



Contents

Being human in history	2
Guest writer, Theresa Dunthorne	
Me, myself and I	4
Literary Review, T.E. Dunthorne	
High standards	6
Arts Review, A. L. Browne	
War criminals after the Nazis	7
History Review, E. L. Braithwaite	
The myth of normality	8
Cognitive Sciences Review, E.A. Hunt	
What does it mean to be human?	9
Philosophy, collaborative	

Editor's Note:

Our theme for this month is being human—through time, as a society and as individuals. This is a question which has always preoccupied humanity, and with good reason; how we look at ourselves shapes how we look at the rest of the world.

The JWP is a periodical with a self-consciously academic purpose: to give a platform to the student voice, and by exploring disciplines beyond curriculum, the writers on the JWP hope to inspire the interest of their younger readers. In addition to this, super-curricular activities - so termed by Oxford and Cambridge - form an important part of developing and expressing a passion for these disciplines, and so a tripartite purpose exists. Each half-term, the JWP will feature articles by both regular and guest writers on the arts, sciences, and humanities, as well as an interdisciplinary philosophy section.

Being human in history: defining feeling

The legacy of Greek and Roman theories in premodern Europe

Why is it important to gain an understanding of historical feeling? Quite simply, these studies allow historians to uncover ‘worldviews and [...] fundamental assumptions about life, culture, and personality’. In essence, emotions are a viable means through which we can track what it is to exist as, and to be, a human. Emotional experience is furthermore telling of the society in which it is found: culture influences the meaning and expression of feeling through the designation of names and values. In the modern understanding of emotions, we view psychology and physiology as separate phenomena, and so can objectively understand feelings as a matter of hormones present in the mind – and equally, as a product of culture. This is nothing new; emotions have been explained in terms of medicine and biology for centuries. However, in the period 1400-1600, which I will be focusing primarily on, the link between mind and body was the *key* to understanding emotional feeling. The primacy and legacy of classical Galenic and Aristotelian theories in the premodern world provided the base platform for medical understanding of the human being, and this no less was the means through which medieval and early modern populations conceptualised and understood emotion. Emotion was explained in familiar terms: via Aristotle’s irrational *pathe*, which opposed reason; Galen’s medicinal, humoral temperaments; and therefore in terms of movement and irrationality.

To explore how emotions were understood and explained between 1400-1600,

Theresa Dunthorne

Adapted from essay ('how were emotions explained and regulated between 1400-1600?') written for HH2137A Inventing Modern Man: Constructions of Mind, Body, and the Individual, 1400-1800, (module convenor: Dr Hester Schadee), the University of Exeter

it is first important to note that the word ‘emotion’ is itself an anachronism. Prior to the seventeenth century, it was not in regular use, and instead implied a ‘movement away from something’, tending to be reserved only for discussion of civil unrest. Emotions, as we would understand the word, were better articulated through the lexicon of ‘passions’, ‘affects’, ‘affections’, or even ‘perturbations of the mind’. The language of emotion was particularly concerned with movement – and this in itself informed early modern peoples on how to understand their feeling. Indeed, early modern writers such as Thomas Wright explored the passions and affects as movements and actions *from the soul*. The language with which passions and affections were discussed constructed images of feeling as almost tangible energy. In Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais*, Montaigne provides one particular anecdote concerning an angry man who, when in a fit, required ‘something to quarrel with’, ‘some [...] object to limit and circumscribe it at a reasonable distance’. In essence, his anger had to be directed at a target, even if said target were inanimate object. Wright’s passions and movements are described as physical transfers of energy, and Montaigne’s angry man experiences the drive to release the energy. In the first in-

stance, emotion in the early modern linguistic sense is understood and defined as a drive and movement. This is important when considering how emotions were explained as it highlights the metaphors required to conceptualise what people felt internally.

I have mentioned that emotions were explained through classical Greek and Roman theories about the body and soul. The legacy of ‘ancient authorities’ informed much of the medical understanding of medieval and early modern Europe, as evidenced in particular with the prevalence of Galen’s humoral theory until the seventeenth century (which in particular saw the combative rise of anatomical studies). However, Galenic and Aristotelian works also informed how the passions were explained in the early modern period.

Firstly, Aristotle presented the view that the passions (known to him in Greek as *pathos*, or in plural *pathe*) were located in the non-rational part of the soul. These *pathe* were responses to, and evaluations of, external factors outside of one’s control.

What does it mean to be human?

A collaborative piece on who we really are

R. S. Coleman

Before exploring the unanswerable question of what makes us human, I posed myself another question: what makes us different to animals, particularly close primates such as apes? We often separate ourselves from the word animal. In fact, that question itself rather ironically suggests that humankind *is* different to animalkind. But the word ‘animal’ meaning ‘a living organism, which feeds on organic matter; typically having specialized sense organs and nervous system and able to respond rapidly to stimuli’ most definitely includes us. We should not forget the fact that we are very close relatives to monkeys. So in this debate I would like to look deeper into what makes us different to other animals that walk the earth. Why is it that we think we’re special?

In my research, I found a study by Maddie Bleistern. In this, she discussed the fact that apes have never asked questions. At first this may sound silly. You’re probably aware of how intelligent apes are. However, you may be surprised to know that many apes have actually been taught sign language. It’s fascinating; they can do incredible things. They can describe objects, hold a conversation, answer questions; even about how they are feeling that day. Interestingly though, not one of the apes has ever thought to ask a question. They understand what questions are, as they can answer them and they know how to say “why” or “what” in sign language, but they don’t seem to understand that they can ask them too. Why don’t animals ask questions?

There is something different in humans, which has made us the ultimate learning machines. We are incredibly inquisitive beings. But more interestingly, we have the ability to be inquisitive. While apes may be curious, as are many animals, they don’t see outside their own minds. An ape doesn’t consider the option that someone else may know something that they don’t. They assume that because they don’t know the answer, neither will you - they can only think in terms of their own minds. For example, they can answer how they feel at a certain time but won’t bother asking back. They’re not rude - they just assume that, because they don’t know how you’re feeling, you also don’t know how you’re feeling.

This doesn’t apply to just apes. Animals, with the exception of humans, don’t have the ability to be inquisitive. This has been proven by scientists by examining the brain of living organisms. Interestingly, humans don’t develop the ability to be inquisitive until roughly 3 years old. Until that point the only mind or source for intellect they consider to exist is their own.

I think this is one of the many things that make us human. The reason our species has been so successful is because of that old saying: ‘two brains is better than one’. Evolution has allowed us to combine knowledge and that is what has allowed us to become intelligent and therefore rule the earth’s land, its skies and even outside our atmosphere. (I’ll let you decide as to whether we rule the sea also).

I don’t think our intelligence makes us any better than the other animals on this planet, however. Just because we have the intelligence and ability to mass produce food by keeping animals captive and often inhumanely killing them, should not mean we have to. Sadly, the smartest animal on this planet also appears to be the cruellest animal too.

E. L. Braithwaite

If we were to go by the zoology taxonomy system humans are simply: Homo Sapiens. But there is more to human beings, surely, than a classification. Yet to live in today’s society is to be classified. In every walk of life what we achieve, where we live, even where we go is determined by a classification. When we are born we are classified by our sex, nationality, ethnicity. If we are to reach the age of 16 we leave school with a piece of paper that has different letters or numbers for each subject. This tells us and future academics and employers which categories we fit into and what we can and can’t ‘achieve’. This classification then has the capability to dictate where we live. If you were to earn £2,000 a month because no higher paying job will employ you as a result of those classifications, then you will not be able to leave to go live in an area where rent’s £5,000 a month. If you leave the country of your birth then you need to obtain a passport, another classification system that determines whether you are allowed into certain countries. What would happen if you broke away from all these types of classification? You would be an illegal, or a law-breaker, yet another classification.

It is evident that humans cannot live without any type of classification. We as a race have become obsessed with factors that assign us to a certain category - so obsessed that we the amount of suffering we’ve inflicted on one another has necessitated that those in power have had to make hate crimes illegal. English has become ‘the language of the world’ because a certain group of people decided that a British classification was better than an Indian one. Who decided any ethnicity was better than another? Who decided it was okay to take other human beings as slaves? As a race we have become obsessed with classification to the point of human suffering on an astronomical scale. Billions have lost their lives as a result of hate crimes, a hate that stemmed from the classifications we are born into.

The myth of normality

Changing attitudes across the world

Have you ever been told by your parents or teachers to act ‘normal’? To not stand out or cause distraction to your surroundings? Normal is a word with a plethora of meanings and a difficult dynamic – one that is almost impossible to understand. To be considered normal is to conform to the society around you; to blend in; to avoid disruption. The biggest question is ‘what will this mean to society?’ How will this result when the location which you are viewed as ‘normal’ in, is taken away from you? The once ‘standard human’ of your environment is now considered abnormal in new surroundings, a different place in space or time; they are labelled an outsider, a stranger to their norms. This idea suggests that a ‘normal person’ must be tied to their society to maintain their normality.

Just like fashion trends, what may seem perfectly acceptable to one group of people may be absurd to another. Being with friends and obtaining the newest technology may be top priority to a 16 year old New Yorker but would be totally preposterous to an Andean child of the same age, yet both activities of these 16 year olds would be considered normal within their habitat. An-

E. A. Hunt

other example of contrasting societal expectations is the LGBTQ community. In Tanzania you will receive a life’s imprisonment for conducting homosexual relations whereas in London, as of March 2014, it became legal to marry someone of the same sex and as time progresses it will be more and more ‘normal’, just a decision someone makes and no more difficult to accept than a heterosexual relationship.

Physical features may distort the level of regularity an individual may be perceived to uphold, but what about what you are shielded from: their cognitive behaviour. Mental illnesses consist of different methods of thinking and acting. Thoughts will occur that may seem perfectly acceptable to think and as a result these victims of mental instability will perform actions that they perceive as ‘normal’ in their minds but could be illegal, or transgressive, in reality. Some accept it is normal to be anxious without cause, others accept their compulsive behaviour as a norm and some may even consider their extreme depression usual and consistent with the rest of their society. A ‘normal’ brain ceases to exist, as every mind is exceptionally

unique. You can decide what to wear and you can personally change the way others perceive whether you conform to a society but without extreme forces you cannot change the way you think – as a result the mentally ill may find it difficult to adhere to what is considered normal within their given society.

The bottom line is, people have different interests, tastes and experiences. It is unheard of to have one absolute ideal that is self-evident in all environments. Whatever the contrast may be in society, young and old, male or female, there will always be anomalies. The initial understanding of what ‘normal’ is, whatever conforms the most to wider society, will never be a consensus as there will always be crime and deviance, rebellious acts, different cultures and generally contrasting interests between the selected natives of that environment.

They were then defined as a ‘feeling accompanied by pleasure or pain’, and thus always, at base level, some form of these physical sensations. Furthermore, they were deemed to cause action or change, including that of the body (such as internal temperature, or expression). This idea is rooted in Greek tendency to conceptualise emotion through the changes caused by it: the construction of metaphor to translate the internal unconscious self. This is most notable with the Greek feeling of Phrikê, which was the literal personified spirit of horror in Greek tragedies, or trembling fear. The word itself, Phrikê, referred to the physical symptoms: goose-bumps.

Secondly, other ancients had impact on understanding and explaining emotion by way of making the passions easier to comprehend. Cicero, for example, assigned the emotions into four basic categories: (1) fear; (2) pain/sickness; (3) lust/appetite; and (4) pleasure/delight. In addition, as within in the case of Phrikê, emotions were ‘conceived of in a medical frame of reference’. Galenic medicine provided another method through which the passions could be easily categorised and understood in scientific terms. It set about the idea that people had four humors (blood; yellow bile; black bile; and phlegm) which all corresponded to a particular element (as the entire world was believed to comprise of air, fire, earth, and water), due to the common belief that the microcosm mirrored the macrocosm: so individuals mirrored the outside world. These four humors each linked to a temperament which affected the character and general emotional composure of an individual. It was understood, then, that certain people were naturally more inclined to feel depressive, for example, due to their humoral balance (if they were more melancholic, which was a tendency to-

wards an excess of black bile). Thus, both Cicero’s four categories and Galenic medicine provided an accessible explanation and categorisation of feeling.

How do we know that there was a definite legacy to classical conceptualisations of emotion? If we explore written sources, we can see that this legacy is quite apparent. Michel de Montaigne, as aforementioned, discusses the passions in Aristotelian terms. He understood fear, for example, as irrational: that sometimes in warriors it would ‘add wings to the heels [...] sometimes it nails them to the ground’. His knowledge of the passions as of the soul is both Galenic and Aristotle in origin. However, so important is Aristotle to the early modern understanding of feeling that Montaigne states that Aristotle ‘will still have a hand in everything’. Indeed, Wright, too, is heavily influenced by Galenic theory, discussing how affections can ‘stir up’ and imbalance the bodily humors. Thus, it is apparent that to explain emotion between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, theorists turned back to the Greek philosophers as an authority on this information. Emotions were explained through the familiar framework of old theories, seen particularly as irrational, understood through metaphor, and also seen in very medical terms. As such, they were seen as potential symptoms and illnesses simultaneously. Interestingly, it is worth exploring briefly the Christian explanation of ‘bad’ emotions. Bad emotions were understood as being against God, in the form of the seven deadly sins – notably all seven sins are emotional states, or have an emotional quality. Negative passions across the period 1400-1600, however, were typically imagined and explained not as sin, but instead as illness because: ‘sin can only be repressed’ but ‘illness [...] can

be treated’. This, therefore, provided an explanation for emotions which allowed them to be approached in a constructive, curative manner. When understood in terms of Galenic medicine, excesses of emotion were considered to be a humoral imbalance.

In conclusion, emotions were necessarily abstracted to be understood by early modern populace. The language with which they were conceptualised was often nonliteral, and one which considered emotion in terms of path and change. Viewing emotions as ‘passions’, ‘affections’, or ‘movements of the soul’, gave them the power to be a substance which could alter the body. They were explained further as irrational, in medical terms, and ultimately within the framework of the old theories provided by Galen and Aristotle.

If further interested in this topic, a good base point would be Barbara Rosenwein and William Reddy’s works on emotional communities and regimes. Their scholarship explores the ways in which culture imposes a natural or constructed regulation upon emotional expression, and articulation of feeling. Emotional regulation is probably where current historical scholarship is most concerned, and it is a good means for understanding the interplay between culture, medicine and religion in early modern society.

Me, myself and I

Taking a look at ourselves and the modern period

What does it mean to be human right now, at this point in time? The rise of social media has earned us the nickname of the ‘Selfie Generation’, generally used in a criticism against us. Certainly, a pre-occupation with the self seems to characterise these recent years, but this is not a phenomenon that has emerged with smart phones or social media. Rather, this is a trend that has affected us, our parents and our parents’ parents’ parents. Neither is this a dangerous streak of narcissism. The turn inwards is not an excessive preoccupation with the self. It is a movement towards the celebration of the everyday, of the individual. It is a centuries-long trend in Western literature, from the classical period to the modern, and it accompanies the political forces that conceived the very ideals that have come to define our society: individualism; equal rights; freedom; meritocracy. These political forces effected a shift away from the noble and divine, towards the rational. This was then succeeded by a shift away from the rational, to the subjective and individual. It is a movement that has allowed people to find value in themselves and each other, based on a common humanity.

The classical era provided the foundation for the Western literary tradition we know today. Ancient Greece especially dominates this early period with their creation of, and emphasis on, theatre - being heavily reliant on oral tradition as opposed to written communication due to poor literacy rates. Since the 6th century BCE, theatre has remained one of the most influential - and enduring - forms of art. Tragedy emerged as the

T. E. Dunthorne

characteristic tradition of that Greek society, and the works produced are deemed - contentiously - as ‘the great literature of Western civilization’. Aristotle’s *Poetics* is the prescriptive essay that defined the genre, serving as a guide for understanding the construction and ‘rules’ of tragedy as it existed in the classical period. One rule states that: ‘tragedy is an imitation of persons who are above the common level’. That is to say, tragedy is necessarily separated from the masses because they were deemed as not being *worthy* of representation; only the noble classes were. Oedipus had to be a king, not a field worker. The ‘high’ nature of art therefore taught people that their heroes, the protagonists of all respected art, should be men who fulfilled the class criteria of being ‘great’. There were noble slaves and cruel aristocrats, true, but these were not characters one could look up to in their own right; they were always, inevitably, secondary to the hero.

This trend remained more or less consistent through the classical societies and the European feudal systems that followed. The difficulty of class movement continued making giants out of men, fictional or otherwise, as they occupied space that could only be achieved by the circumstances of their birth. Even as England emerged from the feudal system in the 16th century, Hamlet was made a Prince, while the Duchess of Malfi was never even given a name - she was defined by her position of birth.

Moreover, the mortal heroes of these worlds could never fulfil the reverent space that ancient gods, and later the monotheistic God, did in societies that were built upon faith; even Renaissance art, with its humanist motivations, had a heavy theological emphasis. The stories most told were religious in nature, the grandest of architecture constructed for worship and ritual, the overarching message: to be humble before God. If people were not looking to giants as their heroes, they were looking higher - to the divine. This, however, has changed.

The emergence of society from the medieval to the modern period brought with it Enlightenment ideals of liberty and a greater emphasis on individualism. It was a philosophical reaction against the religious dogmatism of the 16th and 17th centuries, and there prevailed a greater separation of church and state. The erosion of God as the universal ‘hero’ began; the emulation and reverence of the classical period and its intellectual rationalism superseded it, and the role of ‘hero’ was applied more and more to *people*, albeit ones of distinguished stature, rather than divines. This trend was later observed by Nietzsche in the 19th century with the

War criminals after the Nazis

Does the Nazi Party decide the fate of recent war criminals?

E. L. Braithwaite

History. This one word covers so much, but so little. It covers all the wars there has ever been, all the crimes ever committed, and all the crimes committed during the time. But with hundreds of examples for each category, we are right to ask: ‘what has changed?’ The focus of this article will be on later war crimes. The definition of a war crime is ‘an act carried out during the conduct of a war that violates accepted international rules of war’ and out of the thousands of war crimes that have been committed throughout the history of our species there is one that everyone knows. They know the name, the criminals responsible, the victims, the locations and when it all occurred. The Nazi Party’s persecution of the Jewish people that occurred across Europe during the Second World War that would become known as the Holocaust. Auschwitz, Treblinka and Chelmno are perhaps the most famous of the death camps at which over 6 million people lost their lives, leading to one of the most famous trials in history: the Nuremberg Trials. The Nuremberg Trials saw 24 Nazi officials, including Rudolf Hess and Hermann Göring, indicted of participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace; planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The trial then went on to aid the formation of the International Criminal Court. The most significant thing to note here is that this occurred in the 1940s - it received huge media attention then as it does now but no one seems to mention any of the war crimes that have been committed since. It’s almost as if the Nazis set the bar so high when it comes to the severity of war crimes that no action has been taken on those responsible since. A bit like two people not doing their homework, but only one person getting detention because they did less than the other. Ultimately, millions of victims are without any form of justice simply because the war crimes committed by the Nazis were worse. Society has left these victims behind.

Tony Blair is the first alleged war criminal to be discussed. Accused of waging an aggressive war against Iraq, a crime the Nazis were associated with. The reason the word alleged has been used is because Blair has never had to defend his actions since in English law it isn’t illegal to wage an aggressive war. In other words, Blair has found a loophole in

the system to eliminate the need to clear his name. If we go back to the Nuremberg Trials, they occurred because the crimes committed, one the same as Blair, were internationally recognised - so why not Blair as well? After all, for many people the situation is ‘black and white’; he should be held accountable and put on trial. It is reasonable to argue that if the Holocaust didn’t occur the world would be stunned by his actions and he would probably be starting his new life behind bars, but because of the severity of the war crimes committed by the Nazi Party, Blair’s crime has been overlooked.

Lyndon Bain Johnson. An American president that is generally only remembered as JFK’s successor, maybe for setting up the Warren Commission at a push. Many people don’t associate him with the Vietnam War. A war that left around 4 million citizens dead on top of the 1.35 million soldiers that also lost their lives - around an estimated 5.35 million in total. The general figure for the Holocaust is quoted at around 6 million. One of the war crimes committed during this war was the mass murder of 347 to 504 unarmed civilians in the Mai Lai Massacre on the 16th March 1968. The murders were committed by the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 23rd Infantry Division. Regrettably it does not stop there: numerous victims were also forced to endure rape, torture and beatings. Unlike with Blair there has been a trial regarding this war crime, but of the 26 US soldiers charged with war crimes only William Calley was convicted. Initially this was for life. This was then reduced to three and a half years on house arrest. Even more shocking is the fact this one man was taking the blame for up to 504 deaths but ultimately orders came from the top, who in this was Johnson. Johnson oversaw the operations from the comfort of the White House. Not only did he know what was going on, but he was the one who ultimately authorised it. He had ordered the terrorisation and bombing of civilian areas just in case there was a member of the Viet Cong hiding there. But is he held accountable? Of course not. The Nazi Party was also guilty of mass murder, but they did not receive this type of leniency. It is not unreasonable to hypothesise that without the Hol-

ocaust, Johnson and all others involved would have met a very different fate.

While the argument that the Nazi Party is to blame for overshadowing the severity of war crimes committed since theirs, that is not the only way this information can be approached. Another explanation could be that they have not been held accountable due to the fact that it would place two key players in Western politics into disrepute, something unthinkable for the all mighty western powers. Coincidentally these two western powers were part of the allied forces who bought the Nazi war criminals to justice, in all the positive light that gains them. It would be ironic if their ruling parties were to endure the same fate. However, it is significant to note that western powers have been quick to label other governments, normally in the developing world, as weak and corrupt. Yet it would be difficult to argue Trump’s administration *isn’t* corrupt, and for anyone who thinks Theresa May’s government actually is ‘strong and stable’, watching the news may burst your bubble. Even if you don’t put any effort into keeping up with modern day politics, you could form an educated guess. As discussed earlier, however, no one mentions the war crimes committed by President Johnson and little is said about Tony Blair. Considering this, the stronger conclusion is the first; even with other explanations considered, the Nazi Party still cast an abhorrent shadow over 50 years later. When will we live in a society that obtains justice for all victims of war crime irrespective of the nature, severity or identity of the criminal?

High standards

Art's responsibility for social beauty standards

A. L. Brown

Is art responsible for the creation of beauty standards in society?

No, not really, is the short answer, but it is responsible for the perpetuation of beauty standards.

Beauty standards are made up from both biological reason, and social construction.

Biologically, from the primitive perspective, we look for efficiency for breeding as attractive; wider hips and bigger breasts for bearing and feeding babies, and long hair and nails showed women were healthy, men who appear strong are thought to increase reproductive success – it's evolution.

However, a large part of the beauty standard comes externally, perpetuated through the media so much that it becomes a cultural norm and a societal expectation that we strive for, even subconsciously. With the development of social media and the apparent 'rise in narcissism', we see more perpetuation of beauty standards than ever before. Instagram has created so many figures to whom people are constantly exposed to and strive to become because the power of idyllic portrayal has convinced us that we *must* adhere to a convention that does not exist beyond social media. It isn't common to look as stunning as Kendall Jenner but the internet would appear otherwise. This is a façade. What the beauty standard society panders to is the result of a lot of work, whether to the person themselves or in Facetune. But is this art's fault?

The concept of making things more per-

fect than they are isn't exclusive to the 21st century, this has been happening throughout humanity – anyone wealthy with power looked different to what their commissioned portraits suggest. Hans Holbein painted Henry VIII to look larger and more physically imposing, Elizabeth I had terribly damaged skin not featured in her portraits from the white lead-based makeup she wore in order to adhere to the beauty conventions of the high status of the time, even Winston Churchill kicked up a fuss about his aged portrayal in the portrait painted by Graham Sutherland when it had been displayed publicly - despite his wife finding it 'really quite alarmingly like him'. The conclusion of this is that, throughout history, people with power have felt the need to align themselves to standards of beauty as a matter of status. This is something that could be achieved most efficiently with art – the first real photoshop.

The point of art creating unrealistic beauty standards goes further back than this, however. The philosophy of aesthetics provides that art should be judged on a sensory level; how agreeable it is usually links to its beauty; we want to surround ourselves with beautiful things so that art can complement our surroundings instead of challenging our senses. Things that please our senses are often what we want and not what we can have, hence the way idyllic Greek gods are carved elegantly into marble, hence the way supermodels are meticulously photoshopped on our magazines.

Having said that, the rise of existentialism through art has brought out the opposite. Significantly, Francis Bacon and



Reflection (Self-portrait), 1985 - Lucian Freud

Lucian Freud, and more recently Jenny Saville. They portray the actual human experience, not shying away from portraying their subjects as grotesque or contorted, allowing them to be honest; something traditional art and media's unrealistic portrayal of beauty has never been.

The answer to whether or not art is responsible for the creation of the beauty standard is complex. No, it isn't, because beauty standards exist regardless, but aesthetics in art perpetuate unachievable standards for humans to strive towards which has been far worsened in the digital age. Having said that, the rise in art challenging these beauty standards is something that we should be looking out for. Besides, these works have always been far more interesting, positive or negative, and they will always demand the attention of twisted curiosity.

notorious phrase 'God is dead', to mean that scientific rationalism shifted the Christian faith from its centrality in Western zeitgeist. Humanity, however troubled for its loss of faith, found its hero in itself.

The Age of Enlightenment also inadvertently created Romanticism, as an aesthetic reaction against the objectivism it championed. Subjectivity instead of objectivism as an artistic creed is inevitably intertwined with individualist philosophy, due to the emphasis on personal response; poets talked about their own emotional reactions to things they found beautiful. The movement self-consciously characterised itself as individual responses to individual experiences. Poetry, according to Wordsworth, should begin as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. Of course, emotion is a universal human trait. To write so openly about emotion, therefore, meant that the voices that emerged from the movement were increasingly accessible to people of different classes and circumstances. The perception of beauty also altered as a result of this movement and its leaders. Although the beauty, or sublimity, of nature was the most prominent emerging theme, something as commonplace as a girl working in a field – the *Solitary Reaper* – was deemed as beautiful. The banal and everyday had aesthetic significance that was worth recording; heroes could be found in the quotidian.

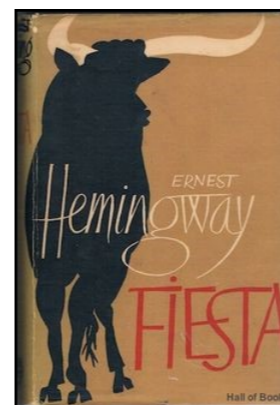
The 'bringing down' of literature devel-

oped further in the early twentieth century, with the modernist movement. Perhaps the most radical innovation of the literary movement was the popularisation of stream-of-consciousness writing and free indirect discourse, techniques employed by the most iconic figures of the time period, like Joyce and Woolf. These are techniques embedded in contemporary literature to such an extent that it can be difficult to conceptualise their significance when they were introduced into the mainstream; it was a turn inwards, to the human mind, catalysed by Freud, Marx, and other thinkers who questioned society and human rationality. Psychological examinations of individuals became a key feature of literature. The mind itself became the focus of art, whether that mind belonged to a middle class woman throwing a party, or to an Irish advertising canvasser. The artistic value of individuals was found simply in their existence as human beings, regardless of background and distinction, and their stories worth telling.

This was a sentiment that was building momentum; the turbulent geopolitics of the first half of the twentieth century, the First and then Second World War, saw the rise of universal human rights – the political value of human beings – which culminated in the landmark adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations on 10 December 1948. The document states as its first article: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'. Artistically and politically, the role of

'hero' was placed with the individual, every one of whom has equal and inherent value. Why should we not celebrate our own selves?

Over the past centuries, there has been a clear political and artistic trend in the West: a movement towards the self. The individual who exists without noble birth is just as worthy of art as the individual who does. There is no aesthetic sacrifice by depicting the average over the heroic. We no longer look to Gods or to Giants; we look to ourselves. Although we are each fundamentally flawed in a way that neither Gods nor Giants are, these are flaws that are inherent to humanity. And to art, humanity is a beautifully flawed subject. Being human is nothing to be ashamed of, and we're slowly realising that.



September Book Recommendation:

Fiesta, or *The Sun Also Rises*, is Hemingway's first published book. The story is an examination of love, unfulfillable despite being required, on a European backdrop: part one takes place in Paris, whilst part two takes place in Spain during the annual Festival of San Fermín, a week-long celebration characterised by famous bullfights. It's a study of human relationships, and a little bit depressing because of that.