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THE PEACOCK'S TAIL AND THE REPUTATION REFLEX: THE NEUROSCIENCE OF ARTS SPONSORSHIP

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For my mother, Pam Wight, for her nature.
And my wife, Jane Morgan, for her nurture.

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FOREWORD

Darwin would have liked this thoughtful essay by Robin Wight. His co-discoverer of natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace, would have loved it. These two scientific heroes stand at opposite ends of a continuum of opinion, which we can represent as 'art for art's sake' at Darwin's end of the spectrum, and 'art repays sponsorship' at Wallace's. The specific field of their disagreement was Darwin's 'other theory' of sexual selection, epitomised by the peacock – poster boy of nature's advertising industry, the Robin Wight of the bird world.

Natural selection, narrowly understood as a drab utilitarian bean-counter obsessed with survival, was always going to have trouble with peacocks and peacock butterflies, with angel fish and birds of paradise, with the song of a nightingale or the antlers of a stag. Darwin realised that individual survival was only a means to the end of reproduction. As we would put it today, it is not peacocks that survive in the evolutionary long-run anyway, it is their genes, and genes survive only if they make it into the next generation, manipulating a succession of short-term bodies to that long-term end. For peacocks and other animals whose biggest hurdle in the way of reproduction is competitors of the same sex, natural selection – or sexual selection as Darwin called it in this case – will tend to favour extravagant attractiveness or formidable weaponry, cost what it might in economic resources or risk to individual survival.

Attractiveness in whose eyes? The eyes of the peahen, of course, and if her tastes happen to coincide with ours so much the better for us. The peacock is a walking advertisement, a colourful hoarding, a neon come-hither, an expensive commercial. Even a work of art? Yes, why not? The case is even clearer for the bowerbirds of Australia and New

Guinea. Not particularly bright or showy in their plumage, male bower birds build an 'external peacock tail', a labour of love which serves the same purpose of attracting females. Fashioned from grass, twigs and leaves woven into the shape of an arch or a maypole, paved with stones, decorated with berries or painted with their juice, adorned with flowers, shells, coloured feathers from other species of birds, fragments of coloured glass, even beer bottle tops, no two bowers are the same. Females survey the bowers and then choose the male whose architectural offering they find most pleasing.

Males will spend hours titivating and perfecting their bowers. If an experimenter moves an item while the bird is away, he will carefully replace it when he returns. The trope of the 'external peacock tail' is reinforced by a telling observation. Those species of bowerbird with the drabbest plumage tend to be the ones with the most elaborate bowers. It is as though in evolutionary time they shifted their advertising budget, bit by bit, from body to bower.

When a male bowerbird stands back, cocks his head to one side and surveys his creation, then darts forward to move a blueberry two inches to the right, then steps back to survey again, it is hard not to see an artist delicately touching up his canvas. And that narrative is entirely plausible, for the following reason. The eye and brain that the male seeks to impress are of the same species as his own eye and brain. If he likes his own bower, there's a good chance that a female will too. Whatever turns you on, if you are a male bowerbird, will probably turn on a female of the same species.

American song sparrows teach themselves to sing by burbling experimentally, and learning to repeat those fragments or phrases that sound good to the male himself, or, as the experimenters put it, that conform to a 'built-in template', a kind of idealised song genetically lodged in the brain. But there is another way to understand the 'template'. As with

the bower, the gradual improvement of the young bird's song can be regarded as the shaping and perfecting of a work of art, in this case a musical composition. And again, since the purpose is to appeal to the nervous system of a (female) member of the same species, what better way to perfect the composition than to try out random phrases on himself? Again, "Whatever turns me on will probably turn her on too, because we share the song sparrow nervous system." How else does a composer proceed than to try out fragments of melody or candidate harmonies, in his head or on the piano, varying them and modifying them to suit his own taste, implicitly reasoning that what appeals to him will also play well in the concert hall?

'Works of art' is one way to look at the perfected products of sexual selection. 'Drugs' is another. A nightingale in a cool greenwood sang of summer to John Keats, and a drowsy numbness pained his sense as though of hemlock he had drunk. Keats was not a bird, but he shared its vertebrate nervous system, and I have made the case elsewhere that female nightingale nervous systems might be drugged in the same way. Male canary song is known to cause female canary ovaries to swell, and secrete hormones that affect reproductive behaviour. It is entirely plausible that Keats's experience of being drugged was a (probably reduced, for in his case it was incidental) version of what a female nightingale experiences when she hears the male pour forth his soul abroad in such an ecstasy. Is birdsong the avian equivalent of a date rape drug?

Works of high art? Seductive drugs? Piccadilly Circus neon signs? However we describe them, the products of sexual selection make demands on Darwinian theory that go beyond ordinary utilitarian natural selection. This was where Wallace and Darwin parted company, as Helena Cronin has shown in her beautiful book, *The Ant and the Peacock*. Darwin accepted as a given fact of life that females have

tastes, aesthetic preferences, inexplicable whims, and these simply dictate how aspirant males must sing, or be adorned, or build their bowers. Wallace, who described himself as more Darwinian than Darwin, hated the arbitrary assumption of feminine whim. Having given up on the hope that peacock tails and other bright beauties might have some hidden usefulness of a practical, utilitarian nature, Wallace fell back on the strong belief that, at very least, they were demonstrations to the female of the male's practical worth. The gorgeous plumage of the peacock was not just beauty for beauty's sake, as Darwin had it. It was a demonstration, a badge of worth, an unfakeable certificate of a male's quality. A large and elaborate bower, perhaps, is tangible evidence that here is a diligent male, hard-working, skilled, with stamina and perseverance, all desirable qualities in the father of one's children.

Two of Darwin's and Wallace's greatest successors, R A Fisher in the first half of the twentieth century and W D Hamilton in the second, have championed the Darwinian and the Wallacean view of sexual selection respectively. Fisher showed that beauty for beauty's sake need not depend on arbitrary female whim, but nor need it be a badge of real quality. If we assume that female preference itself evolves alongside male ornamentation, mathematical reasoning can predict a runaway process in which the two advance together 'with ever increasing speed' until the joint evolutionary race is finally brought up short by overwhelming utilitarian pressures. Fisher really did succeed in modelling beauty for beauty's sake, while never departing from rigorous Darwinian standards. Though not denying the ingenuity of Fisher's mathematical reasoning, Hamilton was more drawn to Wallacean models of sexually selected advertisements of genuine male quality. For Darwin, the male's colourful hoarding says (albeit using compulsively seductive arts to do so) nothing more than "Choose me! Choose me!

Choose me!" The Wallacean male, by contrast, says: "Choose me because I am a healthy male, strong and fit, likely to be a good father, as you can see from the following evidence." In human terms, the Darwinian / Wallacean distinction is, of course, entirely familiar to Robin Wight and his colleagues in the world of commercial advertising. Both schools of advertising surely have their merits, but in different circumstances.

Hamilton's computer models were particularly concerned with advertisements of male health and resistance to parasites. He was indebted to the more general 'handicap principle' of the Israeli zoologist Amotz Zahavi, which plays so large a role in Robin Wight's 'Reputation Reflex', as developed in this work. Zahavi was, in turn, indebted to Hamilton's friend and Oxford colleague (and mine) Alan Grafen, who showed, in the teeth of massive scepticism among zoologists, that Zahavi's seemingly bizarre idea can actually work. Grafen's rigorous mathematical models show us that the handicap principle, maddeningly paradoxical though it at first appeared, is a serious candidate for explaining real facts in the real world. Natural selection can favour advertisements that are costly, extravagant or dangerous, not (as Darwin and Fisher thought) in spite of their costs but precisely because they are costly. It is the unavoidable cost of a good advertisement that authenticates it. Males deliberately endanger themselves, or perform feats that are difficult to execute, or demand expensive equipment or scarce and precious resources, because females will not accept cheap substitutes. To put it in Darwinian terms, natural selection would penalise females who did accept cheap substitutes, and would favour rival females who insist on authenticated evidence of quality. In Hamilton's version, male advertisements and displays are nicely calculated to show healthy males to their best advantage and, more surprisingly, even paradoxically, are also calculated to expose unhealthy males to female detection. As I have put it before, females evolve to become skilled

diagnostic doctors while, at the same time and more surprisingly but in accordance with the logic of the Zahavi / Grafen theory, males evolve to give the game away even if they are unhealthy, with the equivalent of clinical thermometers protruding ostentatiously from every orifice.

My time is overdue to hand over to Robin Wight. He takes the Zahavi / Grafen / Hamilton class of 'Wallacean' theory and artfully combines it with neurological and other scientific insights from various branches of science, to produce a telling case for the financial support of art, not just art for art's sake, but arts sponsorship as sound commercial strategy. The pages that follow constitute a neat example of lateral thinking, and the deploying of science where we might least have expected it.

Richard Dawkins

THE PEACOCK'S TAIL AND THE REPUTATION REFLEX: THE NEUROSCIENCE OF ART SPONSORSHIP

Five years ago I began a journey looking at art and its sponsorship. Along the way I gradually began to realise that my investigation went to the heart of human behaviour, and even provides an important sideshow in the debate about the power of our ancient instincts versus our more modern cognition.

Emerging from this intellectual awakening, I shall propose today a scientific case for arts sponsorship.

I shall use the concept of the Peacock's Tail as a metaphor to describe a long line of fitness signals traceable through handaxes, potlatch ceremonies and indeed 'creative brains' all biologically engineered to signal the status of their owners. Art sponsorship itself is but one of these signalling displays. I shall also argue that our brain has a special area, which I shall call the Reputation Reflex, that was wired up hundreds of thousands of years ago to respond positively to displays mirroring those of a peacock's tail (of which art sponsorship itself is but one).

Perhaps the most important evidence that I shall advance is that this response system is an *automatic* one that can override objections that a conscious mind might make to the idea that a business is wasting money on sponsoring something so ephemeral as art.

Some of the conclusions of this scientific journey will challenge prevailing views. For example, by linking together a range of insights from the disciplines of genetics, evolutionary psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, cognitive psychology and even philosophy, I find myself *celebrating* the fact that unsuccessful businesses stop sponsoring the arts.

I also celebrate the battle-cry of Oscar Wilde that "all art is quite

useless" and shall argue that Wilde's viewpoint may now be confirmed by the findings of evolutionary psychology.

The affordability of something as 'useless' as arts sponsorship is revealed to be one of the most valuable signals of the real success of a business. But this signalling has, in the biological sense, to be kept 'honest'. The fact that unsuccessful businesses have to stop their sponsorship of the arts is no more than the underlying system keeping its signalling accurate.

More broadly, I have found it fascinating to realise that my enquiry mirrors aspects of a controversy about the nature and purpose of art that has been raging certainly from the time of the Greeks. It is one that engaged many philosophers, artists and writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Speaking specifically about poetry, Shelley queried whether it only had intrinsic value, achieving any social improvement almost by accident. Or should every poem, as Wordsworth argued, have a "worthy purpose"? Kant, Schiller, Flaubert and Baudelaire were on Shelley's side in the debate, embracing the formula of *l'art pour l'art*. The purpose of a poem, and art itself, is simply to exist or to be beautiful, which is what Wilde was arguing in his memorable phrase.

The *l'art pour l'art* battle-cry has been the traditional response by art lovers to the issue of the usefulness of art. Perhaps its finest expression was by Hazlitt and cited by Chris Smith in *Creative Britain*: "The arts do not furnish us with food or raiments, it is true: but they please the eye, they haunt the imagination, they solace the heart. If after that you ask the question, cui bono, there is no answer".

More recently, Stephen Fry, John Tusa and John Carey have all eloquently argued on the same theme.

This is not an argument that is being won in the world of politics and

business. As a result, the art world has successfully adjusted to the failure of the intrinsic case for art as a fundraising argument by adopting the instrumental case for art instead. The doubling of art funding that Chris Smith so skillfully negotiated with the Treasury was built around the latter, rather than Hazlitt's battle-cry. And so great has been the victory for social instrumentalism as the case for art that when the Fitzwilliam Museum approached the Heritage Lottery Fund for help in buying a fourteenth century prayer book, the first question they were asked was not whether it was good art but "how is this work relevant to the owner of your local Chinese takeaway?" A recent paper on multicultural art even lamented "the constant drone of the art for art's sake Zeppelin casting a shadow over cultural policy".

Art as a weapon of social policy has been so successful that there is now, as John Holden has reported, an increasing backlash against the culture of instrumentalism and accountability, each of which has been increasingly typical of public subsidy for the arts. The experience of Arts & Business in recent years also echoes this: no less than 30 of the 38 nominations in the 2006 Arts & Business Awards were for art as a weapon of business or social policy. If we don't want art solely to be justified for its instrumental outcomes, we need a new narrative to ensure that art itself is not left starving in its garret.

This is where science is now coming to the rescue of the arts. In the last decade, scientists have been discovering another answer to Hazlitt's question, and I would argue, an even more powerful one, that – eventually – feeds down to what I believe to be a scientific case for art sponsorship. This new science now brings support to the instincts, impulses and convictions of those who originally invented and nourished ABSA (and then Arts & Business) without any of this science to support them. It is a circumstance for considerable rejoicing that we now have evidence of why those instincts were so soundly based.

There will be some who will find what follows too materialistic so let me try to pre-empt that objection. It is certainly true that the biological purpose of art that I shall be describing is entirely different from its cultural purpose. I shall argue that art serves the needs of us humans to survive while its cultural purpose is to make that survival worthwhile. The materialist case for art that I shall advance using scientific arguments is not meant to replace the cultural one. Indeed, by the end of this essay, it should be clear that this biological purpose of art is far more supportive of higher cultural purpose than the social purpose of art on which the funding argument is too often focused.

But this is to rush to the end while we are still at the beginning of a complicated scientific journey.

It is important for me to make clear right from the outset that with one exception every scientific theory that I shall advance originated with someone else. What I have essentially done is simply to link different areas of science that, as far as I can tell, have been stuck in silos of their own specialism.

And so to begin.

The scientific case for the arts on which I am focusing can be traced back to Richard Dawkins' revelation in 1976, in the *Selfish Gene*, that we are here only for our genes' sake. Darwinian natural selection favours genes whose characteristics promote their own reproduction. Any genetic qualities that have consistently survived tend to be those that give a gene a better chance of being passed on to the next generation. Any characteristic that seems 'useless' but keeps being passed onto the next generation must provide some genetic advantage or it would have died out as Steven Pinker argues in *The Blank State.* In other words, it is not *biologically* useless.

A good example of this is the tail of a peacock, or a bird of paradise, or

indeed any organ of advertisement as opposed to survival. The lumbering disadvantages of the peacock's tail did not seem to square with the survival of the fittest to Darwin, which was why he supplemented the theory of natural selection with his 'other' theory of 'sexual selection'. Sexual selection in turn raised various intriguing problems that Darwin wisely left to twentieth century biologists to solve. One of the most ingenious of these twentieth century ideas was the revolutionary Handicap Principle proposed by the Israeli zoologist Amotz Zahavi. I shall argue that Zahavi, perhaps without even realising, has built the basis for the scientific case for art sponsorship with that biological principle.

He realised that the peacock's tail, far from just being an extravagant waste of resources, is elegantly fitted to signal the fitness of the male to the peahen. The characteristics that make it better than any BUPA screening in revealing genetic quality are a size that made it vulnerable to predators, colours that require complex nutrients to create and a symmetry that provide an instant health check to any peahen.

Zahavi's Handicap Principle applied to not only the peacock. From the 'stotting' of an antelope to the lump on the bill of a male pelican that obscures vision when catching fish: there were many sorts of embellishments and behaviours that apparently disadvantaged an animal but were, in fact, signalling fitness to a potential mate. It is precisely the costly, wasteful, even dangerous aspects of these evolved advertisements that authenticated them to the peahen or whoever the target audience might be. An advertisement that was cheap or easy to produce is too easy to fake, and natural selection would work on peahens to see through it. Zahavi's theory was controversial, even ridiculed when it was first proposed in the 1970s, but it has been triumphantly vindicated by the Oxford theoretical biologist Alan Grafen, using mathematical models.

An important point to remember in all these discussions is that we are

talking about an *automatic* stimulus and response system. The peacock's genetic programming causes him to show and display his tail. And a hardwired response system within the peahen's brain causes her involuntary response to the appropriate tail. 'Automatic' does not mean casual. Take just eight feathers out of a peacock's tail and the peahen notices. One of Zahavi's additional points is that animal advertisements are often standardised to facilitate comparison. I shall return to this in a moment.

Given the modular system with which evolution has constructed living creatures it would be no surprise to find equivalents of the peacock's and peahen's brains in our own considerably larger brain. Scientists identify part of our brain as having reptilian origins, part evolving from animals and part – the neo-cortex at the front – evolving from our later mammalian ancestors.

Can we find evidence of this sort of signalling behaviour in our own species? I believe that we can.

The first known human signalling system for mate selection evolved about a million years ago. This is demonstrated by the handaxes that are now displayed throughout the British Museum. Many of these handaxes seem to be as sharp as the day they were knapped: not only that, they seem to be made to a standard pattern. For nearly a million years and across wide geographical areas and at a time of a major spurt in brain size, there was no significant change in the design of handaxes. The suggestion is that handaxes served a less utitilarian purpose than just cutting up carcasses. The standardisation of handaxes seems to have operated like the feathers in a peacock's tail, enabling like to be compared with like; an exam question in the mating GCSE.

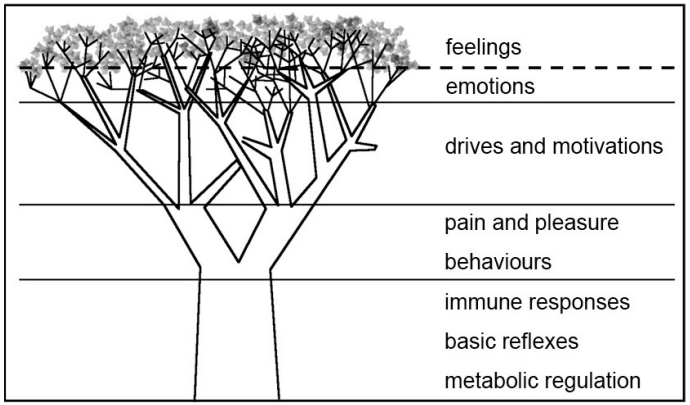
Why should a potential mate be impressed by this standardised handaxe?

One hypothesis, simultaneously advanced by Steven Mithen and Marek Kohn, explains the fact that so many razor-sharp handaxes have been found and emerges as a human example of the Handicap Principle. Once the hunter had killed the animal then handaxes would have been knapped on the spot of the kill site. Then – and this is the crucial discovery – the sharp handaxes were discarded, mimicking the wastefulness of a peacock's tail. This is the 'honest signalling', making sure that no cheating had occurred by cavemen less skilled in knapping handaxes but anxious to impress potential mates. The handaxe would only be trusted as a signalling system (for genetic fitness) if it was first created and then discarded in front of other members of the tribe.

Knapping the handaxe – the stimulus – and being attracted to the knapper – the response – became hardwired behaviour in the brains of our ancestors. What is relevant for my exposition is that we can find exactly the same processes in our own brain. But not in our massive neo-cortex: this seat of our prodigious ability to reason and a crucial component of our creativity arrived relatively recently on the evolutionary scene. Rather, as a first stage attempt to 'survive and reproduce', our genes evolved a *pre* neo-cortex decision-making system. Suppose I am a caveman and I see another caveman approaching me: how do I decide if he is friend or foe? Our emotions evolved to make this decision in the blink of an eye, far faster than the on-the-one-hand-and-the-other-hand neo-cortex that evolved later. It was the emotions that originated as a high speed decision making system to help our genes survive and be passed on to further generations.

To the neuroscientist emotions are very different from feelings. Feelings are, by definition, conscious. Emotions are the unconscious process that *may* precede a particular feeling. According to the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, most of our emotions never emerge into consciousness.

He captures the point succinctly in this chart from one of his three seminal works on the subject.



Our emotions have a precise biological purpose, as the science writer Rita Carter explains: "Emotions are not feelings at all but a set of body rooted survival mechanisms that evolved to turn us away from a danger and propel us forward to things that may be of benefit". Emotions, it seems, should be seen as stereotypical, automatic processes to help an organism survive.

And the neuroscientists have now shown that three of the four main emotional sites in the brain governing these emotions are 'sub-cortical' – that is, they are part of our ancient brain system that we share with other mammals.

There is a huge collection of reflexes in each of our brains in what is called the limbic system centred around the amygdala. At least one of these has a crucial role to play in how we respond biologically to art.

Amygdala: the control centre for much human behaviour

I call this reflex the Reputation Reflex (and it is the only scientific concept in this essay that I can claim to have originated). The Reputation Reflex is a biological response not just to a piece of art but to a piece of anything that this part of the brain interprets as signalling the reputation (in terms of biological fitness) of the transmitter. It is one of a whole cluster of reflexes that were a primitive, but highly effective, way of making decisions before modern memory or the thinking weaponry of the neo-cortex evolved. And they still are.

Indeed, a study in Holland in 2006 showed that forcing people to make 'snap decisions', rather than allowing detailed conscious evaluation led, under some circumstances, to better decisions being made. But even though such clever reflexes would, under ancestral conditions, have been effective as response systems to help ensure the physical survival of the body and to assess genetic quality of potential mates, they lacked the ability to signal their own genetic quality to others. So genes drove the expansion of the brain, producing

consciousness, language and creativity; all weapons, I believe, in the service of advertising to mates.

Reflexes, such as the Reputation Reflex, exist beneath consciousness. Consciousness, however, is a more 'advanced' version of the same 'survive and reproduce' programme. Linked to memory, it enables our autographical self to exist. It also extends the mind's reach, and in so doing improves our chances of survival – a mind with a larger reach can sense what may be coming round the corner!

With consciousness comes communication. Language gives conscious expression to our feelings and evolved, in the view of many, to keep groups of early humans together. This enabled us to manage the complex social relationships involved in groups of around 150, necessary for our ancestors' survival when they moved from the jungle on to the savannah. It has been suggested by Robin Dunbar, in fact, that there is a clear relationship between neo-cortex size and the size of a group of anthropoid primates as well as humans. Vocal grooming – or gossip – seems to have evolved to replace the physical grooming which only allowed a maximum group size of 40 or so when we were apes.

And then we come to the evolution of the ace in the deck – creativity – the power behind art. As far as we know, every known human society has created art, although archeological evidence dates it no earlier than about 45,000 years ago. Our near cousins, the Neanderthals, lacked this creativity, even though their brain size was actually slightly larger than ours. The recent discovery that the Neanderthal brain lacked the FOX P2 gene that is so crucially involved in speech and language that it has been called the 'creativity gene' suggests the crucial link between creativity and human survival. Creativity thus emerges as an important component of the 'survive and reproduce' programme that drives us.

I follow Geoffrey Miller's theory of the evolution of our creativity – which

he advanced with as much boldness as Zahavi with his Handicap Principle. Miller proposed that our brains operate as advertisements for our fitness, and its apparently wasteful behaviour, just like the apparent wastefulness of the peacock's tail, signals our own genetic fitness. Miller's summary of his theory merits a direct quotation. "Sexual selection made our brains wasteful, if not wasted: it transformed a small efficient ape-style brain into a huge, energy-hungry handicap spewing out luxury behaviours like conversation, music and art. These behaviours may look as if they must be conveying some useful information from one mind to another. But from a biological viewpoint they might signify nothing more than our fitness, to those who might be considering merging their genes with ours."

Miller is, in effect, proclaiming that a 'biological' viewpoint on creativity (and the art it produces) reveals an entirely different purpose from the cultural one with which we are normally concerned. Though he does not use the word 'useless' with which I began this paper, he does use the word 'waste' to suggest that the brain is, in fact, our own Peacock's Tail, with 'creativity' revealing how good our genes are. The notion that creativity is sexy is something that the scientific establishment may find surprising. The art establishment, too, may feel uneasy about the link between art and reproduction in spite of the fact that evidence is starting to emerge that this is so. In 2005, a study showed that creative people had 50% more mating success than normal people. Another study showed that good dancers are attractive because the symmetry of their bodies signals genetic fitness to members of the opposite sex.

This being so how does the theory that creativity is driven by our 'survive and reproduce' programming explain the creativity of people who have no interest in passing on their genes, for example, members of the Gay community?

The genetic answer was given – with typical directness – by Richard

Dawkins. As part of the signalling of their quality "Males" Dawkins says "will dance, sing, sweet talk, tell jokes, compose music or poetry, play it or recite it, paint cave walls or the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Yes, yes, I know Michelangelo might not, as it happens, have been interested in impressing females. It is still entirely plausible that his brain was 'designed' by natural selection for impressing females just as – whatever his personal preferences – his penis was designed for impregnating them. The human mind, on this view, is a mental peacock's tail and the brain expanded on the same kind of sexual selection that has driven the enlargement of the peacock's tail."

It remains a paradox that some of the most creative people ever born are, on this viewpoint, second class genetic citizens. This difficulty is at least partially removed when we explore the second replicator that Dawkins conceived: the 'meme'. In the same way that genes offer us biological immortality, memes (at their simplest an 'idea', seen as the cultural analogue of the replicating gene) offer cultural immortality. The ideas captured in Michelangelo's works live on even if Michelangelo's genes do not.

The tension between these two sorts of replicator that emerges between our biological mind system and our cultural mind system will be explored in a moment. For this essay at least, I need first to explore a crucial development of this biological explanation of art.

My explanation at the moment is limited to art itself. It is not yet a biological explanation for art *sponsorship*.

The concept of sponsorship takes us into the world of altruism and my understanding of the biological purpose of that is again indebted to Zahavi. (Altruistic behaviour was, like the peacock's tail, another phenomenon that baffled the brilliant Darwin). Zahavi has made a lifelong study of the Arabian babbler, a small bird that abounds in

Middle Eastern deserts. The Arabian babbler is altruistic to a high degree. Male babblers perform sentry duty to watch for predators, they risk their lives mobbing snakes and even compete for the right to give food to nestlings bred by other birds. Zahavi showed that the male babbler that performs the most altruistic acts earns the highest ranking in any particular babbler community and, as a result, has more babbler offspring. Other zoologists would expect birds to behave altruistically only towards close kin (who share genes) or potential reciprocators. Only Zahavi expected – and found – that an individual would compete with rivals to perform altruistic acts, as an ostentatious advertisement of superiority. "See how much stronger and fitter I am than you, I can afford to give you food and endanger myself by warning you of predators!"

A study of the Hadza and Meriam people showed that humans behave in the same way. The individual hunters who supply the most meat do not receive equivalent amounts of meat in return from others. Meat, to them, is more than nutrition: it is a medium of communication by which one transmits information to show ones superiority over others. The hunters are hunting for reputation rather than just food. So even though the best hunters do not end up getting more meat, they have higher fertility – they produce more children. It is a system that has been called 'Competitive altruism' by Gilbert Roberts and underpins much generosity.

We can see this signalling behaviour in the fact that people are more generous in public than they are in private situations. It appears that all of us, for example, are more likely to give to street beggars in the company of a friend than when alone. This is the dynamic that underpins the charity auction: only those with substantial resources can afford to be so conspicuously generous.

What makes this form of signalling so powerful, is that unlike the case of the merely selfish peacock, it benefits the recipients as well as the

signaller itself. This means that wealthy people are not the only ones who can gain status by this type of behaviour. So do people who are generous in other ways. As a recent study observed, the members of society with the highest status are scientists, doctors, military and political leaders, artists, entertainers, all of whose contribution benefits everyone.

Altruistic behaviour can thus be seen, at the biological level, as the 'Super Peacock Tail' where everyone is competing to be more generous: the babbler 'wastes effort', the tribesman 'wastes meat', and the art sponsor 'wastes money' – all in the cause of signalling genetic fitness.

Please remember that I am talking about an unconscious mechanism. I am also talking about biological behaviours that have migrated into a cultural behaviour. This brings me back to Dawkins' memes.

There were no reproductive consequences, as far as we know, of Pope Julius II's sponsorship of Michelangelo. Popes are not meant to have children. But the 'idea' – or 'meme' – of that sponsorship lives on in a device that signals the power of a Church able to waste such resources on the painting of a ceiling. It is true that memes, our 'second replicator', are controversial. Nobody has yet found them in the brain. For that matter a neural basis of consciousness has not yet been found, though nobody denies it must exist. Memes, ultimately existing as a neurological trace within the brain, await their physical discovery as did genes for all those long years of doubt.

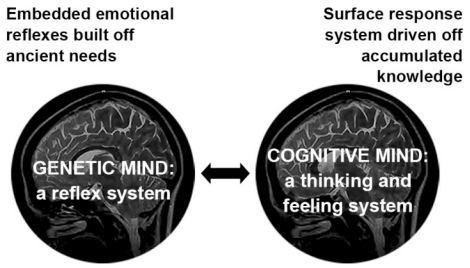
In my view, memes may ultimately be seen as just as important a discovery as genes, and, certainly for the purposes of this essay, let us give Dawkins the benefit of the doubt for his original conception. The evolution of memes creates the possibility that humans can be the first species to escape from what Dawkins calls the 'tyranny of our genes'. Theodosious Dobzhansky perceptively describes the revolution that memes bring to our thinking: "Culture is not inherited through our

genes, it is acquired by learning from other human beings. In a sense human genes have surrendered their primacy in human evolution to an entirely new non-biological or super organic agent, 'culture'.'

At this point, I feel it is pertinent to join together the part of the mind that I introduced earlier, the Reputation Reflex buried within the unconscious amygdala, with another part of the mind, the conscious one that shapes our culture, often using memes as its distribution system.

What eventually evolved over hundreds and thousands of years were two separate, though linked, mind systems: a *biological* mind system and a *cultural* mind system. Each and every day we are – quite literally – in two minds as these two systems battle it out because it emerges that they serve different masters.

People are in two minds about everything



This chart summarises a complex situation that has been usefully described in the work of Keith Stanovich.

In his book, *The Robot's Rebellion,* Stanovich argues that the mind on the left principally serves our genes. Its operating system known as TASS – standing for The Autonomous Set of Systems – enables the

mind to make the fast, automatic unconscious responses – including the Reputation Reflex – that genetic programming has laid down over the millennia.

Our other 'system' is the cognitive mind with its analytical thinking and feeling system which principally serves the interest of the 'vehicle' – ourselves. It is the seat of consciousness. And it is the engine room of the memes.

Serving two masters, the two minds do not always agree. Take contraception. For the cognitive mind, the enjoyment of sex without risk of pregnancy makes sense. But for the genetic mind, anything that limits the potential spread of its genes is against its programming. The fact that contraception is widespread reveals that the cognitive mind can 'win' some of the battles.

With its ideas expressed as memes, the neo-cortex evolved its own replication system. For in the same way that you can find the same genes in two members of a family, you can find the same memes in two members of an 'idea group'. The ideas that we give our children on the subject of everything from table manners to religion can be 'reproduced' in parallel to the way a parent passes on its eye colour. Judith Rich Harris in her latest study on personality reports that the true heritability that is the direct action of the genes is between 0.30 and 0.35 (where 1.0 is total heritability). However, 'memetic' heritability is even higher: the heritability of attitudes to the death penalty is 0.50, to organised religion 0.46 and to reading books 0.37. So we can clearly see that there is a mechanism that can give memetic immortality to those who, for whatever reason, don't obtain genetic immortality.

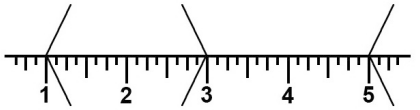
As a replication system it is arguable that the memetic one is superior to the genetic one. Genes can take many thousands of years to change the organisms they dwell within. But memes can reproduce and

reshape the organisms they inhabit with staggering speed. However, as a decision making system – it could be argued that the genetic mind remains dominant in the sense that it remains the gatekeeper of the whole decision making process.

I reported earlier the evidence that three of the four main emotional sites in the brain governing our decision making emotions are centered in the 'sub-cortical' area of the brain. Onto this we can now superimpose the knowledge that this part of the mind is largely working to serve the interest of our genes. From the tension between this genetic evolution on the one hand, and the cultural evolution of the neo-cortex evolved to serve ourselves rather than our genes on the other, emerges a paradox that ultimately benefits art sponsorship.

For all of the ability of the neo-cortex to construct memes that can spread all over the world, the genetic mind still keeps the neo-cortex on a tight leash as far as the decision making process is concerned. Psychological literature is rich with examples of the dominance of the unconscious genetic mind. Look, for example, at the celebrated Muller-Lyer illusion.

Two inches are not always the same length



To our conscious cognitive mind the line between 1 and 3 is the same length as that between 3 and five. However, something happens within our unconscious mind, maybe derived from a stimulation of the visual cortex that helped us hunt more effectively, which makes it hard to accept what our conscious mind is saying to us. The first of those two lines looks shorter and it is hard to gainsay that impression.

Or take another instance where our conscious opinion is manipulated by an unconscious influence: our preference for tall people reported by Malcolm Gladwell in 'Blink'. 'Tallness' has evolved as part of the biological pecking order in human society. And though few of us will have a conscious preference for taller people, we all have an unconscious preference, especially for taller males – thank goodness. 14% of the US male population is 6ft or taller. But 58% of all the CEOs of the Fortune Top 500 companies are over 6ft. And indeed it has been calculated that every inch a male has above average height is worth $600 a year in salary.

The 'height' reflex is not terribly harmful perhaps (and it does make Martin Sorrell's achievements look all the more remarkable) but the Foreigner Reflex that biases us against someone from another tribe is the engine for racial prejudice.

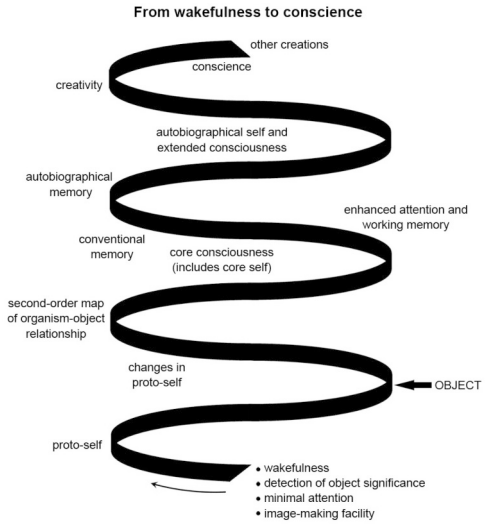
Biases such as these which are obviously 'wrong' by the standards of today's society can be tackled by the neo-cortex to some degree. But such is the power of our unconscious mind that, as with contraception, it is often hard for the cognitive mind to overcome the ancient decision maker (I shall suggest that this is a crucial reason why the concept of art sponsorship can survive an attack from the conscious mind).

The celebrated Stanford prison experiment of 1971 is a further example of our automatic response to certain stimuli. In this experiment, nine college students volunteered to be 'prisoners' and they were soon abused by another randomly chosen group of nine students who had been selected to become 'guards'. All the students had been chosen for their emotional stability yet the experiment revealed that normal rational behaviour was soon overcome by underlying, and unexpected, emotional responses to the prison situation. This was true whether they were cast as a jailer or a prisoner. Both groups of students made an automatic response to the role they had been given.

More broadly, psychologists have done numerous tests to demonstrate the power of this unconscious control upon our behaviour. Studies suggest that for 85% of the time analytical decisions that we think we are making have already been 'primed' by the unconscious mind. Sometimes these control systems seem unbelievable. In one test the skin conductance response (the scientific way to refer to how much someone is sweating) revealed that the volunteers knew by 'hunch' what was the winning deck of rigged cards to play well before their brains had worked it out.

When we probe further into the control exerted by the 'advanced' system of the neo-cortex and the 'ancient' system of the genetic mind, we discover more examples of the underlying hierarchy of our mind-control system.

The schema on the next page, from Damasio, who has done so much of the neurological heavy lifting in this new area of science, ranks creativity highest in the development of the mind, (apart from Damasio's own concept of conscience).



Yet numerous studies show the crucial role of the ancient genetic mind as the powerhouse of creativity. Creativity seems to depend on what has been called the 'undermind' existing on the boundaries of intuition and reason. Without the unconscious genetic mind we would not have our imagination. And it is our imagination that, as has been wisely observed, provides the difference between a bee and an architect: the architect is the one who can imagine what he is going to build before he's actually built it. As another suggestive indication, studies of creativity show the crucial importance of 'incubation' until we have the conscious 'eureka moment'.

If we look beyond creating to deciding, we find, as in the examples I've already given, that the grip of the genetic mind is even tighter.

To facilitate this control the unconscious mind even decides what information reaches the conscious mind. Studies show that an acoustic stimulus reaches the amygdala twice as fast along the 'quick and dirty' circuitry of the thalamic pathway than the route down the cortical pathway. This information is less detailed but gives the genetic mind the time to decide in a third of a second whether the neo-cortex should be informed and what its response should be.

The balance between 'lower' processing driving our genetic minds, and the 'higher' process run by our cognitive minds is one that takes us to a major battlefield of current brain science debate.

Even though it may be for the 'good cause' of art, there will be those scientists and philosophers who reject the narrative I have offered as presenting a debased account of humanity. They would argue that this narrative belittles the importance of human consciousness in separating us from the monkeys who have failed to climb further up the evolutionary tree.

Though the battle rages, neuroscience is starting to provide striking evidence of the two-mind model that I have advanced.

Brain scans apparently show that on issues of short term gratification, the genetic mind is particularly active. On issues involving longer term options, it is areas in the cognitive mind that are triggered. The science writer, Jim Holt, reporting on these discoveries observes "There may be no built-in hierarchy, just two autonomous brain modules in competition'. So, if tempted by a diet-destroying chocolate bar, shorter term gratification could lead you to eat it while the far-sighted reasoning part of your brain makes sure you know it is bad for you.

How our divided selves resolve issues rather more important than chocolate bars, such as art and its sponsorship is the central purpose that this essay is trying to illuminate. And the two mind model that

I have described allows us to understand what is really going on.

Philanthropy is something that is driven by the conscious mind and is clearly, at this level, a desirable and generous action. But at the unconscious level it is something else. Competitive altruism has taught us that this generous behaviour is in fact the most powerful form of reputation signalling that exists.

Now, with the concept of the Peacock's Tail and the Reputation Reflex at our disposal, and understanding that we are in two minds, we can see how art and its sponsorship can work as signalling behaviour as well as cultural behaviour. America, Britain and Russia allows us to observe what is happening in three different cultural and economic environments. America, lacking the class stratification of European culture and built by immigrants all anxious to signal their success, can be expected to support more signalling behaviour than a country such as Britain, where success has been more embedded into established class structures.

To the conscious mind this behaviour can be called more 'vulgar' if it is applied to consumption or more 'generous' if applied to philanthropy. But looking through the eye of the Peacock's Tail and the Reputation Reflex, and understanding how the genetic mind works, it is precisely the behaviour we should expect to find. Art sponsorship, as the best reputation signaller for businesses and individuals, can be expected to display more vigorously in the American than in the British context.

It is not that Americans are more generous it is merely that they have different signalling needs. (The fact that they have more generous tax laws is arguably a consequence of this drive rather than the cause of it). The present boom in private art sales can also be reinterpreted in this context. The arrival of the Russians – buying 11% of Impressionist paintings purchased in the latest round of art auctions –

is signalling behaviour that clearly flaunts the Peacock's Tails of the newly minted oligarchs.

In the 21st century art is becoming the ultimate luxury product. Not only does it offer a level of exclusivity that makes a Rolls Royce seem common – there is only one piece of each artwork, after all. But art is the most eco-friendly way to deliver conspicuous consumption: the only oil that is truly eco-friendly is the oil that makes a painting.

So private art sales are booming wherever new success wishes to signal its arrival. It was true of the Medicis and remains true for the Saatchis. And when you find money and creativity connected, as Charles Saatchi has been able to achieve, you'll find that it is not just Nigella Lawson's saucepans that are being stirred.

In Britain, private art sponsorship has expanded alongside private art sales. Look on the walls of the Serpentine Gallery and you can see the names of individuals who never supported art before clever Julia Peyton-Jones gave them an opportunity to signal their success. Arts & Business' survey shows that private arts sponsorship in the UK now amounts to around £250 million a year. But why is corporate arts sponsorship *only* at half that level? 'Only' is a harsh word because thirty years ago it was almost zero and Arts & Business (and its predecessor ABSA) has achieved a lot. But it has had to work in the context of arts sponsorship just being seen as philanthropy rather than being seen as a legitimate – and necessary – signalling for a successful business.

The conscious minds of too many business leaders have been infected by the meme that 'corporate art sponsorship is corporate theft'. This is where the new meme of the Peacock's Tail and the Reputation Reflex can arrive to show how, if a business is truly successful then – as with a person who is truly successful – art is the most effective way to signal that success.

But, and it is a big but, the business must be truly successful. For what makes the signalling powerful is the recognition by the receiver of the signal that, for example, the Orange prize for women's fiction does not seem likely to sell any mobile phones. This is why I said earlier that we should be celebrating the fact that a less successful business does not support the arts, for it keeps the signalling potent for those who can truly afford it. Rather like a judo throw where you use the strength of your opponent to defeat him, so it is precisely the weakness of art that is its signalling strength, and it is a weakness that only the truly strong can afford to deploy.

The happy fact is that there are many more successful businesses today than there are sponsors in the arts. Now business leaders can see for themselves, with the concept of the Peacock's Tail and the Reputation Reflex, the nature of the signalling system that lies within arts sponsorship, they will no longer need to deny themselves – and their shareholders – the reputational benefits that automatically follow from it. This is perhaps the most exciting discovery of this scientific journey: the *automaticity* of our response to what I have described as competitive altruism. We cannot help thinking better of the person bidding with conspicuous generosity at a charity auction even though our conscious mind is whispering in our ear that the bidder is just trying to impress us. This is as true at the corporate level involving art sponsorship as it is at the individual level at a charity auction. Conspicuous *donation* signals reputation even more powerfully than the conspicuous *consumption,* invented at the beginning of the century by Thorstein Veblen.

What is true at the corporate level is also true at the national level. Our brain is wired up to think more of Gateshead because it has apparently chosen to 'waste' money on a piece of sculpture – The Angel of the North – than build a new school. Wherever new art is constructed,

from Bilbao to Salford to Southwark we see the signalling of reputation that is unleashed.

Hopefully, it will now be clear that the instrumental case for art that I began examining is one that is located in the conscious mind. And that the intrinsic case, even though it clearly exists in the cognitive mind, derives its strength from the unconscious genetic mind. This is the *'useful usefulness'* that is the essence of the scientific case for the arts and its sponsorship that I have been describing.

There can be no better time for this case to be revealed than when support for arts is being siphoned off to support another Good Cause, the 2012 London Olympics. The mechanism of the Peacock's Tail and the Reputation Reflex explains how a nation that wants to signal its success – and Britain can surely afford to – as well as a business that wants to signal its success can use art and its sponsorship to do so more effectively than almost anything else.

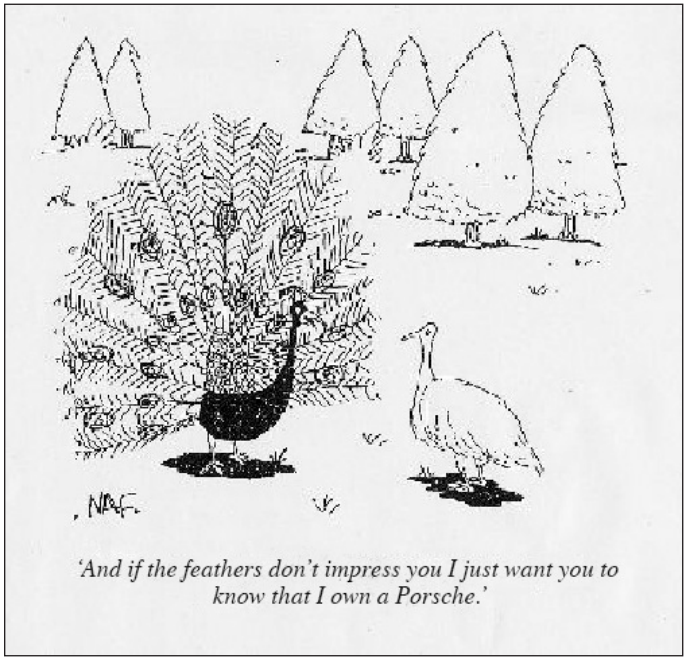
The fact that a biological drive to find a higher quality mate is underpinning this cultural process is not to diminish the worthwhile endeavours that arise from it. I think art is no more reduced in its perceived value by understanding the process that drives it at the biological level than the appetite for food is destroyed by understanding the science of the digestive system.

Let us celebrate that our humanity contains two strands that make us magic. A cognitive mind that shapes our culture and a genetic mind that ensures our survival.

It is this latter mind that has been trained by the slow process of evolution to recognise that 'waste of resource,' sometimes evidenced by art and its sponsorship, is the best way to signal reputation.

So art does not need to be supported as just an instrument of social policy. It can be liberated by this analysis since government, as well as

business, can recognise that what was just felt as an instinct by the enlightened now has the support of science behind it. That allowing art to just be its wonderfully useless self is in fact not only the best way for us to be human – but also to show how *successful* we are at being human.



With grateful thanks to The Spectator.

AFTERWORDS

Stephen Fry

When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my gun, Hermann Göring.

"All art is quite useless," declared Oscar Wilde. This might surprise those who would expect the great high priest of aestheticism to have made far grander claims for the arts than that. Functionalist, utilitarian, social, political, 'spiritual' and high doctrinal claims for a fully capitalised (in both senses) Art are frequently made by the cultural czars and arts panjandrums whose unhappy lot it is to compete with hospitals, primary schools and prisons in those regular scrambles for funding called Spending Rounds. Who can blame them? Politicians are not going to listen to metaphysical definitions, ideological propaganda or ontological disquisitions about the nature of Art, Culture and Society, but they might just lend an ear to an argument that invokes Use, Pragmatism and Profit (they *might,* but frankly they're not idiots and they know a pup when they're sold one). Thus they are told that Art does for the spirit of the nation what aerobic exercise does for the pulmonary system of the individual. Art de-stresses, but it does more than that; art, in some unspecified way, 'enriches', 'enhances' and 'empowers'. Art makes coherent and authentic the wider social structures of the culture, art offers a 'radical outside'; art liberates, art activates, art questions, art deconstructs, art critiques, art destroys, art creates, art degrades, art ennobles, art offers hope, art energises and art gives colour. As trees to the physical environment, so are the arts to the cultural – sucking in the stale carbon dioxide of dullness and cliché and breathing out the oxygen of the new. Fear of elitism might often lead the arts apologist to suggest that art democratises, art connects, art opens up. Is Britain broken? Art *heals.* Besides, we don't really use the word Art any more, certainly not as in High Art. Media. Fun stuff. Video gaming, hip-hop, ringtones and easily digestible slices of

anything that makes you feel good and doesn't put you off and doesn't make you think and doesn't involve foreign words or long words or, ideally, any words at all.

Perhaps Art fails to 'make its case' because it falls into the Bad Liars Trap, that of giving too many reasons: "sir, I didn't do the essay because my aunt died and I had to go to her funeral, and the dog ate it and I was ill …","sir, the arts are important because they're a beacon of excellence and standards, and they're a profitable service industry and they're democratising and inclusive and diverse, blah-di-blah-di-bloody-blah". Nothing, I should imagine, would be more irritating to a potential patron, finance minister, councillor or CEO than the whining, the self-justification, the cajoling, the mock hysterics, the contradictions, pleonasms and false syllogisms of those who plead the cause of Art.

Let's be honest here (if artists can't be honest they're no better than snake oil salesmen, astrologers or conmen, in fact if artists can't be honest, they aren't artists, *tout court,* so let it be with those who presume to discuss the subject) art is often difficult, ornery, cussed, fractious, contradictory and disobliging. It gracelessly bites the hand that feeds it more often than it obediently gets up on its hind legs and performs as asked (and paid) to do. Art is often angry, salacious, unhealthy, bloody-minded, mysterious, obfuscatory, ludicrously complex or even more ludicrously simplistic. It rarely asks to be liked or understood. It enrages or (let's continue to be honest) it fails even to enrage but simply leaves indifferent the masses who so often pay for it. Make any argument you like but let's not pretend art is approach-able, round-cornered, child-friendly, flame-retardant, wipe-clean and hygienic. Art is not necessarily interested in furthering the ambitions of those who wish to improve cultural integration, diversity, plurality, education or social justice (it might be, but it reserves the right entirely not to give a stuff about anything but itself). Art can be elitist,

anarchically demotic, intellectual, naif, cheap, expensive, big, small, noisy, silent … you name it. Art, in short, is precisely as full of internal contradictions, maddening inconsistencies and bewildering problems as the species and habitat from which it derives.

Let's not pretend. That's all. Let's not kid ourselves or hope to kid others that art is useful, or manageable. It is, as Oscar said, quite useless. From that honest beginning, we can proceed, perhaps to a new dispensation *vis-à-vis* art, the state, commerce, science, the universities and public policy.

Perhaps it's time to redefine terms and remove the smell of Arts Council meeting rooms and the old cultural nostrums. Time at least, to revisit the territory and look with open eyes. Robin Wight knows more about the collisions of art, culture, commerce and government than just about anyone. This does not stop him from reappraising and re-imagining. We should pay attention to people like him, people who are unafraid to think.

When I hear the word 'gun' I reach for my culture, Alan Bennett.

Stephen Fry

Helena Kennedy

Spending an hour with Robin Wight is like a ride on the fairground waltzers. The ideas come thick and fast and just when you think you can puncture one of his bolder propositions, he has whirled you at speed around another bend. He is himself a glorious peacock and his mental agility has brought him considerable success, not least with women. His recognition that self display has a purpose is at the heart of his argument. He believes we should be upfront and open about why businesses and individuals should swagger their success by displays of giving.

I am not sure where successful peahens fit in to Robin Wight's genetic and neurological theory of philanthropy. If the males of the species developed their creativity, performance skills and even their displays of altruism to impress females, are women as protectors of the home genetically destined to hold their acquisitions tightly in their clutch?

I had always thought that women figured less in the giving-stakes simply because they had less power and fewer disposable assets, rather than that they were less inclined to show-off. Few of the great patrons of the arts were women but then women have rarely been given the opportunity to head companies or manage large family fortunes. Yet, while the menfolk had their names on grand public buildings or attached to great artistic events, it was often their women who steered the direction of family benefaction and encouraged support for arts and charitable ventures.

In contemporary 'giving', women are increasingly major donors. It could be argued that the arrival of more women in positions of power in the public realm and in the business world has been the stimulus for a growth in corporate social conscience and a willingness to support community and cultural programmes. Perhaps the feminisation of the

workforce is introducing new imperatives. I throw that provocation into this debate because increased gender equality has undoubtedly had its effect. Modern marriages recognise family fortunes as a product of a joint endeavour, even when only one party spends the day in the office. So we have wives like Melissa Gates playing a very public role in the disposal of the family largesse. We also have philanthropists like Sigrid and Lisbet Rausing, who use their personal wealth to huge public benefit with little call for attention. One of the most generous patrons of the arts in Britain is Dame Vivien Duffield and Dame Anita Roddick was a pioneer in the art of giving. So there is increasing peahen activity too!

Robin Wight's clear message is that giving money away to good purpose is the best way of signalling just how successful you are. That is certainly true – for men and women as individuals and for businesses. That truth has brought large sums of money into the arts for many years, often with the help of Arts & Business, which brokers partnerships between cultural organisations and entrepreneurs. However, the arts need more financial support. They need constant nurturance.

But giving is not just about displaying our peacock's tail. Once individuals or companies get into the habit of giving money away, they start to enjoy it. It feels good. Becoming involved in sponsorship relationships with a theatre group or an orchestra or a museum is not just good for your reputation, it is hugely fulfilling and it is fun.

Taking a first dive into these waters is always the hardest challenge. That is why Arts & Business helps make the introductions and finds ways in which you or your business can get involved. If there is one thing arts organisations need as well as money it is know-how about finance, marketing and advertising. They need people with skill on their boards. The exchange of creativity between the parties can be electric and the benefits are felt by everyone.I have no doubt that

Robin Wight's thesis will entertain us wildly and stimulate debate. I hope it also encourages everyone to get out their and strut their stuff with a rich flurry of corporate sponsorship and personal patronage of the arts.

Baroness Helena Kennedy QC

Chris Smith

For some years now there has been a rather sterile debate going on within the world of the arts, between the so-called 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' arguments for the value of the arts and culture. This has always been a false dichotomy, and always will be, and I groan inwardly whenever I come across its advocates, on either side. The arts bring beauty, loveliness, thought, idealism, joy, sorrow, laughter, anger, realisation, emotion, humanity, passion, nonsense, and myth into our lives. They move us, they trouble us, they enlighten us, they change us. And that *of course* ought to be enough of an argument for value. What higher value could we possibly place on an element of human life and activity?

It just so happens, however, that in addition to all of that – being of immeasurable value of and for themselves – the arts also turn out to be rather wonderful at helping children and young people to develop their educational potential, and at assisting a process of social cohesion in troubled communities, and at providing aspirational opportunity for those who are disadvantaged, and at being the seed-bed of creativity from which powerful economic activity in a wide range of 'creative industries' can spring. I don't see any of this as in any way diminishing the argument for the value of the essence of art. I see it not as supplanting, but as enhancing and complementing it.

And of course when I was Secretary of State I didn't go round knocking on the Treasury's door asking for investment in the arts in terms of what it would do for beauty and truth. I wish Finance Ministries around the world worked like that, but they don't, anywhere. I made the instrumental case, because that's what would be most effective, and secured major increases as a result. And that enabled investment in the essence. A case of mutual benefit, I believe.

Where Robin Wight's *Peacock's Tail* thesis rather brilliantly takes us is into a place way beyond this false antagonism of essence and instrumentalism. He takes pride in the wonder and extravagance of art, and identifies the celebratory, look-at-me nature of donation in the arts, and calls on us to recognise (and foster) this impulse for the future. Yes, art enshrining humanity; yes, art helping social purpose; but yes, too, art as celebration of wonder and superfluity. I don't buy this argument for everyone and everywhere. But it's an exciting insight into the motives for some arts sponsors and some artistic creators. There will always be those who wish to invest in education and outreach programmes, in essential core costs and activities, in helping to tackle disadvantage, and in the public purposes of art. And rightly so. But there will certainly be others for whom the impulse falls more into the celebratory category. Think of the outstanding generosity of the Man Group in sponsoring the Man Booker Prize, for example, including even the perpetuation of the name of a previous sponsor. Think of the Unilever series of stunning grand installations in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern. Think of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's donation, very recently, to the Royal Opera House. They would all, I suspect, understand what Robin Wight is on about.

Corporate donation to the arts has moved through cycles in recent years. At one time donations may well have arisen because of a particular passion within the Chairman of the company's family, or perhaps from a casual conversation over dinner. In more recent years the drive for Corporate Social Responsibility has replaced the intimate with the worthy approach to donation. Now Robin takes us further on, and enables us to trumpet the celebratory approach. It won't knock all the others out of consideration, but it puts a new thought, a new set of motives, a new understanding, on the table. We can't and shouldn't ignore it.

Chris Smith (Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury)

Deyan Sudjic

There is a compelling elegance to the argument that we are the product of decisions taken for us by our genes, especially when those decisions lead us in counter intuitive directions: that the apparently useless in fact has a higher level of utility.

Compelling, but in fact also somewhat disturbing. Few of us have more than the haziest idea where to find our genes, and even the most coolly rational of us, don't really care for the idea that we are driven by something that we can't control, but which is inside us. Ok so we may have an inkling that there is still a bit of an opening to give us at least some vestigial sense of a lingering flash of free will.

And of course, if there isn't, then is there any future in the dazzling insights of the *Peacock's Tail*? Because the genetic imperative seems to leave no room for choice. And while we are at it, I am not entirely clear that I follow the seamless translation from the gene pool to organisations, which do not necessarily sink or swim through a process of natural selection.

But I am very interested in the idea of the useless, and why we value it so much more than useful, especially in the context of the Design Museum. Art is useless, and as Thorstein Veblen, the American economist, tells us there are good reasons to value it because of that.

Perhaps I have this entirely wrong, but it seems to me that in Robin Wight's dizzying, and elegant exposition of the essential utility of the apparently useless, we have what is in itself an outstanding example of a peacock's tail. What possible use is neuroscience, the theory of the leisure class and the selfish gene, in persuading anybody to invest in sponsoring the arts? Dimly, I suppose a corner of my mind reminds me the Selfish Gene still leaves a crack of light open to the possibility of a bit of vestigial free will. But assuming that you can apply the principals

of genetic selection to bureaucratic organisations rather than living species, it's mostly a done deal. Like the Calvinists and their belief in predestination, the genetically successful are hard at work on burnishing their tails to attract mates/new business. And the doomed are not. So how is reading Wight going to change anything?

Well, it just might if we understand the baroque decorative detail of the argument as an elaborate lure, a form of fly fishing for fastidious sponsors who are prepared to be dazzled, entertained and enthralled by the display. By the time they get to the nub of the argument, that there is such a thing as enlightened self interest, they are only too delighted to get their cheque books out, safe in the knowledge that it is genetic imperative that is driving them, rather than egotism. And also that they are in the hands of a master of the art of intelligent argument.

In the context of the Design Museum I've been thinking quite a lot recently about the way that even the most materialistic of us value the apparently useless about the useful. A pair of Manolo Blahnik needle thin heels are not useful, except as part of a courtship display but they command a far higher price than a pair of plimsolls. A Ferrari is useless as a practical means of urban transport, but it costs 15 times as much as a more sensible vehicle.

And money can have the curious effect of making once useful things unusable. Thomas Chippendale's bookcase made for the Marquis of Dumfries in 1754 was valued at £4 million when it came to the market earlier this year, rather more than the Adam House, and the 2000 acres that went with it. For that kind of money, it's unlikely that anybody is going to use it to keep their CDs and collection of paperbacks.

We value art, with its essential uselessness, above design, which in theory at least is about dealing with practical problems. A Mondrian painting that represents no less intense a realisation of the essence of

De Stijl than Gerrit Rietveld's red blue chair commands 20 times more at auction. One is a painting, and useless. The other is a chair, albeit one whose demanding disdain for comfort does not make it as useful as all that. The problem here is that because we value uselessness more highly that utility, the entire world is going to end up claiming to be involved in art. There is already the curious phenomenon of the limited edition design, and the concept of the artist's proof as applied to a sofa. Ex-display model might sum it up better.

But this is to suppose that utility is concerned only with the ostensible purpose, the alibi as it were. And of course design is about a lot more than that. It has its emotional aspects, and its ability to engage and entertain, to embody memory and identity.

The Design Museum is a privately funded charitable trust, and our future depends on a constructive relationship with many trusts, benefactors and sponsors, all of whom see that an association with us is, in all the definitions of the word, useful. The museum is useful because it has the ability to stand outside the world of selling people things, and look at what it is about life and creativity that can excite and engage people, to allow them to look at the world in a different way.

When we work with Coutts & Co, who are the sponsors for our exhibition on the fashion designer Matthew Williamson, they are looking for a way to show their potential female clients that they understand what interests and excites them about fashion. When we staged a retrospective on the amazing Italian designer Ettore Sottsass at the museum, we were sponsored by two very different companies. One was an Austrian lighting business called Zumtobel, which is driven by the passion of its founder for contemporary art and design. He has a love for Sottsass's work that goes far beyond the fact that his company makes Sottsass's designs. It is not a superficial sales aid, it is an enthusiasm that runs deep throughout the company. Design is what the company is about,

and that is why they support it. The other, Bonar Floors, is British. It had started recently to work with Ettore Sottsass, and it understood that if it was going to talk to a new audience about itself, and to show its own workforce where the company was going, there would be something very useful to it to get involved in this way. And the fact that it was working with Sottsass too, made it a natural choice for them to support.

For Deutsche Bank who have supported our outreach programmes, especially with schools, over the years, their work with us is a form of corporate responsibility that is central to their ethos. They are committed to making a contribution to giving young people a sense of the chances that they have in taking their futures in their own hands.

Together with all our supporters, we are working on that peacock's tail. It's what delights our audiences and which, in the end, sustains all of us.

Deyan Sudjic

Raymond Tallis

Robin Wight's beautiful essay, with its highly original synthesis of some widely received ideas, leaves me in an interesting position. I agree strongly with one of his conclusions: that art should not be viewed instrumentally. (Though perhaps he re-instrumentalises 'useless' art and 'useless' business arts sponsorship by comparing it to the peacock's tail that serves as a signal of respectively individual prowess and corporate heath. He sees arts sponsorship not as philanthropy but "as a legitimate – and necessary – signalling for a successful business") Nor do I have a problem with his other conclusion that art should be sponsored by business. And yet I disagree with pretty well everything that leads him to these conclusions.

Because the differences between us run so deep, let me begin with our point of most wholehearted agreement: that art should not be subordinated to external purposes such as promoting social inclusion and social cohesion, stimulating the economy, propaganda, or whatever. Art should, indeed, be for art's sake[1]. What that sake is, and how it differs from the sake of other things we do for their own sake (sunbathing, watching football on television), is quite difficult to pinpoint. This is especially true now, when the notion of art has been extended to encompass all sorts of objects and activities not previously regarded as art; and when many have questioned the special value of high art, as opposed to popular culture. If, however, I had to characterise the distinctive contribution of art to our lives, it would be something along the following lines: art presents us with special experiences, and awakens special emotions, sought for their own sake. Since, other things, such as drugs, do this as well, something else is needed to capture what is special about art. Unlike drugs, art connects and clarifies experiences, enabling us to rise above the contingencies of everyday life without, however, losing touch with them.

We are engaged without being immersed; disengaged without being abstracted. We are elevated on a tor above our own consciousness. Art achieves this in part through *form*[2]. It helps us to experience those experiences we seek out for their own sake, and to link the great facts that enclose us with the small facts that detain us, and places human consciousness in italics. Since consciousness is useless (a point of dissent from Wight), art, too, is useless[3].

Most of the differences between us arise from the theoretical framework which Wight invokes to support his conclusions. We are both Darwinians: neither of us doubts that human beings evolved as did any other species or believes that we were created by special dispensation. Wight, however, has a pathological form of Darwinism – *Darwinosis:* he seems to believe that all human activities, including those seemingly remote from animal behaviour, such as the creation of art, and even sponsorship of the arts, can be understood in Darwinian terms. He connects them with structures such as the peacock's tail and behaviours such as the altruism in of Arabian babblers, which at first seem to be liabilities, make evolutionary sense: they are 'an ostentatious advertisement of superiority', propaganda on behalf of the organism – 'See how much stronger and fitter I am, since I have such spare capacity!' – and hence its genes. The creation and sponsorship of art have, Wight believes, the same origin.

He admits that this is not the whole story. Culture is not inherited through the genes but acquired by learning from other human beings. Behaviour is shaped through transmissible units of culture: 'memes'. The 'meme' is a slippery notion. Its purpose is to 'Darwinise' culture; to acknowledge that human life is not genetically prescribed, that cultural evolution is more important for us than gene-mediated evolution, while at the same time enclosing all human life in the Darwinian framework of self-replication and competition. It is (as one might expect)

profoundly (and for Darwinotics usefully) ambiguous, For some, 'meme' includes things consciously, and sometimes effortfully, learned, and, for others, (such as Susan Blackmore) memes transmit themselves from mind to mind like a virus and minds themselves are 'meme machines'. Wight sees the ancient 'genetic' mind, located in subcortical structures, a nexus of unconscious reflexes, as 'the powerhouse of creativity' and identifies a conflict between its 'lower' genetic processes and the 'higher' memetic processes of our cognitive minds. This is where the battle over 'useless' art sponsorship is fought.

He invokes neuro-imaging in support of this model. As one who has spent most of his medical career in clinical science, and used functional neuro-imaging in research, I am deeply unhappy by the gross over-interpretation of the messy, patchy, fragmented data we have so far. For some, the discovery that the areas of the brain that light up when we suffer physical pain are the same as those which light up when we suffer the pain of social rejection is evidence of the fundamental similarity between these two kinds of experience[4]. For me, it is a demonstration of how little neuro-imaging is able to capture of ordinary human life (For the limitations of neuro-imaging, I recommend an essay by Richard Frackowiak, one of the pioneers of Positron Emission Tomography[5]).

Wight emphasises the unconscious influences on our behaviour, in his discussion of 'The Reputation Reflex' in tail-proud peacocks, altruistic Arabian babbler birds, in artists in and corporate sponsors of the arts. This Reflex is a biological response 'not just to a piece of art but to a piece of anything which the brain interprets as signalling the reputation (in terms of biological fitness) of the transmitter'. It is 'buried within the unconscious amygdala'. He denies that this betrays a 'debased' or reductionist approach to human behaviour but is most certainly is. It by-passes pretty well everything that makes humans, including

or especially in their art-making or art-loving mode, different from beasts; the fact that, above all, we are *explicit* animals. In explaining art sponsorship, he speaks of 'the *automaticity* of our response… to competitive altruism' and beneath it 'the biological drive to find a better quality mate'. The (unconscious) genetic mind has been trained by the slow process of evolution to signal that 'waste of resource' sometimes evidenced by art and its sponsorship is the best way to signal reputation.

Just *how* reductionist his approach is, is evident from the way he thinks about emotions:

Three of four main emotional sites governing our decision making are centred in the 'sub-cortical' area of the brain…this part of the mind is largely working to serve the interests of our genes…the genetic mind still keeps the neo-cortex on a tight leash as for as the decision making process is concerned.

He argues, along with Antonio Damasio, that most emotions are unconscious and they are simply means of energising activity and ensuring rapid responses when they are needed. In fact, in humans they are nothing of the kind. For a start they are self-narrating and self-justifying. Even a low-grade emotion such as anger – leaving aside the 'red mist' that is the alibi of thugs – consists of much muttering to one's self, much imagining of speeches and scenarios. The emotions associated with producing a work of art (for example a symphony that takes many months to compose), with giving one's self up to it (for example, deciding to go to the Bridgewater Hall for one's tenth listening to a Bartok Quartet), and with sponsoring it, will be yet more complex. Not only complex but also intensely conscious. Admittedly Wight gives a significant role to the neo-cortex, and the 'higher' processes of our cognitive minds but he still emphasises the importance of the instantaneous response of the 'genetic mind'. He even refers to the

'creativity gene' that is supposed to explain why we flourished and Neanderthals didn't.

This is all highly paradoxical because he wants to persuade the business community that arts sponsorship is a good thing. If, however, the amygdala, with which arguments cut little ice, had such a big role in sponsorship decisions, then such abstract and rational persuasion, would presumably be either redundant or ineffective. Amygdalas don't hearken to lectures, even beautifully written ones such as Wight's. What is more, business sponsorship of the arts goes beyond an advertisement of rude corporate health. A bank may sponsor an opera because the CEO's wife has a particular fondness for the art; or because he wishes to tell a hypocritical and snobbish world at large that Moneybags Bank is more than about shifting shillings. There is also simple advertisement: sponsorship of anything – arts, sport, and new schools – enables the brand to penetrate more widely in the collective consciousness.

Since Darwinotics look at human behaviour through the wrong end of a telescope, it is scarcely surprising that Wight seems also to fuse four quite different activities: the creation of art; the enjoyment or appreciation of it; purchasing high value works of art; and sponsorship which gives needy artists or art projects a helping hand. And his Darwinosis causes him to overlook the complexity of human behaviour and the fact that it is *explicit* at so many levels (which is precisely why its susceptibility to certain unconscious influences, made much of by psychologists, occasions such surprise). It takes place in a public space constructed by many millions of human consciousnesses over many hundreds of thousands of years. The theatre in which decisions about art sponsorship are made is not the isolated brain but the board room where the Director of PR manages to persuade the Director of Finance that, when all the beans are counted, there are some left over

for investing in something that may not bring immediate rewards or rewards only in heaven. The plan to sponsor arts is not plausibly a genetically programmed, mimetically inflected response.

Neither an individual businessman nor a corporation is comparable to an organism whose responses are wired; nor is that which they are responding to a 'stimulus' in the simple sense. Neither the creation nor the sponsorship of art amounts to a simple signal (of genetic or corporate fitness) itself simply prompted. We are at a great distance from the dark places of the amygdala, the (so-called) creativity gene, the babbling of birds or the Peacock with its (unsponsored) tail. In that distance lies most of what it is to be a human being, the misery of human life which art attempts to redress by mourning so beautifully and the glory which it celebrates.

Raymond Tallis

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3. Raymond Tallis *The Explicit Animal. A Defence of Human Consciousness* (London: Macmillan, 1991)

4. See Chris D. Frith *Making up the Mind: How the Brain Creates Our Mental World* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). p.6

5. Richard Frackowiack Full Reference

Alan Yentob

There couldn't be a more timely moment than right now for Robin Wight to stretch his wings, flutter his Peacock's Tail and remind us all of the power of art, and – of the virtue and value of arts sponsorship.

As the 2012 Olympics loom and the economic boom threatens to lose its sheen, it would be complacent and irresponsible to simply assume that something will turn up. From here, it's relatively easy to look back on a substantial period of success and stability in the arts in Britain – thanks in part to the infusion of cash and capital from the National Lottery Fund.

But I haven't forgotten those drab and dismal days in the late seventies (by which time the creativity and euphoria of the 1960's had long since evaporated) and the outrage expressed in every quarter of Britain at the sight of Carl André's infamous bricks on the floor of our hallowed Tate gallery.

It was a response fuelled by ignorance, provoked by a philistine press and a pandering media, but sad to say it was a point of view sanctified by a timid art establishment, fearful that as a consequence its already modest subsidies might be eroded further still.

It wasn't until the early 1980's with Norman Rosenthal and Charles Saatchi's controversial exhibition The New Spirit Of Painting at the Royal Academy that modern art came out of the closet and some equilibrium was restored.

The Saatchi Gallery in Boundary Road continued to make waves throughout the eighties when a new generation of young British artists the YBA's came to the fore. Some of us called it the Frieze effect. Then of course with the arrival of Tate Modern in 2001 the renaissance for the visual arts in Britain was virtually unstoppable.

Today 30 years on, Andre's notorious Bricks have been happily superseded by Hirst's Shark, Emin's Tent and Gormley's Angel of the North. Right across the length and breadth of the country there's a healthy appetite for arts and music of every kind. The rehab is complete.

What's more, over the last few years the arts have not only flourished within the walls of the great arts institutions, but outside those walls as well… literally in the case of the brilliant children's charity Kids Company which I'm privileged to chair.

In 2004 with the support of Tate Modern we built an annexe outside the gallery to house the work of hundreds of children who had collaborated with artists to depict their own fragile and sometimes shattered lives. The exhibition affected people in ways that were powerful and unexpected.

At first glance the field of art education and art therapy fits less easily into the realm of the Peacocks Tail. It's less safe, less glamorous and tends to contradict the proposition of art simply for arts sake.

But to me it's evidence of a greater truth that the arts have an enduring, life enhancing role and they really can make a difference to the quality of all our lives.

As one visitor to the Shrinking Childhood Exhibition at Tate Modern commented as she left 'This show asserts in the barest and most uncompromising terms, one of Art's essential purposes. Its ability clearly and powerfully, to communicate truths about life, and make us see the world around us in a new way'.

Alan Yentob

CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Dawkins FRS

Richard Dawkins holds the Charles Simonyi Chair for the Public Understanding of Science at the University of Oxford. He was originally best known for his popularisation of the gene-centered view of evolution first set out in The Selfish Gene (1976) and The Extended Phenotype (1982). Numerous other works extended his influence in criticizing creationism, The Blind Watchmaker (1986) as well as religion with The God Delusion (2006). Selling over a million copies worldwide, this work has made Richard Dawkins the global flag bearer of Atheism. He continues on television and radio to promote science, most recently The Enemies of Reason, on Channel Four.

Richard Dawkins topped Prospect magazine's 2004 list of the top 100 public British intellectuals, as decided by the readers, receiving twice as many votes as the runner up.

In 2006 he began a new foundation, The Richard Dawkins Foundation, for Reason and Science to advance the cause of rationalism and humanism.

Robin Wight CVO

Most of Robin Wight's career has been spent serving the art of advertising – he's currently Chairman of ENGINE and proclaims the virtue of everything from BMW to 118 118 – rather than the art of art. However, from 1997–2005 he was Chairman of Arts & Business and it was this experience that lead to the Peacock's Tail project that is represented by this essay.

His experience in the art of philanthropy includes being Chairman of

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Charter for Business from 1991–2001. And setting up in 2003 the Ideas Foundation, a charity that awards Creativity Scholarships to disadvantaged young people. His Peacock's Tail remains active.

Stephen Fry

Stephen Fry has since the mid 1980's dominated British cultural landscape as a comedian, writer, actor, novelist, filmmaker, television personality and cultural thinker. Though prolific in film, including and portraying Oscar Wilde in the 1997 film Wilde and television-creating the immortal role of a General Melchet in Blackadder, he is equally celebrated as a writer as much as a performer. His most recent (of ten) books The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within has now associated Fry with poetry.

In December 2006 he was ranked 6th for the BBC's Top Living Icon Award and was voted the most intelligent man on television by the reader's of Radio Times. BBC Four Dedicated two nights of programmes to Stephen Fry in Summer 2007 to mark his 50th birthday.

Helena Kennedy QC

Now Baroness (Lady) Kennedy of the Shaws has been Chair of Arts & Business since September 2006. From 1994–2002 she was Chair of the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), and from 1998-2005 Chair of British Council.

She is currently chair of the Human Genetics Commission, and chaired the Power Commission (2005–2006) which examine the problem of Democratic Disengagement in the United Kingdom.

She continues to practice as a QC and her prominent cases include the

Brighton Bombing, and the Guildford Four Appeal. She was voted the 7th Greatest Living Scot in the Sunday Herald.

Chris Smith

Now Baron Smith of Finsbury, Smith has served for twenty years as Member of Parliament, including and serving in Tony Blair's first cabinet as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport from 1997–2001. He was able to not only secure substantial funding increases for the Arts, but also to secure a tax rebate that he gave to many museums to give free admission. He is Director of Core Leadership Programme, a Board Member of the Royal National Theatre and Chairman of the Wordsworth Trust.

Deyan Sudjic OBE

Deyan Sudjic originally trained as an architect at Edinburgh University. His career has been based on a combination of writing, curating and teaching. He is the author of several influential books, including Architecture and Democracy (2001), The 100 Mile City (1993), The Architecture Pack (1996), Cult Objects: The Complete Guide to Having It All (1985), as well as monographs on John Pawson, Ron Arad and Richard Rogers. He has also been responsible for major curatorial projects – he was director of the Glasgow 1999 UK City of Architecture and Design programme, establishing the Lighthouse, Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City, and then in 2002, Director of the Venice Architecture Biennale.

Deyan Sudjic is currently Director of the Design Museum in London. Founded in 1989, the Design Museum is the UK's cultural champion of design and wins international acclaim for exhibitions of modern design history and contemporary design.

Raymond Tallis FRCP FMEDSCI DLITT LITTD

Raymond Tallis has been called Britain's leading polymath. As well as being a leading figure in British Medicine (including holding the position of professor of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Manchester) the books he has written include the trilogy entitled The Hand, I Am: A Philosophical Inquiry into First-Person Being, and The Knowing Animal. He is perhaps best known for his attacks on post-modernism in books such as Not Saussure, Theorrhoea and After and for his attacks upon the assumption of much Artificial Intelligence research in his book Why The Mind Is Not A Computer: The Pocket Dictionary On Neuro-mythology. He has also published volumes of poetry, plays and novels.

Alan Yentob

Alan Yentob is the Creative Director of the BBC. This role includes responsibility for the new Arts Network which will pull together art programme makers from across the BBC. In 1978 he created the mould breaking art series Arena. His most recent programme achievement at the BBC began in Spring 2003 when Alan presented and wrote the landmark documentary on Leonardo Da Vinci and became host of BBC One's successful and acclaimed art strand, Imagine. He is on the board of the South Bank, the International Academy of Television, Arts and Science, and is Chairman of the Institute of Contemporary Art and the charity Kids Company.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The beginning of this project was reading Stephen Pinker's *The Blank Slate* with his insightful chapter on the arts that first raised the question that had never occurred to me until then (despite being Chairman of Arts & Business for a number of years): was there a scientific case for the arts that could sit alongside the 'arts for arts sake' argument and the 'arts for business sake' argument?

The first section of the eventual essay that emerged builds on Pinker's analysis as well as the original insights of Richard Dawkins and Amotz Zahavi.

That first version of this essay, I am ashamed to say, was produced in December 2003 and dispatched to a number of readers to get their input into this thesis.

These included Peter Davis, Rupert Gavin, Hannah Grant, Marek Kohn, Nick Phillipson, John Tusa, Keith Weed, as well as several long-suffering souls at Arts & Business (especially Colin Walker and Andrew McIlory).

Its Chief Executive, Colin Tweedy, has been both diplomatic yet direct in his encouragement and criticism as were all my fellow trustees.

In particular, Vernon Ellis, Chris Gibson-Smith, Kate Mosse and Alan Smith both encouraged and challenged the original arguments that went no further than exploring the arts and arts sponsorship within the concept of evolutionary psychology.

I also recognised that my original intention to embrace the world of marketing as well as the world of the arts within the concept of the Peacock's Tail was too complex for a single essay or lecture.

And so I developed a separate strand of analysis that eventually emerged as the Brainpower concept that my colleagues within the Engine Group as well as several of its clients (and in particular the ever

thoughtful Uwe Ellinghaus of BMW) have patiently listened to.

Not only was my original Peacock's Tail too broad, it had a number of important flaws. To tackle them, it required that I extend my project into cognitive psychology and neuroscience, as you can see from the numerous studies in the bibliography.

The work of Antonio Damasio (grateful thanks for permission to reproduce the charts on page 14 and page 26), Malcolm Gladwell, Geoffrey Miller and Keith Stanovich, (all recognised in the bibliography) were central to the evolution of my argument, along with the tutorials of kindly scientists such as Gemma Calvert, Rita Carter and Lauren Stewart who checked out my writings for scientific accuracy. (Obviously any errors that remain are entirely my responsibility).

A second draft eventually emerged in 2005 and was once more dispatched to a luckless group which this time included Melvin Bragg, Clemency Burton-Hill, Claire Fox, Val Gooding, Simon Jenkins, Paul Judge, Caroline Michel, Nick Prettejohn, David Puttnam, Nicholas Serota, Dennis Stevenson, Claire Enders and Helena Kennedy (my successor at Arts & Business who has been a bold supporter of launching this concept as an Arts & Business Lecture).

The document that had emerged by this stage, though not without merit, was over-written, unclear in some ways and far too long for the lecture that I hoped would give the Peacock's Tail its first flight. Thanks to the kind suggestion of Amanda MacKenzie I discovered the wonderful Rosamond McGuinness. As a former Professor of Music at Royal Holloway, University of London, I daresay she had good experience of cutting rambling student essays down to size. Over two years, her challenge of editing and criticism as well as input to my argument have helped me develop a more coherent and concise articulation of my thesis, leaving much on the cutting-room floor for later development.

Richard Dawkins and Karen Owens also provided kind editing input as did my razor-sharp wife Jane Morgan. All of these inputs led to further revisions and to the point where I felt able to launch the concept, with the generous support of the Engine Group (thanks to the support of my partner Peter Scott) at the British Museum in a lecture on November 6th 2007. Alex Crouch, Jessica Garland and the Arts & Business team have proved patient and efficient in making sure my baby had a safe birth, for which great thanks. Heidi Sanders and Darren McMurtrie of Dave have designed and produced this publication with style and punctilious attention to detail. Finally, Vivien Kay my 'life manager' nurtured me with wise advice all through the process.

But the project doesn't end here at this point. If I'm tempted to make a scientific case for the arts, I must, following the concept of Karl Popper, allow for the process of 'falsifiability' to occur. That is, I must, welcome attempts to challenge my viewpoints as well as prove them. It was with this in mind that I invited the contribution (and am most grateful for their acceptance) of Richard Dawkins, Stephen Fry, Helena Kennedy, Chris Smith, Deyan Sudjic, Raymond Tallis and Alan Yentob to provide their own perspective on the issues I had raised, knowing full well that their views and criticisms would help develop the debate that I was trying to start on the topic of arts sponsorship.

With that in mind a website has been established www.skyarts.co.uk/thepeacockstail (many thanks to SkyArts for all their support on this project) where it is possible to download this particular publication, as well as providing an opportunity for readers to 'blog' their own observations. At the same time I am hoping to develop a project that will attempt to measure the impact of the Reputation Reflex of different forms of art sponsorship, sports sponsorship as well as CSR programmes. This research, using the Implicit Attitude Test developed in Harvard over the last 15 years, will, for the first time, attempt to

measure the impact of these forms of sponsorship on the genetic mind, as opposed to the cognitive mind upon which most research measures are made. The results of this search will clearly cause some modifications to the hypothesis that I have developed. I also hope discussing and debating the role of arts sponsorship in signalling business success will begin to provide further support for a cause that needs all the encouragement it can get.

If this debate should start to bring an extra perspective both to supporting the arts and encouraging arts sponsorship, then the last five years will not have been entirely wasted.

Robin Wight

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