

Julius Höhn: Questions for Peter Tepe

[Julius Höhn](#) in conversation with [Peter Tepe](#) | Section: [Interviews](#)

Abstract: Julius Höhn is about to graduate from high school. As part of his Abitur examinations, he is investigating the relationship between art and science. He asks Peter Tepe six questions that primarily relate to the role of art in the making of science.

Note from the author: my responses to Julius Höhn's questions reflect my outlook on the major topic of *art and science*; several articles published in the online journals *w/k* and *Mythos-Magazin* (www.mythos-magazin.de), both edited by me, explain my views in further detail.^[1]

Without art, do you think modern science could have developed in the same way as we know it today?

If we understand modern science to mean the *empirical sciences* that emerged in modern times, then I believe there is no direct correlation to art. But there are individuals that have an artistic as well as a scientific practice; in *w/k* we call them *border-crossers between science and art*. Due to their specific knowledge and skills, they can influence the creation and development of a certain science.

Have we arrived at a point where the development of science can stand on its own two feet? Can science today continue evolving without art?

The empirical sciences, according to their own rationale, “stand on their own two feet” in the sense that they evolve autonomously based on the *general* principles of empirical-rational thinking as well as the *specific* principles of the respective subject, which change over time. It is not the case that this autonomy has only become possible today: the continuous development of the empirical sciences has always been independent of art.

People like Leonardo Da Vinci or Michelangelo are role models for many scientists. How did we get from art to science? Do art and science correlate? Did they ever? Do they still do so today?

Let's take Leonardo as an example. He counts as a border-crosser between science and art; his various activities have also inspired empirical scientists and engineers. However, the assumption that at some point there was a transition *from art to empirical science* is misguided. The first disciplines of empirical science were founded by experts in *demarcation from earlier forms of natural research*, not least from Aristotle's philosophy of nature.

I would thus reformulate the question “Do art and science correlate?” as a question about the relationship between art and science, which is undoubtedly subject to historical change. My texts on the art-and-science-theory explain my outlook in detail.

Collectives are gaining more and more prominence. Are today's collectives taking on the role of the artistic genius, driving the sciences forward?

I find the idea of “artistic geniuses driving science forward” problematic – as can be deduced from my answers so far. The empirical sciences are advanced not by the “artistic genius”, but by individuals who have the cognitive abilities that enable the invention of new theories. In some cases, yes, they are border-crossers. However, it is never a *collective* that drives the empirical sciences forward, but *individuals*

and *groups of individuals*.

Over the centuries, have the central themes and the meaningfulness of art changed, or does art still have the same critical intentions as in the Renaissance?

Both the central themes of art as well as the general and specific artistic goals have changed considerably since the Renaissance. However, this does not mean individual artists can't continue to pursue an agenda related to the Renaissance in some way or another.

Is it art's duty to enlighten?

Art *as such* does not have a specific task that can be easily *identified*. It is much more the case that artists and other individuals, such as political or religious leaders, *assign* certain tasks to art. This becomes especially clear if we take previous epochs and cultures other than our own into account. One of many tasks that could be *assigned* to art is the contribution to some kind of *enlightenment* – which would then have to be defined in more detail.

[1] Cf. the list in P. Tepe: *5 Jahre w/k. Was bisher geschah. Teil II, Kapitel 8: Bausteine einer Kunst-und-Wissenschaft-Theorie* (5 years w/k. What happened so far. Part II, Chapter 8: Building blocks of an art-and-science-theory), only available in German. Online: https://wissenschaft-kunst.de/5-jahre-w-k-was-bisher-geschah-teil-ii/2/#8_1

Details of the cover photo: Videostill from the interview with Peter Tepe: *Border Crosser between Science and Visual Art* (2016).

Tags

1. Border Crosser
2. Julius Höhn
3. Peter Tepe
4. Scientific development