

MUSEUM OF COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY

The Agassiz Museum

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Batuz
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Dear Batuz:

Our meeting at the Harvard Faculty Club was a stimulating and pleasant experience for me. I am inspired by your mission to seek unity across the arts, and greatly impressed by the time and energy you are putting into it.

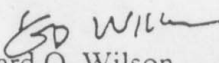
In order to fill you in more fully on the conception of consilience across the great branches, hence the widening search for the unifying principles of knowledge, I enclose herewith a copy of my forthcoming article on the subject, due for publication in *Daedalus* (organ of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences) early next year. As soon as it is published, it can be distributed among other interested parties as you wish. In December, if all stays on schedule at Knopf, my publisher, I'll be able to send you a copy of the bound proofs of the complete book, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*.

You asked me for a brief statement on the overlap of our thinking on cross-cultural understanding. Needless to say I applaud your program to bring practitioners and students of different art cultures together with scholars to seek a commonality of understanding, an understanding both of the creative process and of the interpretation of the creative products thereof. I believe that we are in essential agreement that such a commonality exists by virtue of the universal properties of human nature, which include artistic impulse and particularities of aesthetic response. I have approached this subject not laterally, as is the habit of so many interpreters of the arts, but from the bottom up, interpreting art as the result of genetic human evolution. There is a reason for the existence of universal aesthetic qualities, and it lies in the benefits it has conferred on human beings for tens or even hundreds of thousands of years.

By studying the biology of the senses and brain activity—the physical basis of mind—and interpreting it against a background of both genetic and cultural history, it should be possible to provide a degree of understanding of what it is in the arts that binds humanity together. I believe that this approach, entailing causal explanation from the natural sciences to the humanities, is one essential way to span the great branches of learning. The argument for this approach is covered succinctly in the *Daedalus* article, but in detail in *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, and especially in the chapter entitled "The Arts and Their Interpretation."

I hope that this brief account will prove of some use to you.

With warm regards,


Edward O. Wilson

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Enc: "Consilience among the great branches of learning," *Daedalus*, in press