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SUMMARIES

Conscience and Art: W. Perpeet's Philosophy of Art

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Within all artistic activities, including production, appreciation, and criticism, one senses what can be called “an experience of certainty (die Gewißheit).” Within an artwork itself, too, one senses a characteristic manner or style, a kind of “proof of certainty” that distinguishes that work from all other artworks. The contemporary German philosopher Wilhelm Perpeet (1915-2002) understood such certainty as “conscience (das Gewissen).” One reason is that, etymologically, “conscience” means “to know together, mutually,” and one may understand conscience as a decisiveness towards/with one’s own self.

The roots of this certainty are sought for in the human consciousness of time. The sensation of this faith-like certainty arises in humans vis-à-vis the activities that they will perform into the future. Further, the diversity of human cultural activities shows that the certainty of conscience is not unrelated to human experience in the past. Therefore, while it bears the diversity of the past, Perpeet discovers the roots of conscience in the moment of “becoming certain” of one’s own self as directed towards the uncertain future.

This paper aims to correlate such moment of consciousness with the problem of the Other. The Other, who appears in a variety of states, presents the rich experience of the human past, and awakens a consciousness within humans of the future. In our own artistic activities of production and appreciation, we, too, are able to recognize the existence of the Other as latent in the background of artworks.