

# SMPLECTY

**Ecological Civilisation and the Will to Art**



**SAMUEL ALEXANDER**

**Essays on the Aesthetics of Existence**

*Rescuing Aestheticism from the Dandies: Critical Distinctions*

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\* This is a provisional Table of Contents. The essays are being published individually as they are completed, meaning that this project is a work-in-progress which may evolve.

‘All art is quite useless.’

– *Oscar Wilde*

# *Rescuing Aestheticism from the Dandies: Critical Distinctions*

Samuel Alexander

The term ‘aestheticism’, which I am embracing, has acquired a bad name today, employed primarily as a pejorative. It is often directed towards people or movements associated with ‘Dandyism’ – to be defined below. If I am to succeed in reclaiming this dubious term and make aestheticism a plausible centrepiece of a political cosmology, then further attention must be given to how this term acquired its contemporary meaning, what that meaning is, and how I intend to employ it quite differently. Taking form in the hazy space between life and art, my aesthetic position lies in sharp contrast to Dandyism, which raises similar questions about the unstable distinction between life and art, only to offer very different responses. The following critical examination need not entail a comprehensive review of the territory. Rather, I will only aim to clarify the nature of my own undertaking by way of contrast.

Dandyism is associated most prominently with literary figures like Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire, Beau Brummell, and Joris-Karl Huysmans. Pioneering theoretical work on the underlying aestheticism was undertaken by sympathetic critics like Barbey d’Aurevilly and Walter Pater.<sup>1</sup> These great writers deserve credit for actively and deliberately blurring the distinction between art and life – an aspiration which I share – but the dandies embodied and theorised the aesthetic perspective in ways that I contend were often regrettably superficial, taking aestheticism in many wrong directions, sometimes dangerously so. We should hesitate, however, to reject the task of interpreting life through an aesthetic lens just because some pioneering aesthetes offered a flawed original attempt. Dandyism is a form of aestheticism, albeit a crude one, but aestheticism is far from exhausted by Dandyism. By clarifying this distinction in what follows, I seek to advance the cause of rehabilitating aestheticism in helpful and important ways.

## ***What is a dandy?***

The dandy is an eccentric, often one of aristocratic lineage, who is pre-eminently concerned with making a striking social impression, first and foremost through carefully crafted and flamboyant attire. It is said that dandies would sometimes spend four hours getting ready – beautifying themselves – for a twenty-minute excursion out in public. Being noticed, and noticed in the right way, is of the highest importance. The dandy enters a social gathering with the intention of doing or saying something memorable, witty, or provocative, then promptly departs with the goal of maintaining intrigue and keeping society wanting more. Life, according to the dandy, is always performative, and pleasure, beauty in appearance, and social admiration, are held up as the highest values and goals. Consciously or unconsciously, a strong element of narcissism and self-absorption defines the lifestyle of a dandy.

Legend has it that the nineteenth-century poet Gerard de Nerval would walk a lobster through the Palais Royal Gardens of Paris, using a blue silk ribbon as a leash. Similarly, Walter

Benjamin would report that it was fashionable for *flâneurs* (i.e., urban wanderers) to walk through the arcades of nineteenth-century Paris with a turtle on a leash.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not these stories are apocryphal, they are indicative of the type of conduct a dandy would embrace in order to attract sufficient attention to himself – and historically the dandy was always a male character. He was also usually one of sufficient wealth and class to maintain a life of leisure and high fashion (even though some dandies, such as Baudelaire, knew poverty very well). From the dandy's perspective, who one 'is' is little more or less than how one is 'perceived' by others, and since social impressions could be crafted and designed to form a stylistic whole, life itself was seen as a form of art, with an intended audience. It was important to be talked about and to maintain the right appearances in society, suggesting life was to be treated as an aesthetic performance, albeit in rather cosmetic and affected ways.

### ***The Picture of Dorian Gray***

I will now delve a little deeper into the ethos and practice of Dandyism, to provide sufficient contrast to the form of aestheticism I will be defending. To do this I will briefly consider how the aestheticised life of the dandy is represented in one of its leading texts, namely, Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).<sup>3</sup> This book is both illustrative of the defining philosophy while also conveying a cautionary note.

The protagonist, Dorian Gray, begins as an innocent, moralistic, and naive young man, one naturally gifted with extraordinary beauty. He is having his portrait painted by one Basil Hallward, who believes the picture to be his finest work, somehow capturing the spectacular aura of this handsome, young Adonis who was 'made to be worshipped'.<sup>4</sup> Into the studio walks Lord Henry Wotton, who, lighting a heavily opium-tainted cigarette, is to be the mouthpiece of Dandyism in the book and soon to have a profound influence on the posing model.

The plot that structures the book is relatively straightforward. Lord Henry easily convinces the impressionable Dorian that the life and values of a dandy are to be pursued to the fullest, a vocation particularly suited to Dorian given his magnificent beauty and youth. 'We are punished for our refusals,' advises Lord Henry. 'Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us... The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.'<sup>5</sup> Thus begins Dorian's unrestrained life as a libertine dandy, where any pretensions of propriety and decency take backstage to the amoral exploration of sensuous experience in all its richness, whatever the consequences.

But as Basil reasons: 'Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed... [showing] itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the moulding of his hands...'<sup>6</sup> Reflecting on this reality, Dorian begins to envy the pure and youthful image of himself in the painting, which he knew would never age. Wanting to live the hedonistic life of sin and debauchery while also maintaining his youthful vitality, Dorian makes a passionate plea: 'If only it were the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old!... I would give my soul for that!'<sup>7</sup> Little did he know that this wish was to come true – signifying the plot's central twist. As Dorian's life experiences unfold over the course of the novel, the picture would come to change in hideous and frightful ways, reflecting the degeneration of Dorian's soul, while the real Dorian would maintain his youth and beauty,

no matter the immorality of his licentious and decadent behaviour. And so, the central theme of *Dorian Gray* emerges: a man exchanges his soul for eternal youth – but at what cost?

Dorian soon falls in love with an actress called Sibyl Vane. They are to marry. It becomes clear, however, that he is in love with the actress, *as an actress*, rather than the young woman herself. ‘Tonight she is Imogen...’ he tells Lord Henry, ‘and tomorrow night she will be Juliet.’<sup>8</sup> When Sibyl remains in the sphere of art, Dorian finds her exciting and interesting. But one night, after a very ordinary performance on stage, Sibyl confesses to Dorian that she cannot be a great actress anymore now that she has known real love. Dorian’s heartless response reflects the cruelty of the dandy’s aesthetic code: ‘Without your art you are nothing... A third-rate actress with a pretty face.’<sup>9</sup> That evening the heart-broken actress commits suicide, and later that night Dorian notices the first changes in his portrait, a cruel curling of the lips that had not been there the day before. Shocked by these bestial differences in expression, he decides to lock the portrait in the attic where the degeneration of his soul would be safe from prying eyes. This allows Dorian to keep on with the business of life, ‘hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them.’<sup>10</sup>

How might a dandy respond to the tragic death of his fiancé? When discussing the suicide with Lord Henry, Dorian exclaims: ‘How extraordinarily dramatic life is! If I had read all this in a book, Harry, I think I would have wept over it. Somehow, now that it has happened actually, and to me, it seems far too wonderful for tears.’<sup>11</sup> Lord Henry offers a similarly callous interpretation of the situation, offering consolation to Dorian by saying ‘The girl never really lived, and so she never really died.... Mourn for Ophelia, if you like. Put your ashes on your head because Cordelia was strangled... But don’t waste your tears over Sibyl Vane. She was less real than they are.’<sup>12</sup>

One evening Basil visits Dorian and asks to see the portrait. With some hesitation Dorian eventually agrees, and the two men enter the attic and the painting is unveiled. We are informed by the narrator that ‘[a]n exclamation of horror broke from the painter’s lips as he saw in the dim light the hideous face on the canvas grinning at him. There was something in the expression that filled him with disgust and loathing.’<sup>13</sup> It seemed to the painter that ‘the leprosy of sin were slowly eating [the painting] away. The rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful.’<sup>14</sup>

After Dorian confesses to having received the painting’s eternal youthfulness in exchange for his soul, Basil lambasts his friend for the life he must be leading. Dorian takes exception to such moralising and he is overcome with an uncontrollable feeling of hatred toward Basil. Dorian notices a knife glimmering nearby and without ceremony or delay he stabs his friend behind the ear, ‘crushing the man’s head down on the table, and stabbing again and again.’<sup>15</sup> At a social gathering not twenty-four hours after committing this ghastly murder, we are told that Dorian ‘felt keenly the terrible pleasure of a double life.’<sup>16</sup> Dorian soon blackmails an associate to get rid of the body, and the mystery of Basil’s demise is never resolved, even as the act comes to haunt the murderous dandy.

Over time, Dorian ‘grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.’<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, he still found the painting

disturbing. Given that it represented his own conscience, why hadn't he already destroyed it? He resolved to do so at once, returning to the locked room where the portrait was hidden away. Lifting the same knife which murdered his friend, Dorian thrust the weapon toward the painting. A scream was heard, so horrible in its agony that the servants woke. Eventually Dorian's dead body is discovered, withered and wrinkled, lying in a pool of his own blood before the unblemished painting, which had returned to its original state of youthfulness and beauty.



Even from this brief review, there are several features of Dandyism that must be distinguished from the form of aestheticism I wish to defend; features that I should clarify so that my own project can avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. One can sympathise with Wilde's statement that 'Life itself was the first, the greatest, of the arts, and for it all the other arts seemed to be but a preparation.'<sup>18</sup> But a critical reading of *Dorian Grey* shows how questionable this philosophy of life can become in the hands of an amoral, hedonistic dandy. Examining the flaws and missteps should prove instructive.

First of all, if aestheticism is to be taken seriously, the dandy's all-embracing concern with fashion, cosmetic appearance, and social perception must be rejected. There is something rather facile about defining a well-lived life according to how elegantly one's scarf matches one's shoes or top hat; or by how many types of exotic flowers or antiques are purchased for interior decorating. 'When one loses one's good looks,' remarks Dorian, 'one loses everything.... When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself.'<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this first point of critique is merely destroying a caricature of Dandyism that few people would ever take seriously, but given its prominence, this feature deserves cursory attention.

The history of our species may well be richer for having colourful characters like Oscar Wilde. His main orientation toward life was to *become* a work of art, not merely *produce* art. But the idea of Dandyism becoming a broad cultural influence that reaches beyond a small circle of self-centred aesthetes is a terrifying prospect. Perhaps the self-absorption of social media personalities today suggests that a performative and highly choreographed Dandyism has actually made significant inroads into the cultural logic of late capitalism. This is not, however, a puritanical critique that categorically rejects the values of pleasure, beauty, or performance. It is simply to acknowledge that the dandy's materialistic hedonism is evidence only of a shallow and extravagant excess which the world could clearly do without. This critique weighs particularly heavily in an age of ecological decline and where poverty exists amidst such plenty.

There is, to be sure, nothing necessarily illegitimate or unethical about a concern over outward style. Nevertheless, the dandy's craving for social attention is crudely, even embarrassingly, self-indulgent and narcissistic. Surely there is a substance to one's character that ought to matter more than merely how one's outfit and social engagements are perceived by others. If these aspects of the traditional conception of aestheticism are not overcome, all hope for redeeming the term is lost. Fortunately, on this point at least, there should be few objections.

My second point of critique – related to the first – is that Dandyism’s ‘cult of beauty’ ought to be treated with caution purely on ethical grounds. Lord Henry proudly admitted to choosing his friends ‘because of their good looks’<sup>20</sup> and insisted that Dorian was ‘too charming’<sup>21</sup> get involved in any philanthropic endeavours. When asked to elaborate on his reasons for rejecting philanthropy, Lord Henry said that he would not do so because the subject was too ‘tedious’.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, he would declare: ‘I like persons better than principles, and I like persons with no principles better than anything else in the world,’<sup>23</sup> claiming unashamedly that ‘[s]in is the only real colour-element left in modern life.’<sup>24</sup> For this type of amoral aesthete, why give money to the poor when one could purchase a splendid new hat?

If human beings only have a limited amount of attention to direct in life, it follows that the more an individual is concerned with cosmetics and appearance, the less attention one can give to matters of genuine personal, social, or political concern. ‘I can sympathise with everything, except suffering,’ admits Lord Henry. ‘It is too ugly, too horrible, too distressing.... The less said about life’s sores the better.’<sup>25</sup> This is doubtless an easier philosophy of life to embrace when one is born into the nobility. ‘One’s own life –’ Lord Henry proclaims, ‘that is the important thing.’<sup>26</sup> The self-centredness of Dandyism as presented in Wilde’s novel is stark. In one of Wilde’s essays we find the phrase: ‘Aesthetics are higher than ethics.’<sup>27</sup>

At its extreme, the fetishisation of cosmetic beauty at the expense of ethics could even lead to perverse situations where suffering, cruelty, and violence are appreciated or admired for their aesthetic characteristics. Wilde’s novel provides numerous piercing examples to highlight this point. Dorian only loved Sibyl in the realm of art and treated her cruelly and without remorse when that aesthetic fascination waned. Even her suicide was celebrated as an alluring aesthetic phenomenon – ‘a wonderful ending to a wonderful play’.<sup>28</sup> Lord Henry was similarly dismissive of any need to shed tears over the death of a woman who had ‘never really lived.’<sup>29</sup> He even confessed to Dorian that ‘there is something to me quite beautiful about her death.’<sup>30</sup> The present point is to highlight how aestheticism – at least as it is represented by Dandyism – presents profound risks from an ethical perspective, which I highlight now in order to avoid these perils later.

Readers might fairly assume I am about to insist, contra Wilde, that ethics must take precedence over aesthetics. In forthcoming essays in this volume, however, it will be seen that my position is a different, more nuanced one: that there is a necessary aesthetic dimension to ethics, just as there is, or ought to be, an ethical dimension to aesthetics. Neither *should* take precedence because neither *can* take precedence, at least in the sense that these domains are, as Michel Foucault showed so powerfully, inextricably intertwined and mutually dependent.<sup>31</sup> Even the arch-theorist of aestheticism himself, Walter Pater, became concerned that Wilde and others had propagated interpretations of his aesthetic philosophy in ethically questionable ways, as merely an amoral aesthetic hedonism. Pater even removed the famous ‘conclusion’ to his book *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1877) to minimise such a reading of his work (although the original conclusion was later added back in).<sup>32</sup> When Pater was asked: ‘Why be moral?’, it is said that he responded: ‘Because it is beautiful.’ While this interaction may well be legend, it properly implies that aesthetics can have, and ought to have, an ethical dimension that must not be lost sight of. For now, however, I merely expose the ethical dangers that are so plainly displayed by Dandyism.

Wilde himself presented an ambiguous moral in *Dorian Gray*. On the one hand, he clearly set out to present the philosophy of Dandyism in an extreme, eloquent, and powerful literary form, through the words of Lord Henry and the actions of Dorian. Life was to be treated as a work of art, to be lived aesthetically rather than morally, with beauty, pleasure, and self-development being the highest values. On the other hand, Wilde chose to portray a character whose pursuit of beauty for the sake of beauty only made his life uglier than ever, and whose immoral aestheticism tragically led to the death of others and ultimately his own. So even Wilde recognised that unbridled Dandyism posed a social and ethical problem, which means his celebration of the aesthetic lifestyle might not be as unqualified as it might have first appeared. Wilde's essay 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' also calls for a moment's pause, as our aesthete explored a political vision that criticised industrial capitalism. He called for deep structural changes that would enable and empower everyone, not merely the rich, to become genuine, self-determining individuals.<sup>33</sup> Still, despite the grim downfall of his most famous dandy character, Wilde was still prepared to admit that of all the characters in his literary works, Dorian Gray was the individual he would most like to have been.<sup>34</sup>

My third critical note on Dandyism – related to the second – concerns Oscar Wilde's famous declaration in the preface to *Dorian Gray* that 'all art is quite useless.'<sup>35</sup> Not only did he believe art was useless, he also believed that all art *ought to be* useless, in the sense that it was not the role of artists to use their art to advance an ethical or political vision. Art need only be for art's sake, as the aestheticist creed goes,<sup>36</sup> and it was mere high-mindedness to think art ought to serve any moral or didactic purpose. The job of the artist, according to Wilde's aesthetic philosophy, is simply to create beautiful things: 'There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book,' he wrote. 'Books are well written or badly written. That is all.'<sup>37</sup> In the same vein, and in the same preface, he would write: 'No artist has [by which he means, 'ought to have'] ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.'<sup>38</sup> More directly still he would assert: 'The sphere of art and the sphere of ethics are absolutely distinct and separate.'<sup>39</sup>

This conception of what art is and ought to be is internally consistent, implying that stylistic 'form' is the sole benchmark of beauty. This suggests that the purpose of art is make something beautiful that induces pleasurable aesthetic experience, irrespective of any ethical or political implications a work of art might have. In contrast, the view I will be detailing in these essays is categorically opposed to Wilde's apolitical philosophy of art. Far from being 'useless', it will be shown (if it is not already too obvious a thesis) that art can justifiably be crafted and evaluated according to its existential, social, and political effects. Contra Wilde, it is far more accurate to say, I believe, that *all artforms are useful*, at least potentially, such that the aesthetic question becomes one of consequences and potential consequences. To what use is art being put and to what ends does it serve?

The idea of a politically neutral or 'useless' art is both implausible and misconceived. Art *can never* be neutral, because it will always have some impact on artist or audience, for better or for worse, which will inevitably have social or political implications to some degree. Moreover, art *should never* be neutral, because it is a tool that has social and political impacts, and those impacts deserve critical evaluation. This is not to say that art must always wear its politics on the surface, or even that artists must be conscious of the socio-political effects of their art. The

most effective art often works indirectly on the consciousness of its audience, leaving its influence unknown. Furthermore, the creative interpretation of art can also have a life of its own, beyond what the artist ever intended. In any case, it is an impoverished and decadent aesthetic philosophy that treats as useless something as socially and politically potent as art – as something limited purely to the pleasurable but functionless aesthetic experience of beauty. That, in a word, is what Marxists would decry as ‘bourgeois’ aesthetics.<sup>40</sup>

My fourth point of critical departure concerns the dandy’s relation to nature. If Dandyism celebrates beauty in appearance as an ultimate value, it clearly (and perhaps surprisingly) marginalises the natural environment as an important source of beauty and aesthetic value. In his essay ‘The Decay of Lying’, Wilde would write:

The more we study Art, the less we care for Nature. What Art really reveals to us is Nature’s lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition... If Nature had been comfortable, mankind would never have invented architecture, and I prefer houses to the open air. In a house we feel all the proper proportions.<sup>41</sup>

This derisive attitude toward nature is portrayed in an extreme form by Huysmans’ novel *Against Nature* (1884),<sup>42</sup> (a book which is alluded to in Wilde’s story as having a profound influence on Dorian Gray). In Huysmans’ novel, the aristocratic protagonist, Jean des Esseintes, retreats to his country house to live a reclusive and decadent life of art, aesthetic experience, sensory pleasure, and self-indulgent hedonism. This aesthete did not want to be bothered by the ordinary concerns of the world, wanting instead to craft a life dedicated entirely to aesthetic sensations, absorbed through all the five senses. Des Esseintes’ preference for the artificial over the natural is illustrated when he decorates his manor with real flowers chosen specifically because they imitate artificial ones. In another incident, the aesthete sets gemstones into the shell of a tortoise so that it matches the carpet, a procedure that eventually results in the poor creature’s death. If aestheticism is to be taken seriously, Dandyism’s rejection of nature as a source of aesthetic value must be overturned. The position I am developing is closer to the tradition of the nature-loving romantic poets, a perspective captured in these lines from William Blake: ‘To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour.’<sup>43</sup>

Finally – and this point returns us to philosophical territory – treating life as a work of art in Dandyism is portrayed as a *choice* one makes. In one sense this framing can be disputed. In previous essays I presented a case for embracing an aesthetic perspective, in the sense of life having *inherent* aesthetic dimensions. I believe this is simply the way things are, for creatures such as ourselves. While Dandyism represents a call *to embrace* the life of an aesthete, I have argued that aestheticism, whether we like it or not, *embraces us*, by virtue of the human condition. It is not a choice. On the other hand, I accept Wilde’s position that we should choose to look upon life from the aesthetic perspective, but disagree with him, in most regards, about what that involves and implies. In the end, however, I am suggesting that we are all aesthetes now, whether we like it or not, and the important challenge is determining what this means in an age such as our own. That is one way to frame the central project of this collection of essays.

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- <sup>1</sup> See generally, Len Gutkin, *Dandyism: Forming Fiction from Modernism to the Present* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020).
- <sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002).
- <sup>3</sup> Oscar Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin, 2003).
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- <sup>27</sup> Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist' (1891). Available at: <https://www.wilde-online.info/the-critic-as-artist-page45.html> (accessed 15 April 2023).
- <sup>28</sup> Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, note 3, p. 98.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- <sup>31</sup> See, e.g., Michel Foucault, 'An Aesthetics of Existence' in Lawrence Kritzman (ed.) *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 49. I explore Foucault's 'aesthetics of existence' in the essay [Giving Birth to Oneself – to be confirmed].
- <sup>32</sup> Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- <sup>33</sup> Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891). Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/wilde-oscar/soul-man/> (accessed 10 March 2023).
- <sup>34</sup> In his published letters, Wilde wrote: 'Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be — in other ages, perhaps.' See Oscar Wilde, *The Letters of Oscar Wilde* (London: Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 352.
- <sup>35</sup> Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, note 3, p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup> See, e.g., Stephen Cheeke, 'The Religion of Art, *Art For Art's Sake*: Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Walter Pater' *RaVoN* (2011) 59-60. Available at: <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/ravon/2011-n59-60-ravon0382/1013271ar/> (accessed 12 March 2023).
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Wilde wrote this line in response to a critical reviewer of *Dorian Gray*. See the introduction to *Dorian Gray*, note 3, p. xxv.
- <sup>40</sup> For a discussion, see Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (London: MacMillan Education, 1979), p. 62.
- <sup>41</sup> Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying' (1905). Available at: <http://virgil.org/dswo/courses/novel/wilde-lying.pdf> (accessed 10 March 2023).
- <sup>42</sup> Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature* (London: Penguin, 2003).
- <sup>43</sup> William Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence'