



It seems like a good time to advance a thought, or I should say, a kind of thinking, in view of what appears to be a growing gap in an evermore intractable cultural divide in our population. It should first be disclosed that the following counsel is not motivated so much by an interest in *rapprochement* so much as by the opportunity this situation presents for the advancement of Art. Art, coincidentally, is having a crisis of its own and I'd like to suggest that it may be possible to ameliorate both situations simultaneously, and symbiotically.

The situation with Art stems from having more or less completed the task it laid out for itself at the start of the Modern era - that of defining itself. Having now exhausted all formal possibilities of what might constitute Art, it is compelled to, in strict adherence to the tactic of *pushing the boundaries*, claim to 'be' its adjacent disciplines. So what we are seeing is a kind of art that is endeavoring to be more *functional* or *effective*, and often in ways that are typically associated with design or entertainment. This is certainly radical; it is its preordained evolution, requiring the familiar¹ call for the appropriate redefinitions, yet -and this is confirmation of the mission's success- no longer meeting any resistance. But by having Art take on the characteristics of other things we are engaging in an exchange of territory. By taking some of theirs, we abdicate the authority over some of ours -maybe even *all* of ours. I say maybe 'all' because there is a kind of either/or proposition with art. Art stands apart from all other endeavors because its operation is to represent (*all other endeavors*). Something either gets read metaphorically -as something in addition to what it appears to be- or not. So if art chooses to abandon this representation service, and all of the powers it contains, it loses its 'authority position'. If you want to advance art, there is a much more advantageous alternative to making art more like everything else, and that is to make everything else more like art.

Let me offer a current example of how we could go about this. Recently, because of the vacancies on the Supreme Court, there has been some discussion of how various candidates interpret the US constitution. The conversation as you might expect has been reduced to two takes, right and left, conservative and liberal, in this case the Textualists and the Intentionalists. The former believe in a strict reading of what the constitution actually 'says', and² the latter advocate speculating on the intent of the authors to interpret the real meaning of the text. This is the extent of the public discussion on the matter, a binary deliberation that encourages divisive entrenchment. But an argument between what is said and what is meant is far from complete and leaves out an entire field of meaning from consideration. What I am referring to is all of the possible, *unintentional* meanings that reside within this or any other product of man's making. One discipline which does consider unintentional meanings to be of potentially greater value than intentional ones is Art, and it is from art critique that we can learn much about interpretation that might be useful here. Artists, who often employ techniques to encourage inadvertent outcomes in their work, know that the really interesting material lies outside of the field of intention. It's this emancipation from the fascism of rational thinking that allows for bewildering ideas and truly unthinkable thinking to arise. One occupation³ of an artist, like a good shoe designer or constitution framer, is to be able to identify this potential when it renders itself and have the confidence to not edit it out. However, they need not explain it. In fact they ought not explain it, or for that matter anything else about their work. There is probably no more abominable and tedious class of writing than the artist statement. Can you imagine having to limit yourself to interpreting an artwork based on what an artist claims it is 'about'? That is precisely what the Intentionalists recommend when it comes to interpreting the Constitution. Suppose instead we apply the methodologies of art interpretation to constitution interpreting? We could consider all the inadvertent and unintended, accidental meanings suggested in the text. We could examine the stilted and now archaic language for newly emergent, unforeseen connotations. Such a reading will nullify the narrow dialectic between the Intentionalists and Textualists by tapping a more enriched field of possibility. And while this field of meaning flourishes through a fracture in the puritanical system of logic, it also gives that system permission to evolve, and reminds us that the system itself is provisional. After all, we must keep in mind that the framers themselves believed in freedom above all else, were highly skeptical of existing systems, and proposed that mutability was the foundation of long-term viability. So what might be accomplished⁴ here, is that Art, and the methodologies conditional to it, might effectively colonize the field of jurisprudence, thereby reifying its authority and extending its jurisdiction. Such interventions can be made in just about any field of endeavor infusing without limit Art's influence into that which it represents.