



What is Art?

Leo Tolstoy

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This book of mine, "What is Art?" appears now for the first time in its true form. More than one edition has already been issued in Russia, but in each case it has been so mutilated by the "Censor," that I request all who are interested in my views on art only to judge of them by the work in its present shape. The causes which led to the publication of the book—with my name attached to it—in a mutilated form were the following: In accordance with a decision I arrived at long ago,—not to submit my writings to the "Censorship" (which I consider to be an immoral and irrational institution), but to print them only in the shape in which they were written,—I intended not to attempt to print this work in Russia. However, my good acquaintance, Professor Grote, editor of a Moscow psychological magazine, having heard of the contents of my work, asked me to print it in his magazine, and promised me that he would get the book through the "Censor's" office un mutilated if I would but agree to a few very unimportant alterations, merely toning down certain expressions. I was weak enough to agree to this, and it has resulted in a book appearing under my name, from which not only have some essential thoughts been excluded, but into which the thoughts of other men—even thoughts utterly opposed to my own convictions—have been introduced.

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