

*"No, nothing is clear; but everything is significant" (64)*

It is very easy to believe we understand something. Heidegger is a fan of passive vocabulary. We 'submit' ourselves to the experience of language. We are to follow the writer, to ingest what he feeds us, and to let it sit in our bellies and allow the digestive fluids of our mind convert it into the nutrients that feed our being. That is fine. There is no problem. I am concerned with the critic.

What is it that the critic does? He informs us how to digest. He points our attention to certain benefits and flaws, he tells us what to look for, he tells us what we should expect. The critic tells us how to read a book, how to watch a movie, how to listen to a song, how to enjoy a dance.

The critic presumes to know what the artist does. It is only through presuming to understand that the critic puts himself into a position to speak authoritatively on the art work. When the critic presumes to understand the art work, he places the art work within his own schema of understanding. To truly understand is to really exist within the same schema as the artist, and to presume to understand is to displace the work into one's own schema.

The critic is selfish. He understands the work as meaning something according to his own understanding. He seeks significations to further his own prejudices of the artist, and therefore justify his critique. Artificially he attaches significations, he mines signification, he invents signification.

The critic is always a failed artist. If he had not failed, he would be creating art. No artist would rather critique than create, for it is the very nature of the artists soul to have an unquenchable desire to create.

It is very easy to believe we understand something. But understanding does not occur at the level of language. Yes, the poem is derived from a combination of words, and is in a way indebted to language. But understanding does not occur by attempting to interpret language. By trying to force the schema of the artist into our own. Understanding occurs when we listen. I understand the poet because we are two representations of the same spirit. That is why the poem speaks to me, not with words, but in understanding. It is not that I lack the words to explain the poem, but that to explain would be to do an injustice. Quite honestly, I am repelled by those who demand an explanation out of me. I ask only to be left alone with the things I enjoy. One must avoid the poet who goes about explaining his poems, keen on reducing himself to a test subject for the eager critic.

Why should we expect to find significance in a poem, which merely uses words as vehicle, just as the dancer uses motions and the artist uses lines? I could tell you an interesting theory I have about Latin dance, but this does not attest to the activity, not because of my shortcomings as an explainer, but because the explanation is merely an attempt at the truth, it is not the truth, the truth is apparent in the dance, for the person who opens their eyes and closes their minds.