

We all grow up striving for good upright posture. From the very beginning our efforts to learn to stand upright and finally walk on our own are rewarded by adults and even more so by the increasingly effective use of our bodies. It is self-evident. As we grow we learn that proper lifting and carrying depend on taking care that our backs stay straight and vertical to the ground. Good posture and lifelong health depend on our carrying ourselves upright – all of our organs stacked up in proper order.

This stabilization becomes our major orientation to meeting life's many challenges, so important that it carries strong metaphorical power. Physical stabilization is extended metaphorically to our ethical posture; we try to stay "upright" – morally conscientious people. Stabilization becomes a pervading attitude: being upright, dependable, steady, able to be counted on, known as a well balanced person!

Of course being well-balanced complicates things a bit. To be well balanced means you have some experience of its opposite – being off balance. To be balanced, one is in equilibrium, which is to say, successful against unsteadiness and tendencies to wobble. As small children we wobble regularly but eventually learn to stabilize and overcome those slight shifts off center. As we develop our character we are encouraged to apply the same restrictions to our daily habits and attitudes to experience; staying on course, sticking to the straight and narrow, slow and steady wins the race.

The alarming realization that we are losing our balance is understandably a cause for alarm for oneself or anyone dear to us. Being off balance (and all that implies physically, mentally and emotionally) is not a desirable condition in which to find oneself! Except that sometimes – it is.

Sometimes we actually seek to throw ourselves off balance, deliberately fall out of kilter. The father throws the babe precariously in the air; the child rolls down the grassy hill; the skateboarder tests his limits on the concrete stair – all lending them-

selves momentarily but intentionally to a destabilizing sensation. As adults we do the same thing when we perform the deliberately destabilizing movements of dance and athletic contest! Essentially, we wobble all over the place and we like it. In fact we love it. We tilt, lean, wobble, spin our way in the direction of chaos – and then come back. Gasping and grateful to again find our balance... It is an adventure!

So we are actually of two minds: one seeking order and stability as we seek air. The other requiring a degree of risk and deliberate destabilization that excites and enlivens all our sensations. Art is like that. There is art that is totally upright – never takes the risk of not pleasing what it takes to be the viewers sensibilities. And there is art that is so off-balance we can't even imagine its trajectory. And much in between.

All this suggests an imaginary scale that would allow us to place any art we encounter somewhere along its length – depending on its degree of stability or instability – subjectively. At one end of this scale is the totally upright, completely stabilized work of order and at the other end we find complete chaos.

Imagine the resolve of the artists depending on their particular devotion; the stabilizers adopt as wide a stance as possible to insure their correct balance, able to sense and defuse and banish any hint of wobble; there is the wobbler too, gathering teetering instabilities and going with them, now this way - now that, feeling the growing dance of color and form; and finally that one, the perilous wobbler, for whom falling is a normal mode of locomotion!

I name these three types of artists *The Wide Stancers*, *The Wobblers* and *The Fallen*; and I recognize we are likely all three at different times and also likely not at all in equal measure. My own bias is that some wobble is good for us. Even more – I think it essential that we develop our capacity for it. I think a diet without wobble is terribly restricted and dull. Conversely, to be so exhaustively off-kilter that falling is chronic would be a terribly hard way to live, although I expect that is where the true

prophetic artist lives. One doesn't choose that way – it is a calling that is not sought.

But wobbling! That we can do. Wobbles have a wide range to them. Wobbles we can encourage in ourselves and the young who look to us. How much wobble can you stand? That is the question.

Does everybody have a “wobble quotient”?

Is it being taken by a wobble or making a wobble?

Are there false wobbles? Fabricated wobbles constructed to arrive at a predetermined spot. As in political, dogmatic, didactic art?

Are there pseudo wobbles; learned wobbles designed to entertain?

What are the blocks? What besides our history, experience and desire to please others blocks our ability to extravagantly wobble?

EPILOGUE

Blocks: You can't just remove them and expect everything to be normal after that. We will need to go through a process of apprenticeship, of learning how to be otherwise, by developing a repertoire. You can become aware of what happened to you and why you are the way you are and so on. You can gain a certain amount of freedom from it and realize more options, even relief. However, you still need to learn to do what you never learned.