



The Violence of Thinking: Healing through the Contemplative Seeing of the World

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Abstract: The topic of violence and art can be viewed from many perspectives, from the depiction of violence to people who inflict violence on art. Here, the focus is on the ‘violence in our thinking’. Can one's thinking inflict violence on things? Can cold, scientific thinking, thinking in prejudice, or ideological thinking inflict violence on works of art? Here, we address how this happens and how one can confront this violence against works of art. How can it be healed? Through this, the difference between the violence of Thinking and Thinking as a Battle will be explained. At the center of this argument, we discuss the Contemplative Seeing of the World (*Welt-Anschauung*) which enables an honest seeing. This means becoming friends.

Keywords: Violence, ascesis of thinking, contrapositions, contemplative seeing of the world, art, friendship, Selbst-Bildung, self-acceptance, healing, Battle of Jacob, freedom.

1. The main question is:

What are the methods against the violence of thinking about art? The proposal in this paper is: “...we should approach the painting as a friend or lover (R. Guardini, 1912)”

The topic of violence and art can be viewed from many perspectives, from the depiction of violence to the violence of art against people, or people who perpetrate violence against art. In recent years, there has been a great deal of literature and reflection on this topic, such as Rolf Grimminger's “Kunst-Macht-Gewalt. Der ästhetische Ort der Aggressivität” (R. Grimminger, 2000) and Jürgen Wertheimer's “Ästhetik der Gewalt. Ihre Darstellung in Literatur und Kunst” (J. Wertheimer, 1989). The topic has also been explored within the context of responsibility, art, violence, and society, extending even to neurophysical discussions, revealing the breadth of its scope.

The creation of an artwork can become violent itself through the destruction of materials, thus transforming the act of violence into a form of art, as in art-war or political protest, where

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artworks are destroyed to gain attention. These depictions of violence range from exposing taboos and global problems to expressing critical opinions. This also applies to graffiti art. However, it is important to emphasize that not every form of violence can be considered art. The topic of "violence and art" is therefore often discussed critically.

There is a phenomenon where artworks themselves possess a power that can so captivate people that, as in the case of the Mona Lisa or the Pietà in May 1972 in Saint Peter's in the Vatican, they become sites of violence. Dürer's paintings were doused with acid. Here we speak of the power of images when discussing artworks.

Yet there is another kind of violence: the violence of the observer's look at the artwork. Can the observer's seeing inflict violence on a work of art? Could there be a "violent look"? Can one's seeing inflict violence on things? Can the cold, scientific look, the look of prejudice, or the ideological look inflict violence on works of art?

2. We will focus on seeing: a contemplative seeing.

The analytical, dissecting seeing of the scientist could be violent; the contemplative, loving look, which measures itself against the sincerity of Christ's look, is not violent, but gentle. This does not mean, however, that the contemplative look cannot cause pain in the object being observed (person or thing). How does this happen, and how can one counter this violence against works of art? Can the look of violence be healed, or at least a loving seeing cultivated?

The question is how to reflect, even scientifically, on the encounter with a work of art, or rather, on how the work of art encounters us. Don't we do violence to a work if we see ourselves interfering with it, or if we only pick out what seems important to us—that is, if we don't see the whole picture? Don't we then degrade the work to a mere object?

If we want to see only a part, whether of a thing or a person, then—in this functional perspective—everything else fades away. A work of art contains everything within itself and can encounter us on all levels simultaneously; the levels are interwoven in the image. Or can you see theology in the upper right of Picasso's "Guernica", philosophy in the lower left, and the interreligious dimension in the center? But can we see the whole? A work of art is not only what we want or can see in it, but also what we are allowed to see when we engage with it. It has become clear that the question of a work of art is a question of seeing and requires a look of "giving oneself." Our conscious, trained, user-oriented, often fearful, and sometimes egocentric look determines what we see. Can we "exploit" or "conquer" the work of art? Should we not simply accept it, which often presents us with much greater difficulties? How should we think about a work of art?

3. The crisis of thinking

In the 20th century, on the cusp of the Second Vatican Council, Romano Guardini spoke of a crisis of thinking, which for him was also a crisis of faith. This meant not only faith in God but also faith in oneself. He spoke of Selbst-Bildung. In an educational context, "Selbst-Bildung" refers to the active shaping of one's own personality and lifelong learning by the individual. It involves Selbst-Annahme (Self-acceptance), a concept that encompasses both the

acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills and competencies fostered through personal engagement and reflection. Essentially, it is about individuals shaping and advancing their own educational processes instead of relying solely on external influences. This requires a different way of thinking.

Heidegger asks himself this in “What is Called Thinking?”

Scientifically speaking, however, it remains the most insignificant thing in the world that each of us has at some point stood before a blossoming tree. What's the big deal? We stand before a tree, in front of it, and the tree presents itself to us. Who is actually presenting here? Is the tree or are we? Or both? Or neither? We, just as we are, don't simply confront the blossoming tree with our minds or consciousness, and the tree then presents itself to us as it is. Or is the tree even more obliging than we are? Has the tree presented itself to us beforehand, so that we can bring ourselves into this encounter with it? What happens here that the tree presents itself to us and we present ourselves to the tree? Where does this act of presentation take place when we stand before a blossoming tree? Perhaps in our minds? (M. Heidegger, 1935/36).

Thinking is encountering. It is also a way of letting yourself be looked at. The crisis of thinking contrasts with black-and-white knowledge—a limited, ideological, disembodied, or fragmented knowledge of a discipline, in which the values of lived knowledge and shared experience are largely absent. These difficulties are particularly acute in the complexity of today's world, in the age of widespread digital communication and rapid globalization. In the 20th century, Guardini already addressed technological innovations and their impact on our thinking. With Guardini we can formulate seven difficulties of seeing and encountering the world which are causing danger and violent thinking and reactions.

These include: 1. Thinking in contradictions; 2. The missing skills of relationship and friendship; 3. Degrading things and human beings to objects; 4. Loss of order, 5. Loss of the look on the Whole, 6. Loss of trust; 7. Loss of humanity. These seven difficulties could be an indication of a look of violence which could be healed by the “sincerity of the look”, a “contemplative seeing”. In a scientific context, it would also be important to develop this look as a “human” skill.

3.1 Loss of contrapositions

In his book "Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future," (Pope Francis.), the Pope with Guardini, describes why it is important for thinking and knowing to clearly distinguish between contradictions and opposites:

One of the effects of conflict is to see as contradiction what is in reality a contraposition. An opposite brings two mutually repelling poles into tension: horizon/limit, local/global, the whole/part, and so on. These are opposites that, despite everything, exist in fruitful, creative tension. As Guardini taught me, creation is full of vibrant opposites; they allow us to be alive and dynamic. Contradictions, on the other hand, demand our decision between right and wrong (good and evil, on the other hand, can never be opposites, because evil does not oppose good, but negates it.) Seeing opposites as contradictions is the result of mediocre thinking that distances us from reality.

The thinking in contraposition allows us to perceive the world in unexpected and unforeseen ways; it is about a greater creativity that transcends the boundaries of thought and reveals the hidden. Pope Francis describes a process of knowing that leaves room for the unavailable.

3.2 Loss of relationship

Guardini says that the earth is becoming ever smaller, distances are shrinking, and opportunities for encounters are multiplying day by day. But people—and this is one of the most pernicious paradoxes of our cultural path, which is far from being progressive—seem to be moving ever further away. So, he thinks, the root of the problem is the loss of true connection. We must reconnect with one another.

Within the framework of their theoretical and experiential thinking, scientific analysis, and research, scientists may recognize many correct and important things, but the “being” of things and their relationship to the whole remains hidden because the created thing's reference to God remains invisible. Echoing St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, "Enlighten the eyes of your heart, that you may understand" (Eph 1:18), one could say with Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in his book "The Little Prince": "One can only see clearly with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye." "Knowledge is always, in some way, an encounter in love," Guardini writes. Are we still capable of love and relationships today?

3.3 Loss of things and nature

This reveals the entire problem of our modernity, our throwaway society. As more and more people attribute only the character of objects to things and deny their subjectivity, many believe they can simply throw them away and destroy them as they please.

And as people are increasingly degraded to objects, and as objects they are only used and utilized for a specific purpose, profound encounters are becoming increasingly difficult. Guardini says that it is not technology—today we speak of the digital turn and artificial intelligence (AI)—but our use of it and the increase in power associated with technology that is making us increasingly incapable of relationships.

Humanity has increasingly reshaped the earth to suit its purposes, but for Guardini this is precisely a moment of great danger, because “the human dimension has disappeared.”

While travelling around Lake Como in Italy, Guardini realized that what humanity risks losing in this era is the human experience, which is impoverished and disconnected from the spiritual and the beautiful. From Milan to Lake Como, across the valleys of Brianza, Guardini saw,

The whole of nature worked and shaped by man. What is called culture in the most refined sense presents itself to me in the most harmonious form [...] a most noble culture and at the same time so simple, so – I find no other word – natural! [...] a culture that has become so natural, almost second nature (Heidegger 1957).

In Italy, “Things are what they are!” This is not because they concern nature, so to speak, ‘in the pure state.’ Guardini means that the nostalgia of nature in its pure, absolutely intact state is already in itself a manifestation of a culture. It is the result of an existence ruined by excessive artificiality.

The ‘natural’ being of man is alive; man exists because he lives. We must recover the gesture that makes being human natural and that which is naturally human. Though such a culture is far from nature by the very essence of that relationship, nevertheless, it remains close to nature, and is united with it by resilient bonds, so that the culture remains ‘natural,’ and its activity and growth can continue to circulate. This ‘living contact’ with nature is lost.

3.4 The Loss of primitive order

Modern man often escapes from the relationship that places him in direct opposition to the object (Dohna Schlobitten, 1957). He moves out of the immediate condition where he was alternately the one who grasps and the one who is grasped (Guardini, 1941). He removes himself from a point of view situated outside this connection between his ego and objects. He withdraws from the conversation that put him directly face to face with the thing, and he leaves the immediate community between the self and things. Instead, he creates for himself a tool or a technique with the help of which he can embrace many particular cases. He no longer grasps individual reality immediately because doing so would make him rigid at every moment. He replaces individual conquests with a summarizing and all-encompassing concept that represents concrete conquests. Man thus remains in the sphere of substitutions and signs, which creates an order that is no longer the primitive and originally given one. It becomes a secondary and abstract order. This implies a knowledge aimed at the totality of things in their worldly character, but it often fails to grasp the concrete and unrepeatable uniqueness of the world.

3.5 The Loss of the look on the whole/wholeness

The risks of specialization, fragmentation, and the abstraction of knowledge were already prominent in Guardini’s reflection. He was aware that resorting to a particular look should not be a return to deductive knowledge. Even the specialized sciences aim at a radical unity in truth, but their articulated approach is often opposed to true synthesis. If the prevailing blind intelligence needs a vision, this cannot be a neutral or panoptic vision that merely overlooks thought. It must be a stance in relation to a task set by the very world it contemplates. This outlines the meaning of *Weltanschauung*, which is the look on the whole of being and the precision of being, determined in a concrete way. This being is not seen with a disengaged look, but it is viewed as a mission and a stimulus for work. Guardini’s *Anschaung* is an intellectual vision of the thing that links experience with the possibility of establishing meaning, a sense.

Values, norms, and the truth of God are truly accepted in the act of thinking and doing when they are enacted with resolution and depth. It is not enough that those contents are understood correctly or judged to be valid in an objective sense. The content of meaning should be realized in the act and in the unfolding of life. The extent to which meaning is realized depends on the weight with which the act is experienced and lived. It depends on the breadth

and depth of the experience as well as the vital force of the realizing act. A Christian cannot mature in a Catholic understanding by withdrawing from the world because no abstract interiority of the world can advance Christian interiority. Believing in truth means daring a new beginning that must be implemented rather than merely tried. Guardini argues that any Catholic *vision* that stops at a possessive internalization of an objective sense of the world produces separation. This risks reducing the Catholic to a type alongside other types, leading to sectorization and marginalization.

The Catholic attitude is a particular one that is determined by the psychological and cultural types present at any given time. Every form and expression of life acquires its final organic expansion through reconciliation and reciprocity. We should examine Guardini's anthropology to understand how this synthesis avoids falling into a neutral or abstract overall vision. It raises the question of the limit because the individual can realize the various possibilities of form only up to a certain point. If the individual expands into universality, the essential structure dissolves and loses its intimate tension.

3.6 The Loss of trust

Trust in absolute values is lost in the modern age, but this dispossession allows what is essential for Christian life to emerge. Guardini identifies this as naked obedience. This is not obedience to the psychic or physical force of a command, but it is the pure obedience that is reached only through the maturity of judgment. It is an attitude oriented with absolute conviction in the face of unconditional demands. Walter Benjamin wrote that we live in a time of unprecedented impoverishment of experience, which becomes an opportunity for modern man. He is driven to start anew and to get by with little because he finds paths everywhere. He leaves what exists to go to ruin for the sake of the process one undergoes.

This poverty echoes the central question of faith in Guardini's words. We may feel poor in front of the richness of the Middle Ages or the Dionysian fullness of the Baroque, but we love our poverty. In its rigor lies a purity of spirit because values and orderings are presented in a transparent essentiality. This is an expression of honesty and the will to support the struggle for faith on the simplest level. Faith must live in the strength of spirit and the courage to persist in discipline. This faith is something essential and apart from any religious experience. The believing existence with its order is something different in essence from any religion. It is possible to have faith without experience in the sense of being personally shaken, which constitutes naked obedience.

Faith in revelation is not legitimized by being derived from the values of the world, but it serves to critique the existence of the world. Faith sets itself transversely to every religious element. While there is truth in every point of religious experience, it is also ambivalent at every point. Therefore, it is not a desperate faith, but a nakedly obedient response to the revealing command. We must not trust in a rational order of the whole or in an optimistic principle of benevolence. We must trust in God who is at work and who acts. The more the anonymous forces grow, the more the victory of faith takes place in a conquest of freedom. Trusting that God acts enables the believer to resist without shelter and to recognize the direction. It enables him to access a direct relationship with God across all situations of violence and danger. This

allows the believer to remain a living person in the growing solitude of the future world and in the midst of the masses (Guardini, 1951).

3.7 Loss of Humanity

What Guardini indicates as a Christian *Weltanschauung* is a way of seeing things—of participating in an inescapable human task. It superimposes a meaning on the world, which does not reduce the world to a meaning or a phenomenon to the appearance of a retro-world that is its foundation. *Weltanschauung* ultimately means restoring the wholeness of the ties with the world; in other words, it is about authentic human experience. Contemporary art of great importance is therefore represented by the notion of experience, originally linked to ritual action and experience as a grasp of objects, in a movement. Merleau-Ponty would say, active and passive—to take and be taken—are simultaneous actions. This experience is precisely an ‘experience of otherness’; not only to take but to be taken, in a gesture of unprecedented acceptance, in response to the person who has undergone an ‘authentic conversion.’

Violence is caused by a wrong way of seeing the world. The problem lies in the act of seeing itself. One can think scientifically about love (eros agape), but little is said about the *look of love* of the scientist. A *look of love* is capable of creating relationships between contrapositions (opposites). It is the ability not to construct a hierarchy of knowledge, but to see everything analogously and as one, without mixing or separating. It is the view of a human being, who is the “image of God,” upon a thing which, as part of God's creation, also bears within itself the trace image of God, the eschatological promise of God, namely of a triune God.

Guardini wrote in *The End of the Modern Age: An Attempt at Orientation*, “Not on a general order of reason, or on an optimistic principle of benevolence, but on God, who is real and active [...] The stronger the powers of ‘it’ grow, the more decisively the ‘overcoming of the world’ of faith consists in the realization of freedom; in the harmony of the gifted freedom of man with the creative freedom of God. And in trust in what God does. Not only acts, but does. It is strange what a sense of sacred possibility arises amidst the growth of worldly constraints! This relationship of absoluteness and personhood, of unconditionality and freedom, will enable the believer to stand in the placeless and unprotected and to know direction. It will enable him to enter into a direct relationship with God, across all situations of constraint and danger; and in the growing solitude of the world to come—a solitude precisely among the masses.” “...and in the organizations – to remain a living person,” Guardini continues, “But when we divide art into modes of thought, when we “use” it, when we “degenerate” it with our thoughts, then we do violence to it, and also to ourselves.”

4. Form and Human Being: “der anschauende Mensch”

Guardini based his anthropology not on representation, but on form, which can only be realized in the person who looks (der anschauende Mensch). Not the reifying image, placed at a distance from the gaze, but the expression of a ritual action (as occurs with the icon) that clearly demonstrates the relationship between art and liturgy—sisters because both are children

of revelation. The two activities are not confused, because what the liturgy accomplishes mysteriously (in the sacraments), art does mystically (in perception).

This formation of the image can take on different characteristics, and Guardini continues, "We can never achieve unity before our eyes, because I too am only a fragment of the whole." Every object we encounter is merely a relationship from fragment to fragment. But in the process of artistic formation, something particular happens: each aspect that emerges from the object, and from the observer when they perceive this part, creates a kind of power.

Around this power, the unity of existence becomes present. The whole of the object—nature, humanity, and history—lives as one. He develops a sort of Epistemology of Encounter. In this description, Guardini speaks of the "Glory that brings death" ("tötende Herrlichkeit"). An experience of terror of the heart in the numinous that hearkens back to Otto. "What Aristotle says about drama applies to every work of art, and in this the ethical meaning of art is manifested," writes Guardini. All this has nothing to do with a simple form of thought; rather, it is a feeling of power, the power to begin again and the will to do it right. Truth is a space into which the observer enters and from which they enter into tension with reality. This encounter is profoundly personal and historical and thus reflects the dimension of their *Weltanschauung*.

Art has the capacity to unite the person and the world: two poles phenomenologically linked in such a way that one depends on the other. It opens towards the other, it finds itself in the other, revealing itself in the space and time received; a meeting of the eye and light that occurs in the incarnation. At this moment, the word begins to speak and leads to the moment of revelation. Guardini's discourse is akin to the concept of organicity and concerns the educational idea of formation as shaping.

This is not an act of falling once again into a neutral, abstractly comprehensive vision, but of raising the question of limits and the "positive concept" of the limit: "The individual can realize within himself the various typical possibilities of form and action only up to a certain point. If it expands into universality, it loses its inner tension, clarity, and strength; the essential structure dissolves." Precisely in this process of the formation of form, there is a universality, a unity—a "new knowledge"—that is able to coexist with, and overcome, anti-Western, anti-Catholic prejudices.

For Guardini, a work of art contains within itself a formative process that we must contemplate by seeing it intimately. Guardini's greatness lies in his reference to the act of looking intimately (*Anschauung*). This *Anschauung* of the world, this gesture, embraces oppositions, transcending the religious perspective. In this sense, we must understand his perspective.

5. Ascesis of Thinking

Violent thinking can be caused by seeing and valuing only fragments of the world, instead of seeing the wholeness in the part.

"World" is contained in every single thing, for each is a whole within itself and related to the totality of the rest. Reality is not a formless scrap of reality, but a complete form of becoming a being (*Seinsformung*). And everything is not merely a quantitative, mass-based part of the world, but it is an organ. "Organ," however, encompasses the whole insofar as it is ordered

toward it. If we penetrate deeper into what is called "thing," we see the fact of a "single thing" is essentially related to the fact of "the whole." The organic-whole and the organic-individual are given within one another. How can we understand this nature of being (Wesenheit)? Guardini in his works on the great figures of thinking (Denkergestalten), specifically on Bonaventure, talks about the exercise of thinking; the *ascesis of thinking* (Askese des Denkens), a kind of Holy Thinking of Wholeness. In this work, Guardini outlines the theoretical and hermeneutic foundation of his epistemology, whereby two contrapositions (Gegensätze) constitute a dynamic tension in a space of relation. In contemplative knowledge (Anschauung), one form of knowing beyond thinking, the contrapositions, unmixed and unseparated, form a unit in tension. This Catholic World Comprehension as a look of the whole, in the sense of *katholikos*.

6. Skills for Seeing

In a conversation about Romano Guardini, the theologian and 1952 Peace Prize laureate, the writer Nora Bossong mentioned several aspects that describe the difference between the violence of thinking and the need for a struggle of seeing (Bossong, 1965). She mentioned some characteristics of his life that could be helpful for non-violent living.

6.1 Seeing and living with opposites

Georg Simmel talks about polar oppositions (Simmel, 1910/11). People should try to accept their own inner oppositions. Romano Guardini is a good example. "He is also a significant European who not only considered the different mentalities and contrasts but also lived together with them—as the son of Italian parents, who grew up in Germany and maintained his love for the North, even against his own family. " Living with contrapositions could be a help in overcoming violence.

6.2 "Becoming" as a conservative who looks to the future

Guardini developed the method of "Der Gegensatz". He himself tried to live the past and the present as two values in tension. "He is grateful for the past, without insisting that everything must always remain as it is or even be reversed. He is a conservative who looks to the future, a contemporary who knows he has a safety net. The word 'becoming' is essential for him." We could become aware of our own 'becoming'.

6.3 Participating in the World in Freedom

Guardini recognized the human being as a kind of co-creator. "We were not simply placed by God into a finished, fixed world. Rather, we are called to participate in this world through and from our freedom." Thus, we can see the responsibility of our actions, which can build up or destroy the world.

6.4 Against Idolatry

There are many ways to fight for right seeing by describing positive figures. In 1937, Guardini wrote an immensely important book, his major Christological work: “The Lord”—a book about Jesus Christ and, according to theologian Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, also to be seen as a counter-proposal, as a contradiction to the “Führer.”

6.5 Quiet Resistance

“This is a form of resistance that comes quietly, but whose effectiveness should not be underestimated.” From a Christian *Welt-Anschauung*, he clearly stated where we, as part of creation and as human beings, fall short. It is about understanding humankind as created by God, which informs everything we do. Thus, decisions will be guided by humility.

7. Healthy Struggle – The Wrestling of Jacob

“Human beings have the capacity to step outside of natural contexts, to distance themselves, and from that perspective to observe, understand, and judge the object or themselves.” We should be able to stand in the tension without trying to resolve it with our intellect. Guardini writes, this “gives human struggle a completely different character than that of animals: it opens up the space in which there is decision-making and therefore responsibility (Dohna Schlobitten, 2020).” This means accepting the battle.

The nighttime struggle of the Old Testament patriarch Jacob with the stranger at the ford of the Jabbok River (Genesis 32:23-33) is one of the most enigmatic and, at the same time, identity-forming stories of the biblical religions. It is recounted as a battle between equals. Jacob does not escape unscathed—from then on, he will limp through life. But he crosses to the other side blessed and with a new name: Israel, the one who wrestles with God. The place of the event also receives a new name: Penueel, the Face of God.

Church and art, religion and culture exist in a complex relationship that can be both destructive and constructive. This relationship can only succeed if it is a confrontation between equals that will not be without consequences for either side. On the part of religion, the church, and theology, this involves gaining knowledge that may not be achieved without wounds. On the other hand, for believers, a successful encounter can become a Penuël, a place of contemplating God. In the arts, the Jabbok story can serve as a paradigm for encountering the Other, the transcendent—an encounter that transforms, may wound, but in any case inspires and leads to new worlds.

The point of comparison lies in the relationship to the Other. The Other is always the unknown, whose name cannot be spoken for fear of appropriation (the taboo of the name YHWH). Fundamentally, all (intellectual) energies must be employed in the engagement, while simultaneously showing respect for the Other.

In Guardini's wonderful text on "Jacob's Wrestle," it reads: "God wants us to be strong and conquer him"—these words still ring in my ears today. Conquering God means pain, yet Jacob continues to wrestle with "the man who came to him at night to wrestle with him." I immediately realized: "That's how it works with a work of art! I have to 'conquer' it in a struggle, even against myself and my prejudices, ideologies, and judgments." This applies not only to a work of art, but to everything we see. It means becoming friends with myself and with the work of art.

Thus, the genuine relationship to the work of art also culminates in something religious. The preceding reflections have shown that I do not do justice to the work of art by merely enjoying it, but that I must participate in the encounter of the creator with the object. I enter the space that is created here and live in the rising, purer world. By contemplating it, I am embraced by it. Within myself, the "better" is invoked and freed from the constraints and pressures that daily existence imposes. It is precisely in this that I sense what I truly am and feel the promise. One day I will be allowed to attain this true self. As Richter said: in the ultimate future, when the true self of the world finally comes to me, I too will encounter my true self and become my own.

8. Becoming Friends: A Method Against the Violence of Thinking

How do we approach art? "...we should approach the painting as a friend or lover.¹"

First, you have to "Get to know the painting. You examine it from one angle to the other, down to every detail, until you have seen everything, understood everything, in short, come to know the painting, know it by heart."²

"Secondly, you immerse yourself in the painting, try to live completely within it. Until now, you have remained on the surface, dwelled in the physicality of the painting. Now you enter its interior, its soul. You seek to gain the strongest possible impression of the action, the mood, the figures in the painting."

The third step, Guardini says, is the most demanding but also the most enjoyable task. You seek out the details of the painting and, guided by that first great impression, explore its full meaning from within the whole. The initial immersion in the painting has, in a sense, opened your eyes. Now everything appears in its true light. Conversely, you also seek to see what the details mean for the whole. This is freedom.

9. Conclusion

"What Guardini means by freedom can be understood from this being created in God's image and the co-creative mandate that God passes on to humankind. Human beings are made

¹ Guardini R. (1912), *Von der Beschäftigung mit der Kunst*, in «Akademische Bonifatius-Korrespondenz» 27/5 (1912), 291-299; *Occuparsi di arte*, 19-38.

² Idem, Guardini R., *Von der Beschäftigung mit der Kunst*, 19-38, Dohna Scchlobitten Y., (2021), Premessa in: *Romano Guardini. La vita come opera d'arte. Scritti di Estetica (1907-1960)*, Morcelliana, Brescia.

in God's image. Human beings' struggle with their fellow human beings and with themselves, but also with God, is fundamentally different from the struggle of animals. These struggles, waged in the metaphysical realm, are what Guardini is concerned with. Struggles that are also carried over into the material realm and thus raise the question of whether intentional destruction can also occur from within freedom.”

We could try to live in the consciousness that we should become more and more in the image of the Lord.

“We are called by that which is not yet.”

This means that we are involved in this dynamic of a world that is not yet fixed. God did not want a puppet, but a counterpart, and this creative service to which God has called humankind is also evident in encounters with things that only become the true world through humankind. Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 tell us that we should protect and preserve creation, and not subject it to exploitation, as we do to an enormous extent today. Thus, we can try not to “use” but to see all created things as part of the whole of creation.

“To be free means to be able to transcend one's own multifaceted individuality and move towards that of the other,”

Guardini places truth in the context of dialogue, suggesting that understanding is nevertheless possible, namely from within freedom. He says in his speech, “To be free means to be able to transcend one's own multifaceted individuality and move towards that of the other.” But above all, this requires one thing: empathy. Thus, we can try to see with empathy.

Human beings are fully inclined to become the image assigned to them as a task, based on their abilities and inclinations. When you encounter a work of art that has achieved maturity and clarity, it affects your inner readiness for change, confirms your will to transform, and promises fulfillment. From this arises the special trust that the authentic work of art communicates with those who are sensitive and has nothing to do with theoretical training and development. It is about the immediate feeling of being able to begin anew and the will to do it right: a love of life.

Guardini says we should become friends, which means practicing a contemplative look of love (Dohna Schlobitten, 2023). The look of friendship can heal violence. It is a look for what is not yet.

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