

Abstract

With the following essay, Michael Oakeshott took part in a symposium of the *Journal Scrutiny* whose articles were published in the September issue of 1939. The authors who spoke up pursued the question of whether artists, writers and philosophers had a special political task. As part of his presentation, Oakeshott outlined the specific task that politics has to accomplish for a society. It consists in ensuring security and in maintaining law and order. Oakeshott then shows the contribution that cultural workers and intellectuals make to the successful living together of a community. It is to clear the self-image and understanding of a society. Oakeshott's argument thus creates the image of a social whole that includes a plurality of social sub-areas, that only contribute to the success of the whole by providing the services and tasks that are characteristic of them – even in times of crisis. The argumentation shows that art and culture have no specific political mandate, no duty to take political action, and that they would miss their social purpose if they put themselves in the service of a political mission and would thus neglect their indispensable cultural role.