

Science March II

Nobody asked but ...

What good is science if it doesn't take its place among the arts? Science has become an enemy to both the ignorant and those knowledgeable enough to know that it takes more than science? Art has its root meaning in making do. The Online Etymology Encyclopedia says,

*“art” (noun) — early 13c., “skill as a result of learning or practice,” from Old French art (10c.), from Latin artem (nominative ars) “work of art; practical skill; a business, craft,” from PIE *ar(ə)-ti- (source also of Sanskrit rtih “manner, mode;” Greek artizein “to prepare”), suffixed form of root *ar- “to fit together.” Etymologically akin to Latin arma “weapons.”*

In Middle English usually with a sense of “skill in scholarship and learning” (c. 1300), especially in the seven sciences, or liberal arts. This sense remains in Bachelor of Arts, etc. Meaning “human workmanship” (as opposed to nature) is from late 14c. Meaning “system of rules and traditions for performing certain actions” is from late 15c. Sense of “skill in cunning and trickery” first attested late 16c. (the sense in artful, artless). Meaning “skill in creative arts” is first recorded 1610s; especially of painting, sculpture, etc., from 1660s.

Supreme art is a traditional statement of certain heroic and religious truths, passed on from age to age, modified by individual genius, but never abandoned. The revolt of individualism came because the tradition had become degraded, or rather because a spurious copy had been accepted in its stead. [William Butler Yeats]

Expression art for art's sake (1824) translates French l'art pour l'art. First record of art critic is from 1847. Arts and crafts "decorative design and handcraft" first attested in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, founded in London, 1888.

I take "art" in its earlier senses to mean the putting into effect of the knowledge gained from experience and inspiration.

So if an art cannot be applied to concrete effect, what good is it? If the art of science is not about solving human problems, what good is it. Just as thought must be mixed with behavior to have a practical effect. Science must be made into a synthetic that works in the real world. That synthetic must involve economics, else the result is not of this world and of no practical use in this world.

— Kilgore Forelle