherry-picks' (the term is not Collingwood's) and instead of expressing what *must* be expressed – not just his private affective states but the ones he shares with the audience, as a denizen of his time and society – he selects,[27] adjusting to an idea of what emotions he *should* have and make manifest.

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25 Because things of that sort do require skill and they satisfy the WAS model, they are nonetheless intuitively called 'art'. However, my whole point has been to show that we don't even need the word 'art' to be able to see the huge difference between what is going on under the WAS model and under the NAS model.

26 I use this metaphor of the soul with the following remark by Collingwood in mind: "… a person who mistakes amusement for art is doing his thinking badly, but that about which he makes the mistake is not bad art. What he is doing is to mistake the *clichés* or corpses of language used in this business for language itself. The difference between the things thus confused is like the difference between a living man and a dead man; the difference between good art and bad art is like the relation between two living men, one good and the other bad." (Collingwood 1981, p. 277)

27 Collingwood explains how selection of this sort shuns expression thus: "… a person who shuts himself up in the limits of a narrow coterie has an experience which includes the emotions of the larger world in which he was born and bred, as well as those of the little society he has chosen to join. If he decides to express only the emotions that pass current within the limits of that little society, he is selecting certain of his emotions for expression. The reason why this inevitably produces bad art is that, as we have already seen, it can only be done when the person selecting already knows what his emotions are; that is, has already expressed them. His real work as an artist is a work which, as a member of his artistic coterie, he repudiates." (Collingwood 1981, p. 121)

There is perhaps another way of adding clarity to this issue. David Woodruff (2001) has characterised 'aesthetic courage' as the ability to face what the work tells us about ourselves and about reality. Despite the fact that Woodruff's attempt at a 'virtue aesthetics' has serious flaws,[28] his characterization of aesthetic courage is useful here, because this is exactly the mental attitude required for the struggle with 'corruption of consciousness' (compare this struggle for the integrity of consciousness with Collingwood's earlier remarks on 'the nod of the uncongenial subject', in Collingwood 1929). There is an element of cowardice in the badness of bad art. The sort of cowardice is involved in the fear that others see us not in accordance with an idea of how we should appear to them, but as we are, with all our faults in their unglamourous splendour; the courage to assume our worst as well as our best; the ability to resist setting up a 'charming façade' that 'fits in'.[29] The corruption of consciousness thus seemingly amounts to a peculiar kind of epistemic failure which involves a refusal or an inability to properly understand one's own emotions. To be consistent, this failure must itself be understood in aretaic terms: not as some dire consequence that ensues upon our doing something badly but as itself consisting in not performing that thing well. So, every instance of performing it well involves a struggle with the corruption of consciousness. I think this is why Collingwood portrays the 'death of a civilization' as something that does not involve the waving of flags or the shooting of enemies. We begin to see that it has happened in stillness, looking back (Collingwood 1981, pp. 103–104).

This applies to my assessment of Deineka's work. There is no avoiding the fact that his work exudes optimism about the USSR's grand social experiment. That fact deprives it of the charm that immediately accrues to 'dissident' works, which is not necessarily identical with the courage I described above (even if it exhibits courage in a different way). The issue turns on how well this may coexist, *in the work itself*, with that sort of courage: is it *compatible* with the refusal to 'bowdlerise' or 'cherry-pick' one's experience? It is a highly sensitive and unstable ground to tread.

To conclude this section, here is a potentially revealing remark recently made by Christina Kiaer, a scholar of Soviet art, concerning a curious revival in 21st century

28 Duly highlighted by Collins (2014, pp. 27–34).

29 Here is how I would illustrate this with an example outside the realm of art: one is writing a paper and suddenly realises that some of the references he makes are not really playing a role in the argument but are left there because they seem the sort of thing that convinces the reader of the author's erudition. Realising this, the author abandons a self-centred position and assumes that of the audience member who would notice that feature in the text. At that moment, a battle with the corruption of consciousness is won: he realises he is perverting expression. To a significant measure, writing well consists in becoming aware of such temptations. This fits with Collingwood's remark: "Corruptions of consciousness are always partial and temporary lapses in an activity which, on the whole, is successful in doing what it tries to do." (Collingwood 1981, p. 283)

Russia of Socialist Realism in general, and Deineka in particular. It speaks to the sort of contrast I am trying to establish, which will be crucial for our conclusions:

> Revolutionary affect is the very foundation of Deineka's visual language, but if this can be disregarded, then his rhythmic, martial lines and the impressive size of his canvases, combined with his stern, staccato imagery of individual and joint endeavor, can be recruited to project the muscularity of Russian state power. (Kiaer 2024, viii)

Despite Kiaer's seemingly magical language when she characterises Deineka's individual style as "an alternate experimental aesthetic that, at its best, activates and organises affective forces for collective ends" (Kiaer 2024, p. 2), the former contrast she draws between, on the one hand, serving as an exploration of 'revolutionary affect' (i.e. imaginative understanding of what it was like to be a subject in that massive social experiment, the emotional energy it amassed and mobilised, but which was also constrained and crushed under it) and, on the other hand, to 'project the muscularity of state power' (magical purpose), helps us to see what is at issue, without requiring the observer to share the sympathy towards the social experiment itself that is also embodied in Deineka's art. The important, expressive element, if there is one (i.e. if I am right in my assessment), concerns the human experience of which it bears witness.

6 Political Emotions

Let us now turn to a different kind of example. It is one that arguably has a political dimension, it neatly fits what Collingwood calls 'magic', and yet there also seems to be much more to it. John A. Lomax and his son, Alan Lomax, carried out a series of recordings of work songs by prisoners in the Parchman Farm Prison, Mississippi, in the late 1940s.[30] In one of the songs they recorded, 'Rosie', a soloist raises his powerful voice, followed each time by a chorus of his fellow prisoners. The song has this pattern of question-answer, as a responsory; a form of liturgical chant, despite the words sung being about the promise of 'profane love', left suspended in outside life, beyond reach. We hear the sounds of hand axes rhythmically marking each musical phrase, enhancing its rhythmic energy and emotional tone. Writing on his experience of listening to this song through a radio program that changed his whole approach to aesthetics, Nicholas Wolterstorff says:

> Singing while working is a manifestation of human creativity; the gratuitous excess represented by sung work is a creative excess. In situations of labor under duress, this creative excess is the manifestation of a spirit that refuses to be crushed – a spirit that refuses to be reduced to a mere hoer of cotton or splitter of rocks. By singing, the worker manifests an indomitable sense of his

30 Prison Songs: Historical Recordings from Parchman Farm 1947–48. Rounder Records.

> or her ineradicable dignity. […] One can see why overseers in prisons sometimes refused to allow the laborers to sing. They wanted to crush the spirit of the prisoners. The singing was an indication that they had not yet succeeded. The singing was an act of resistance on the part of the workers to the attempt to crush their spirit. So the overseers forbade singing. They preferred sullen acquiescence. (Wolterstorff 2015, pp. 258–259)[31]

This incredible remark is based on the testimony of prisoners, which the Lomaxes also recorded alongside their 'performances'. It is not something Wolterstorff invented. Is this purely magic or is it more complex than that? There seems to be a combination of the magical element (the fact that the singing makes the work go better) and something that might be described as a magical effect but also seems to be more: as if the human dignity of the singers is revealed to them as they sing in order to make the work go better; as if they discover the political dimension of the music as it fulfils its magical function and as their emotions outgrow this magical function, turning the work song into a cry of defiance, resistance, and collective self-assertion. Even the rhythmic sounds of the hand axes become parts of a whole whose purpose is gradually revealed as the refusal to be broken; a willingness to persevere. And this is more than magic and the building up of the morale required to go through another day. There is an element of self-discovery here that seems to reveal the singing as something more than beautiful sounds but also more than a musical painkiller that testifies to the pain it helps to soothe. Engaging in 'sung work' with a primary magical purpose, the prisoners express and become aware of their own dignity as they express it. They are not induced into a state through arousal of predetermined effects via the employment of adequate, magical means. The 'gratuitous excess' they achieve in that terrible situation is the ultimate identification of life with expression. And this is a prime example of what a political emotion is: it is collective, pertaining to shared experience and patterns of affective possibilities, binding the individual to a community which is not the intellectual community of 'political doctrine' but the affective community of imaginative understanding (the community of *what it is like* to see the world from a given perspective). It happens, for instance, when superficially different groups of people realise that they have systematically experienced the same form of being downtrodden and that such common experience speaks far more powerfully to what they are than any of the formerly apparent differences. The fact that the emotions are collective doesn't mean that this realisation cannot take place between *apparently* isolated individuals.

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31 I have used this same example in Guerreiro (2021), but there I focused more on whether knowledge of the sound sources (e.g. the handaxes) and the context of their use makes a musical difference, by analogy with the debate between sonicists and contextualists on whether the instrumental specifications of a musical work are a part of its identity.

However, it is important to stress, as Collins does, that the imaginative understanding of *how it feels* to be or to act in a given situation is what is shared between artists and their audiences (Collins 2014, p. 124). It is not the occurrent feelings themselves which are shared. No one else can experience the unique blend of sensations and feelings that make up one's experiential point of view at a given moment. But, as Hopkins puts it, by linking one's current psychical states with the appropriate 'sensory and affective profiles' (patterns of possible such states), one is able to 'factor out' one's own role as a subject (Hopkins 2017, p. 369). Such profiles or patterns allow us to map features of a type of situation onto situations that are quite different but share at least one such pattern. And artworks (as essential parts of an expressive act) can systematically enable such sharing of imaginative understanding by making the presence of that pattern more salient, e.g. through simplification, exaggeration, association, or some other 'formal' device, from all the features occluding the fact that a certain pattern is shared. This, I would say, is a condition for the sort of sharing and cooperation between artist and audience that is so important in Collingwood's view of expression and art.

Going back to our examples, it is perhaps not entirely implausible to draw a connection here with a different 'situation of labor under duress' which was the life of artists such as Deineka, with their staunch commitment to an ideal vision, in spite of their utter vulnerability to the oscillating, arbitrary whims of the capricious powers they served for the sake of that vision. There is a parallel here, I believe, between that 'spark of something else' in the Mayakovskaya mosaics, and the 'gratuitous', 'creative excess' in the work song. As if affirming the ideal, no less than it would be achieved by a properly expressive 'dissident' work (e.g. that of E. Neizvestny), was Deineka's own way of articulating a 'defiant cry' in the face of reality, so often absent from the official 'realism'. That 'spark of something else' is the flicker of genuine expression.

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