WHAT IS ART?

Marcus Steinweg

Art exists only as an assertion. Every assertion is headless, blind and exaggerated. To assert headlessness itself demands of art a kind of breathless precision. The subject of art is a subject of this self-assertion. It asserts itself as a subject of breathlessness which leads it to the limit of its being as subject.[1] By subject I denote that which is irreducible to its status as object, to its objective reality. The object-status constitutes the subject's portion of reality. A subject is what transcends, transgresses, surpasses this reality since it is something other than an object codified and represented in the realm of facts. The factical codification of the subject can be neither disputed nor made absolute. It is nothing other than a fact. In relation to this fact, the subject asserts itself as a nameless resistance in order at no time to assimilate itself to the authority of facts.

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[1] *À bout de souffle / Breathless* is first of all the title of one of Godard's films. Apart from that, this phrase links at least the two moments of subjectivity and flight. The subject is essentially a breathing subject. Strictly speaking, subjectivity comprises breathlessness. The subject does not breathe only to maintain itself, to survive. Just as flight in the strong sense of the word reactivated by Deleuze, can only be a flight forward, to breathe means to open oneself breathlessly to a future that remains undetermined, contingent. The subject is breathless because it involves itself with the incommensurable which can only be blindly affirmed because it marks the limit of what is knowable. To breathe means already to be out of breath, opened to the indeterminacy which life is. One does not live simply by breathing. The life of a subject begins with the acceleration of breathing beyond the vegetative imperative. Breathlessly, the subject gives itself its future by receiving it as a surprise.