

February 5, 1981

In this paper I shall attempt to defend Tormey's theory of expression against two criticisms raised by Kennick in the latter's brief section, "On Understanding Art."

1. According to Kennick, Tormey cannot justify the claim that the self-expressive character of art works is an analogue of the capacity of persons to express intentional states. The very condition that makes a work of art self-expressive - the wholly constitutive character of its non-expressive properties - implies the absence "in" the work of at least one of the partially constitutive elements of expression "in" persons - an "inner" intentional state. But does Tormey's analogy fail on this ground?

The structure of personal expression is a significant matrix consisting of an observable behavior pattern, an intentional state "in" the person, and an intentional object, all of which refer to each other. The way to confirm whether a person's behavior does in fact express an intentional state is to ask him whether he "has" that state "in" <sup>\*</sup>him. Further information can be obtained about the nature of the expressed intentional state, by getting the person to talk about its object or about related states and their objects. Kennick's first criticism rests on the fact that since no intentional states exist ready-made "in" a work of art, it does not make sense to say that a work of art is self-expressive in the way that a person is.

*\* Of course, this is not the only way.*

I think that this first objection can be countered. A work of art is self-expressive in so far as its non-expressive properties wholly constitute its expressive properties. Its non-expressive properties indicate, on their own and without any contribution on the observer's part, the range of possible intentional states that may have an affinity with those states that the observer has himself experienced or observed in other people. Within this range as elicited by the work itself, however, the observer must choose the particular intentional states and their objects that fit the particular matrix he judges is best expressed. Works of art are ambiguously self-expressive: their self-expression initially indicates a range of possible affinities with intentional states, and the observer must then contribute his intuition in determining what particular state is most adequately expressed within that range. <sup>7\*</sup> Kennick's first criticism is misguided, because of his desire for access to unequivocal evidence for the particular intentional state indicated by expressive properties.

2. Kennick thinks that Tormey is mistaken in claiming that only intentional states can be expressed. Tormey does seem to make this strong claim in the section on personal expression, where he is concerned to distinguish between sorts of states that can be expressed (such as <sup>PARTICULAR</sup> emotions) and those that cannot be expressed (such as sensations and kinds of emotion). In so far as Tormey leaves out of his list of expressible states such personal characteristics as intelligence and such personal

- \* ① Suppose this claim were false, what would be the consequence of the falsity of this claim?
- ② What is the consequence of the truth of this claim?

moods as anxiety, that have no intentional objects but can be correlated with observable behavior, then Kennick's second criticism seems justified.

However, when Tormey comes to consider the relation between the expressive properties of art works and personal expression, his strictures on what is expressible seem to slacken. He says (p. 230) that the intentional states of persons are only "expressible in the fullest and clearest sense." One might now ask why these states are most fully and clearly expressible. Perhaps non-intentional states are now also expressible, though less clearly and fully than intentional states. Here is my solution: expressive behavior that is partially constituted by an intentional state is more fully and clearly expressive than behavior partially constituted by non-intentional states, because the reference from the behavior through the state to the intentional object in the former case yields a more definite and intensive presentation of the total situation of a person to an observer than does the absence of such references in the latter case. By restricting the expressive properties of art works to affinities with intentional states of persons, Tormey's method provides richer, more definite expressive matrices for interpretation than the inclusion of affinities with non-intentional states of persons would permit. Tormey's point, I think, is not that non-intentional states cannot be expressed, but that the art critic can say more about the affinity of expressive properties with intentional states than he can about their affinity with non-intentional states. *And why is that important? (This is not a critical remark. I merely want to urge you to take a few more steps on the road that you initiate in this paper).*

First rate work!

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