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An Early Concept of ‘Psychological Aesthetics’ in the ‘Age of Aesthetics’

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ABSTRACT. In 1793 Johann Heinrich Daniel Zschokke (1771-1948), a young lecturer of philosophy at the university of Frankfurt/Oder published a book entitled *Ideen zur psychologischen Aesthetik*. It was the first publication that used the term ‘psychological aesthetics’ in the title of a scientific treatise. Since ‘psychological aesthetics’ as an empirical branch of research in aesthetics did not develop before 1870 (mainly initiated by Gustav Theodor Fechner and his *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, 1876), this booklet is an interesting document for the interdisciplinary open-mindedness of the ‘age of aesthetics’. Zschokke’s Ideas explicitly refer to Kant, who, in a footnote to the 2 edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), had criticised the shift in the meaning of ‘aesthetics’ from a theory of experience to a critique of taste in the period after Baumgarten, and had suggested “to give up the use of the term [sc. ‘aesthetics’] as designating the critique of taste, and to apply it solely to that doctrine, which is true science—the science of the laws of sensibility [...] or to share it with speculative philosophy, and employ it partly in a transcendental, partly in a psychological signification”. Zschokke’s treatise represents an attempt to elaborate Kant’s suggestion by a concrete outline of the anthropological foundation of aesthetic experience. That means that the idea of a psychological aesthetics was not the result of a ‘scientific turn’ in the 19th century, but was already included in the broader understanding of the objectives of aesthetics in the early period of the ‘age of aesthetics’.

The common understanding of the term ‘psychological aesthetics’ refers to a paradigm in aesthetics, which, at the end of the 19th century, adopted the scientific methodology of empirical psychology and tried to apply it to the investigation of aesthetic judgements and experiences. The foundation of this approach is usually attributed to Gustav Th. Fechner, who, in 1876, published two volumes, entitled *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, in which he

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propagated an empirical “aesthetics from below” in opposition to the deductive aesthetics of German idealism. Five years earlier, in 1871, Fechner had published a paper entitled *Zur experimentalen Aesthetik*, in which he reported extensive results of the experimental investigations he had pursued in the decade before the publication of this report. In fact, Fechner’s experimental approach and his attempt to formulate the main principles of aesthetic judgement were a pioneering work at that time, and it is reasonable to acknowledge Fechner as the originator of psychological aesthetics.

However, the idea of a psychological aesthetics and even the term ‘psychological aesthetics’ can be traced back to the early days of aesthetics as a scientific discipline. It was Immanuel Kant, who, in the 2nd edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1787, explicitly reflected on the possibility of a psychological approach to aesthetics for the first time. In order to understand the intention of Kant’s reflexions, we have to briefly consider the historical background.

In 1750, Alexander Baumgarten defined aesthetics as *gnoseologia inferior*, which means the science of the lower faculties of knowledge, in that way distinguishing it from logics as *gnoseologia superior*, the science of the higher faculties of knowledge. That means that his conception of the new discipline “aesthetics” was primarily that of a science of sensual perception (*αισθησις*) and not of beautiful objects, of art or of beauty as an ideal value. Thus, his *Aesthetica* could have been the starting-point of a theory of aesthetic experience, which included those aspects that were the aim of psychological aesthetics in the 19th and 20th century. However, already by the next generation, for which Johann Georg Sulzer might be named as a representative, the subject matter of aesthetics was narrowed from sensitivity in general to the realm of art and beauty. Sulzer defined aesthetics as “the philosophy of the fine arts or the science which deduces its general theory and its rules of the fine arts from the nature of taste” (*die Philosophie der schönen Künste, oder die Wissenschaft, welche sowol die allgemeine Theorie, als die Regeln der schönen Künste aus der Natur des Geschmacks herleitet*). Interestingly enough, Sulzer did not distinguish between the faculties of sensory and rational experience as Baumgarten did (thereby following the Aristotelian tradition) but postulated two “independent faculties” of man, namely reason (*Verstand*) and moral sentiment (*das sittliche Gefühl*). Consequently it was the duty of aesthetics according to Sulzer, on the one hand

“to support the artist in the invention, arrangement, and performance of his work” and, on the other hand, “to guide the amateur in his assessment and, by the same token, to make him more capable of reaping all the benefits of the enjoyment of the works of arts at which they are aimed” (*den Liebhaber in seiner Beurtheilung leiten und zugleich fähiger machen, allen Nutzen, auf den die Werke der Kunst abzielen, aus ihrem Genuß zu ziehen*). The main purpose of aesthetics was therefore to teach people to enjoy works of art in the right manner and to decide, by rational judgement, which was the right kind of art.

It was exactly this shift in the meaning of the term ‘aesthetics’ from a theory of experience to a critique of taste which Immanuel Kant explicitly criticised in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the chapter on *Transcendental Aesthetics* he defines this term as “the science of all the principles of sensibility *a priori*”, and adds in a footnote a short remark on the history of the term ‘aesthetics’. He writes:

“The Germans are the only people who at present use this word to indicate what others call the critique of taste. At the foundation of this term lies the disappointed hope, which the eminent analyst, Baumgarten, conceived, of subjecting the criticism of the beautiful to principles of reason, and so of elevating its rules into a science. But his endeavours were vain. For the said rules or criteria are, in respect to their chief sources, merely empirical, consequently never can serve as determinate laws *a priori*, by which our judgement in matters of taste is to be directed. It is rather our judgement which forms the proper test as to the correctness of the principles. On this account it is advisable to give up the use of the term as designating the critique of taste, and to apply it solely to that doctrine, which is true science — the science of the laws of sensibility — and thus come nearer to the language and the sense of the ancients in their well-known division of the objects of cognition into *aisthetá kai noetá*”.¹

Interestingly enough, in the second edition of this work (1787) Kant makes an additional plea “to give up the use of the term [sc. ‘aesthetics’] as designating the critique of taste” the remark “...or to share it with speculative

¹ Quoted from <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16p/part1.html>

philosophy, and employ it partly in a transcendental, partly in a psychological signification”.

It was some years later, in 1793, that a young lecturer of philosophy in Frankfurt an der Oder, where Baumgarten had taught some decades previously, took up again this idea of Kant. He published a book entitled *Ideen zur psychologischen Aesthetik* (*Ideas on psychological aesthetics*). As far as I know, this was the first publication that explicitly used the term ‘psychological aesthetics’ in the title of a scientific treatise. Johann Heinrich Zschokke was an interesting person: Born in Magdeburg, he attended the monasterial school of his home city, but ran away at the age of 17 and spent some time as a playwright with a company of wandering actors. In the same year, when he published his *Ideas on psychological aesthetics*, he also published a novel *Abällino, der große Bandit*, which was soon forgotten but at least was dramatised two years later by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe at the Hoftheater in Weimar. Since the Prussian government declined to make him a full professor in Frankfurt, Zschokke moved to Switzerland in 1796, where the authorities of the Kanton Graubünden granted him citizenship. Later on he held some important positions in the Swiss civil service and became popular as a reformer and author of historical and fictitious writings. In 1804 he started editing the popular journal *Schweizerbote* (Swiss Messenger) and was one of the most noticed voices of liberalism and enlightenment in Switzerland at that time. However, after the publication of his *Ideas* he never wrote anything else about aesthetics.

Although Zschokke’s *Ideas* were not noticed even by the scientific public of his time, they represent an interesting document of the variety of ideas characterising the “age of aesthetics” at the end of the 18th century. Zschokke’s treatise represents an attempt to elaborate Kant’s suggestion by a concrete outline of the psychological and anthropological foundation of aesthetic experience, for example when he traces the origin of art back to “the natural motivation of man to share his sensations with other people”. In this and other suggestions, Zschokke comes very close to considerations and wordings of the later theory of empathy and other concepts of psychological aesthetics. His outline of a psychological aesthetics is based on the concept of sensation and its crucial role for understanding the nature of all art-related human activities. He argues: Since art itself is directed to the evolution of sensations (“die Entwicklung der

Empfindungen”), aesthetics had “to make sensations a preferential topic of its investigations, if it will rightly bear its name”.

However, Zschokke concedes, the essence of beauty cannot be ascertained by psychological methods, since empirical investigation shows a remarkable variability of aesthetic judgement. It is, therefore, the phenomenon of the aesthetic sensibility of mankind itself, its sense for beauty that represents the basic fact for all investigations in aesthetics as a scientific discipline. That means that aesthetics should “not primarily focus on the constitution of objects to which we attribute beauty”, but rather “on the constitution of man as a *sensible* being”. This argumentation is very similar to that of Theodor Lipps, by which he tried to justify the primarily psychological character of aesthetics as a scientific discipline at the beginning of the 20th century.

The human being, which is the actual object of aesthetic investigation according to this line of reasoning, is characterised by Zschokke as “a marvellous amphibian living in the two big elements of the universe: sensorial and material nature”. Corresponding to this twofold way of existence, man is endowed with “two natures”: reason and feeling. In the interaction between these human ways of existence the individual notion of perfection arises only when the object of this cognition, acting or feeling is congruent with the rules of cognition, acting and feeling. That means that sensory perfection is not any concrete quality of the perceived objects but refers to congruence between the content of sensation and the faculty of sensation; it is constituted by the necessary rules and the form of sensibility (“*gründet sich in den nothwendigen Gesetzen und in der Form der Sinnlichkeit*”).

Although these rules and forms of aesthetic perfection have a crucial impact on aesthetic experience, they cannot explain it completely: The peculiarities of a rose as we can perceive it by rational judgment (in particular symmetry and proportionality), create of course the impression of perfection by the cognitive nature of man (“*für die erkennende Natur des Menschen*”), but “*by that* we are not yet permitted to say that it is beautiful; because beauty refers to *sensation*”. The essence of beauty, according to Zschokke, lies in the fact that something that is perfect in a theoretical, moral or physical sense engenders a new kind of perfection in the perceiver’s sensation, namely aesthetic perfection. The distinction between

aesthetic perfection and other kinds of perception corresponds to the relation between sensation (*Empfindung*) and idea (*Vorstellung*): An idea may be the cause of a sensation, but to the same extent as this sensation represents the dominant part in the soul ("*den dominierenden Theil im Gemüth*") the initiating ideas move to the background. Sensation, which represents the actual aesthetic activity of man, is therefore unable "to recognise any reason for its existence", whereas reason may recognise these causes but for reason beauty does not exist. Beauty may be the subject matter of science and in so far of reason, but this mental activity is no aesthetic activity in itself. Aesthetic experience is always bound to an experiencing subject.

Although there are some similarities between Zschokke's ideas and the ideas of Lipps and other partisans of psychological aesthetics a hundred years later -- in particular concerning the central role of psychology in the investigation of aesthetic phenomena -- there are also some differences: When Zschokke uses the term '*Empfindung*', the meaning of this term is closer to 'sentiment', 'self-consciousness' or to the term 'self', as it was later used by Wilhelm Dilthey, than to the term '*Empfindung*' in the sense of 'sensation' as it was conceived by the physiologists of that time and consequently also by Fechner's 'psychophysics'. Thus, there are different reasons why Zschokke's early concept of psychological aesthetics was not received by the scientific community of his time. Probably the most important was the early end of his academic career after his rejection by the Prussian authorities. Nonetheless, it would not be justified to disparage Zschokke's *Ideas* to a mere academic 'writing exercise'. Although his idea of identifying the essence of aesthetic experience with the subjectivity of 'sensation' was in contradiction to the normative tendency of the aesthetics of idealism, it represents an original conception, which, however, was more successfully elaborated a hundred years later by several authors in the context of psychological aesthetics. But it is obvious that his terminology was contradictory to that kind of empirical psychology which was developed in the course of the 19th century. Zschokke's concept of 'sensation' ('*Empfindung*') was clearly different from that of Fechner and Helmholtz, so Fechner's foundation of psychological aesthetics set a new starting point and did not continue Zschokke's early ideas.

Nevertheless, Zschokke's *Ideas* is a good example for the broad variety of ideas that grew up in the "age of aesthetics", which is the topic of our

discussion. Thus, I would like to go a little bit more in detail in reporting his main arguments.

A further important aspect of Zschokke's theoretical argumentation is his distinction between beauty and the beautiful or, better, "the beauties", which are realised in everyday aesthetic experience. This part of his book reminds us of the aesthetics of the British Enlightenment, where we find many essays entitled "The beauties of [whatever topic]". In Zschokke's theory, the term 'beauty' refers to an anthropological fact, to a faculty of mankind, which is objectively determined by the nature of man. In contrast, the concrete "beauties" which we realise in nature and art are bound to the subjectivity of sensation. This is the reason why they are subject to influences of mood or fluctuations of the individual's life history. Consequently, it is not possible to define an ideal of the *beautiful* but only a concept of the beautiful; on the other hand it is very easy to draw up an ideal of beauty by imagining sensory experiences which represent something "which must be perfect for any *rational* nature" in a way "which might be most delightful for this or that *sensory* nature" ("indem das, was für jede vernünftige Natur vollkommen seyn muß, verbunden mit dem, was für die eine oder die andere sinnliche Natur den höchsten Reiz enthält, im Bezug auf Empfindung vorgestellt wird"). Again we find the distinction between the "two natures", reason and feeling, and due to the subjectivity of feeling all ideals of beauty are, for Zschokke, "just as relative as the beauties in reality themselves" ("ebenso relativ, als die wirklichen Schönheiten selbst"). This immediately continues the arguments of Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* but stresses the possibility of an empirical investigation in aesthetics, which Kant had just outlined as a future development of aesthetics, since his primary interest focused on the systematic conceptualisation of this discipline rather than on its empirical aspects.

Let us have a look at the last section of Zschokke's book which is entitled – rather irritatingly – *Aesthetische Pathologie*. The aim of this chapter is not a systematic description of deviant aesthetic judgments, as the modern German usage of the term 'pathology' might suggest. In fact, the title refers to the Greek term 'pathos', which means 'passion' or passionate feeling. This is not my interpretation, but Zschokke himself refers to the physiologist Ernst Platner, who in an aphorism had suggested that sensation in the sense of a subjective experience was rather expressed by the

term 'pathos' in antiquity than by 'aisthesis', while the meaning of the term 'aisthesis' was rather that of a physiological sensibility, which Platner described as a "physical stimulation of organs" ("*körperliche Rührung der Organe*"). In this sense, Zschokke's theoretical conception might be better characterised by the term 'Pathik' or 'Gefühlslehre' than by the term 'Ästhetik'. A crucial feature of this conception may be seen in Zschokke's assumption of "a common urge of all sensitive nature to express its sentiments by the senses" ("einen aller empfindenden Natur gemeinsamen Trieb, Empfindungen sinnlich darzustellen"), which is based on "sympathy", that is, an inherited capacity to perceive the sentiments of others and to understand the common language of feeling. These ideas are very similar to those of the aesthetics of British Enlightenment at the same time, where the concept of 'empathy' played a central role, for example in the writings of Edmund Burke or Adam Smith. In Germany, the empathy concept was introduced into aesthetics by Robert Vischer in his doctoral thesis *Über das ästhetische Formgefühl* (On the optical sense of form) in 1873, eighty years after the publication of Zschokke's *Ideas*, at a time when Zschokke's book had already been forgotten for a long time. It took another two decades till empathy theory became a core construct of psychological aesthetics in the systematic works of Theodor Lipps and Johannes Volkelt. Thus, Zschokke may be regarded as an early forerunner of this theoretical tradition, although there is no direct line of tradition due to his biographical circumstances.

We can find some interesting similarities – in particular to what Zschokke had called "aesthetic pathology" – to the physiological theory of aesthetic sentiments as developed, for example, by Alexander Bain and Grant Allen in England, in particular in Allen's *Physiological Aesthetics* of 1877. Zschokke had already emphasised the biological and physiological roots of aesthetic sensations, although he makes a clear distinction between a physiological and a psychological approach. It is not my intention to pursue these theoretical correspondences, in particular since there is no direct line of tradition. My intention is to show that some of these ideas, which we usually ascribe to the later decades of the 19th century, were already present in the "age of aesthetics", which is the topic of this discussion.

This is perhaps the main reason to remember the *Ideas* of Zschokke,

because a critical review of his work cannot overlook the shortcomings of this book. On closer examination, its originality turns out to be rather limited: Regarding fundamental questions of a critique of taste and of judgement it essentially repeats the position of Kant, with respect to the theory of art it depends on Sulzer and Heydenreich, and its reflections of the physiological basis of aesthetic sentiments refer directly to those of Platner. In so far as ethical or pedagogical aspects are concerned it is rather characterised by a tendency to support conventional prejudices than by empirical impartiality. It surely did not aim at establishing “aesthetics from below”, which was the intention of the empirical aesthetics of Fechner. However, when Zschokke argues that the question of “legality or illegality of a work of art” was not a problem of deducible moral principles but an empirical problem to be solved by an investigation on “the impact of particular objects on the moral character” despite its “probabilistic” character, this sounds definitely more modern than the idealistic “catechisms of aesthetic” of that time.

When Zschokke, in the final remarks of his book, pleaded for “a master’s hand” to perfect his ideas on psychological aesthetics, we may acknowledge this as a realistic self-assessment of his capacity as a theoretical writer. When he states in this context that psychological aesthetics was “one of the most poorly elaborated among all disciplines of human knowledge”, he precisely describes the situation of aesthetics at that time. His awareness of the theoretical development of aesthetics was very clear, and we can see from the references of his *Ideas* that he had a respectable knowledge of the relevant literature of his time. It is in fact a pity that he did not have the opportunity to continue his research in aesthetics.

Let me conclude with some considerations about the productivity of theorising in the “age of aesthetics” and what we can derive for the present situation and the prospects of our discipline.

I hope I was able to demonstrate by my reference to Kant and to the interesting text of Johann Heinrich Zschokke that the idea of a psychological aesthetics was not the result of a ‘scientific turn’ in the 19th century, but was already included in the broader understanding of the objectives of aesthetics in the early period of the ‘age of aesthetics’. It seems reasonable that the narrowing of the concept of aesthetics to a theory of beauty and the fine arts in the period after Baumgarten impeded the conceptualisa-

tion of an empirical aesthetics for a long time. Fechner was right, when he conceived the intention of his empirical approach mainly as a counterbalance or necessary complement of the deductive aesthetic systems of German idealism -- he explicitly pointed to "Schelling, Hegel, and even Kant".

The eighty years between the publications of Zschokke's *Ideas* in 1793 and Fechner's *Vorschule der Aesthetik* in 1876 are characterised by a dramatic development of psychological methods and methodology. Although some authors of the so-called "Erfahrungsseelenkunde" like Karl Philipp Moritz or Johann Nikolaus Tetens propagated a shift from 'psychologia rationalis' to 'psychologia empirica' already in the 18th century, and although Kant had denied the possibility of a rational psychology at all, 'empiricism' of that time was limited to more or less accidental observation. It was mainly Fechner who introduced the methodology of systematic experiment not only into psychology but also into the investigation of aesthetic judgments, following thereby the increasing tendency of empirical psychology to adopt the methodology of the successful natural sciences, in particular of physiology. Whereas Zschokke's *Ideas* still represent theoretical speculation about "what psychological aesthetics could or should be", Fechner's 'principles', as outlined in his *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, were directly derived from experimental practice -- Fechner explicitly emphasises this fact by pointing to his "aesthetic logbook" ("ästhetisches Dienstbuch") in the preface of his *Vorschule*, where he carefully listed the experimental projects he had performed from 1839 until the 1870's. If we identify the term "psychological aesthetics" with this kind of fact-based theorising, founded in experimental methodology, we have to award the title of the founder of psychological aesthetics doubtless to Gustav Theodor Fechner. Nevertheless, it is interesting that a general idea of this approach, which Fechner had elaborated in the second half of the 19th century, already existed long ago in the "age of aesthetics".

I would like to add some short remarks to the question, why this early period of aesthetics was so productive and what this suggests for the prospects of this discipline in our time. I think that the productivity of this early period was at least in part the result of the thematic openness of the Aristotelian concept of aesthesis which had inspired Baumgarten in his conceptualisation of aesthetics as a discipline. As I suggested, this open-

ness was narrowed in the further development of aesthetics. This is the reason why Fechner's proposal to underpin philosophical aesthetics by an empirical foundation was not welcomed as a promising enhancement of this discipline but rejected by the majority of aestheticians at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. It was interesting for me to see that during the past decades there was a growing interest in aesthetics to overcome these restrictions and to return again to a broader conception of our discipline. In his keynote at the Congress of the International Association of Aesthetics in Lahti, 1995, Wolfgang Iser rightly criticised that "the *discipline* of 'aesthetics', [...] has restricted itself for a long time to questions concerning art – and more on conceptual than sensuous issues of art"; since "traditional as well as contemporary aestheticians seem to be held captive by the picture of aesthetics as artistics". Therefore, Iser claimed for an "aesthetics beyond aesthetics", a new kind of aesthetics, which could actually grasp the broad variety of aesthetic phenomena.

In the meantime, this idea seems to be adopted by a growing majority of authors and researchers. Recent descriptions of the current development of aesthetics (for example Barck, 2000) point to a paradigmatic shift of aesthetics from a limited "philosophy of art" to a broader and transdisciplinary understanding of its objectives. This transdisciplinary understanding should, in my opinion, include a re-evaluation of the interrelation between psychological and philosophical approaches to aesthetic phenomena. Also in the new *Handbook of phenomenological aesthetics*, edited by Sepp and Embree in 2010, interdisciplinarity and intercultural discussions are emphasised as something that "could certainly spur fruitful phenomenological research", and in the following sentences "cooperation between phenomenological aesthetics and such diverse fields as art, history, sociology, political sciences, biosciences, and theology" are explicitly mentioned as an agenda for future phenomenological research. I surely appreciate such transdisciplinary endeavours. But as a psychologist I was surprised that of all sciences psychology was missing in this enumeration, even when it only was conceived just as an example. This is rather strange in view of the fact, that, for example, Moritz Geiger, one of the pioneers of phenomenological aesthetics, regarded psychology to be a genuine approach to an understanding of aesthetic phenomena. But also with respect to this neglect there exists a historical tradition: already at the first con-

gress for aesthetics and general science of art, almost exactly 100 years ago, Victor Basch, one of the most renowned French aestheticians of that time, felt compelled to protest against the “excommunication majeure” of psychology by the partisans of a metaphysical foundation of aesthetics.

I think that Zschokke’s intention to elaborate “ideas for a psychological aesthetics” is still challenging in view of the fact that our recent understanding of psychology is totally different from that in Zschokke’s or even Fechner’s time. In this context it is important to emphasise that psychology cannot be reduced to neuroscience or neuroimaging and not even to experimental psychology. There are interesting theoretical developments in cultural psychology or in modelling the emergence of aesthetic judgments, aesthetic emotions, aesthetic attitudes or aesthetic preferences. In this broader perspective, psychology can certainly find an appropriate place in aesthetic research.

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The Monstrous Nature of Art — Levinas on Art, Time and Irresponsibility

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I investigate Levinas' conception of the work of art as the movement away from reality. To Levinas, art is deceptive and dangerous because it offers a form of escapism that interferes with man's responsibility for the Other. I will focus on Levinas' early work in which he unfolds a remarkable discussion of contemporary art. The first part of the paper will concentrate on Levinas thoughts on the nature of art as a stoppage of time. To Levinas, art is caught in the instant and can never become anything more or less than it already is. In the second part of this paper I will focus on aesthetic pleasure and how Levinas argues that the pleasure art gives is a form of escapism which interferes with moral responsibility. I conclude that Levinas condemns art primarily because it is caught in the moment and can never transcend it. Art exposes the *il y a*, which is the meaningless void of pure being. Levinas conceptualizes the present as the instant at which being emerges from being in general. The present arises through the event of the hypostasis in which an existent assumes its existence. To Levinas, the work of art is a standstill which is unable to synthesize the instant with the present and cannot take a position. The specific nature of art is that it realizes "the paradox of an instant that endures without a future." For Levinas, the eternally frozen instant accomplished in art is something monstrous. Not only because art is not able to take up the future and obscures reality rather than enlighten it. Furthermore, Levinas argues that art offers us a form of escapism and gives us the illusion to escape from our infinite responsibility to the other. In his elaboration of time, Levinas asserts a future that cannot be anticipated by a present. The significance of such a future is however derived from an ethical commitment to the other which is already imposed. For Levinas, the call for responsibility is made possible because the other gives us the future and speaks to us. Levinas' analyses of the other shows us the realm of a world of initiative and responsibility. It also shows us why Levinas conceives art as irresponsible: art moves in the world of shadows and remains captured in the anonymous moment. Art as such is a dimension of evasion or escapism in which, due to its stoppage of time, we can free ourselves from the future and thus from the moral responsibility to the other.

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1. Introduction

The question whether art is related to morality has been a life long debate since the beginning of philosophy of aesthetics. Immanuel Kant is by foremost the philosopher who thoroughly investigated the relation between aesthetic beauty and morality. Kant argues in his third Critique - *The Critique of Judgment* - that it is 'always the mark of a good soul' to take an interest in natural beauty. To Kant, it indicates that there is a moral tendency to harmony between nature and moral freedom. In the same section however, Kant denies that this moral tendency is related to artistic beauty. To Kant, artistic beauty has no relation to morality. Art is not able to encourage us to be moral responsible subjects.

In this paper, I would like to investigate the relation between art and morality once more by discussing the phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas has extensively written on art and the artwork and gives a very interesting interpretation of the significance of art.

Levinas is primarily known for his philosophy of the Other and his search for something which cannot be understood in terms of being. Levinas localizes this radical alterity in the relation to the Other. The Other precedes and transcends our individual existence and is beyond being. To Levinas, we have an infinite responsibility to protect the radical alterity of the Other. To ensure the sacredness of the other, Levinas localizes the origin of moral responsibility in the relation to the Other.

Levinas' philosophical thoughts are not limited to the relation to the Other. Levinas has written as well on literature, music and art. There are countless references to poets and writers in Levinas' work. His admiration for the poet Celan for example is very clear throughout his work, and there are countless other references to the visual and cinematic arts.

In this paper, I will focus on illuminating Levinas' thoughts on art as a movement away from reality. I will primarily focus on clarifying the ambivalent attitude Levinas has towards the work of art. Levinas shows his admiration for art but at the same time condemns art calling it 'an idolatrous object' that is 'moral irresponsible'. I argue that Levinas' attitudes to art are related to his project of giving priority to ethics as first philosophy.

The paper is divided into two parts; in the first part I will focus on Levinas' interpretation of art as 'exotic' and art's relation to time. To Lev-

inas, the artwork has ‘deworlded’ the objects it represents, stripping them from their contextual meaning. Levinas argues that art is ‘saturated’ and an ‘object which is caught in the instant’. When an artist finishes his work, the artwork can never become anything more or less than it already is. As such, art is the infinite repetition of a particular moment.

Because art is an infinite repetition of the anonymous (meaningless) moment, it can’t transcend itself and relate to the present or the future. Art is a powerless medium that only reveals the *il y a* or pure being but fails to act upon anything. To Levinas, art represents ‘something less than the object’ because it ‘returns to the impersonality of elements’.

In the second part of the paper I will focus on art’s relation to moral responsibility. In discussing Levinas’ focus on the alterity of the Other and the moral call the other imposes on us, it becomes clear why Levinas classifies art as ‘irresponsible’. The nature of art is monstrous because it offers us a form of escapism; an escape from our world and as such an escape from our infinite responsibility to the Other.

2. Art and its Relation to Time

Aesthetics involves the inquiry into human feelings with regard to the beautiful as evoked by nature and art. Aesthetics is not only focused on the subjective aesthetic experience, but investigates as well the specific characteristics of the artwork.

The nature of the artwork has been extensively investigated in phenomenological philosophy. Most important contribution is Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in which Heidegger argues that art can be a genuine resource for philosophical thought.

Levinas as well has written extensively on art in one of his earlier works, *Existence & Existents* (1947). Levinas discusses art in relation to time and morality and argues that art is a form of ‘exotism’; a movement away from reality, which reveals existence without a world.

Levinas calls art ‘exotic’ because art is able to make objects stand out from the world. The artwork extracts the objects from their belongingness to a subject and presents the radical alterity of the objects. For Levinas, the primal function of art is to “furnish an image of an object in place

of the object itself.” (Levinas, 2001, p. 46). Art is able to present objects disengaged from their subjective purposes and forces us to thematize these objects in a different way.

Art is able to do so because it is a movement away from reality rather than illuminating it. Art reveals the objects as they are; it returns to the impersonality of elements. The reality that art presents is ambivalent, because this reality does no longer refer to our inwardness. For Levinas, the artwork is a ‘grasping and releasing’ and a ‘representing and not-representing’. The artwork reveals the ambivalent nature of the exotic reality, which Levinas calls ‘the world’s shadow’.

The exotic character of art is that it is able to reveal the radical alterity of the objects, or as Levinas calls it, ‘the monstrous materiality of experience’; the *il y a*. The *il y a* is not the fear of nothingness or death, - as in Heidegger, but the fear of pure being. The *il y a* is a formless void; a frightening neutrality devoid of meaning.

To Levinas, art shows us the doubleness of the world. Our ordinary world is the reality which has meaning and signification through our purposes and desires. There is however a world which has its existence apart from our intentions and is meaningless because it is pure being.

Art exposes pure being and is a movement away from reality. Art reveals the impersonality of the elements; or ‘the nakedness of the materiality of experience’. As such, it can be said that art is able to reveal pure being and reveals the absolute: “An artwork is more real than reality and attests to the dignity of the artistic imagination, which sets itself up as knowledge of the absolute.” (Levinas, 2001, p. 46).

Levinas’ admiration for art seems however to change during his later work. In a later essay dedicated to the status of art, titled *La Réalité et son Ombre*, Levinas seems to be more critical to the status of art. In this essay, Levinas classifies art as “the insurmountable caricature in the most perfect image” (Levinas, 1978, p. 4).

To Levinas, art’s ambivalent status has its origin in its troubled relation to time. Art is a representation of an object and a ‘standstill’ or a ‘statue’. An artwork is an image of completion and saturation that will never be anything more or less than it already is: “The completion, the indelible seal of artistic production by which the artwork remains essentially disengaged, is underestimated - that supreme moment when the last brush

stroke is done, when there is not another word to add to or to strike from the text, by virtue of which every artwork is classical.” (Levinas, 1978. p.2).

When an artwork is completed, it is full and saturated and is as a consequence closed off time. Art is not only a revelation of matter in the very fact of the *il y a*, but is also a movement away from reality and a ‘stoppage of time’. The moment the artwork is finished is the moment in which the artwork stops time and becomes a statue. For Levinas, art is nothing more than an infinite repetition of the moment.

For Levinas, being is accomplished by the very stance of an instant. In taking a position, being is assumed, becomes a presence and present, and overcomes the meaningless void. The *il y a* is an impersonal form; the anonymous void of pure being. For Levinas, being conscious is to move away from the *il y a*. Subjectivity is a master of being, which means taking a position and assuming being as one’s own. In assuming being and taking a position, one moves away from the *il y a* and becomes presence or present. The infinite repetition of the anonymous moment is thus overcome by assuming being.

Art is however not able to overcome the anonymous moment, because art cannot make a stance. For Levinas, consciousness comes out of rest, out of the unique relationship with a place. The present is ultimately tied to this characteristic of consciousness; taking a position means being present. Essentially for consciousness is an inwardness, the ability to retreat and relating to that which is outward.

Art however appears in its turn as the covering of an inwardness and a presentation of a worldless reality. The artwork is cut off from reality and presents the “naked elements, simple and absolute, swellings or abscesses of being.” (Levinas, 2001, p.51).

The artwork expresses the reality’s shadow by exposing the naked materiality of experience. As such, art is not able to act upon anything or initiate anything because it cannot take a stance. Art cannot reveal anything more than the nakedness of pure being.

3. Art and Ethical Responsibility

Levinas argues that art is ‘more real than reality’, because it is able to expose the *il y a*, in which objects are presented in their elementary form.

Art reveals the alterity of the world, or the world's 'shadow'.

Throughout his work, Levinas is primarily focused on giving priority to that which is radically different than being and cannot be grasped or thought of in terms of being. Levinas strongly criticizes Western metaphysics of neglecting 'otherness' and 'alterity' and accuses the tradition of a totalitarianism. For Levinas, Western philosophy coincides with the disclosure of the other; "where the other, in manifesting itself as being, loses its alterity." (Levinas, 2008, p. 348). Levinas' search is a search to reveal that what is 'otherwise than being'.

Art is able to expose the radical alterity of the world. As such, it is understandable that Levinas is interested in the artwork which is able to reveal pure being or the *il y a*. If art is able to reveal the *il y a*, it might be as well the medium through which the *otherwise-than-being* can be revealed.

Levinas is however ambivalent to the value of art. In *Existence & Existents* (1947) he seems to praise art's ability to reveal the *il y a* and seems to value the imagination of the artist who is able to reveal the 'nakedness of the world' and is able to "integrate it into our world." (Levinas, 2001, p. 49).

In an essay dedicated to art, titled *Reality and its Shadow* (1948), published only a few years after *Existence & Existents*, Levinas seems to have a total different attitude to the status of art. In this essay, he rather condemns art, calling it an 'idolatrous object' and resenting its 'monstrous nature' (Levinas, 1978, p. 12). To Levinas, art is wicked because it escapes from the call for responsibility: "This is not the disinterestedness of contemplation but of irresponsibility. The poet exiles himself from the city [...] there is something wicked and egoist and cowardly in artistic enjoyment. There are times when one can be ashamed of it, as of feasting during a plague." (Levinas, 1978, p.142).

These are serious accusations which Levinas makes against art. Levinas claims that art is problematic because it diverts one from one's responsibilities in the world. In order to understand this claim, it is necessary to focus on Levinas' conception of aesthetic pleasure. For Levinas, the attempt to elevate mankind above reality needs to be seen as a form of escapism and a way to shield oneself from one's moral responsibility to the other.

In *De l'Évasion*, one of Levinas' first essays, he writes on the nature of escapism and the need to flee away from reality. Inspired by Sartre's

analysis of *La Nausée*, Levinas investigates the confrontation of man with the horrid of being and his tendency to escape the senseless void of the *il y a*. Levinas condemns escapism seeing it as a movement away from what it means to be a conscious being. Furthermore, the pleasure that escapism offers is deceptive and inauthentic. The pleasure of escapism is to Levinas “nothing more than a being caught in the instant.” (Levinas, 1982, p. 26).

Art and escapism are related in the sense that theaesthetic pleasure art gives is essentially a form of escapism or evasion from reality. I would even go further and argue that to Levinas, the pleasure art gives us is dangerous and monstrous because it offers mankind an escape from his infinite responsibility to the other.

For Levinas, moral responsibility is derived from a commitment to the other which is already imposed. To Levinas, the Other precedes my existence and precedes being (and hence the *il y a*) and as such is able to impose moral responsibility on me before I come into existence.

Ethical discourse comes from beyond the visual, beyond being and has its origin in the relation to the other. The relation to the Other is primarily ethical because the other has a face. The face is not something visual, but it is an *epiphany*, a trace of something which cannot be understood in terms of being.

To Levinas, the radical alterity of the Other, - or the trace as he calls it-, is a “movement of the same unto the other which never returns to the same.” (Levinas, 2008, p. 348). For Levinas, the other comes without mediation and without context and signifies only himself. But it is also a relation; a relation to a presence that never has been there and is otherwise than being. Because the Other transcends everything, it opens the future for us.

Levinas’ construction of the future that synthesizes the present, the past and the future, is derived from Descartes’ idea of God as the infinite being, which idea contains more than the finite thinker can account for. Levinas hence argues that the future is given to us by the relation to the Other.

The present is conceptualized by Levinas as the instant in which being emerges from being in general. The present arises through the event of hypostasis in which an existent assumes its existence by taking a position. In his elaboration of time derived from Descartes’ *Meditations*, Levinas

asserts a future that cannot be anticipated by a present. It is through the relation to the Other that we are able to transcend the present and relate to the future.

Levinas' turn to the Other opens the 'ungraspable future', which is beyond my finite time. What Levinas is looking for is an opening of a messianic future that would in itself be open-ended and has an ethical grounding. Important to notice is that on several occasions, Levinas points to the face of the Other as being a trace of God. The thinking of the unthinkable opens a 'future that cannot be fulfilled and a past that was never present'. This revelation of the radical otherwise than being, has for Levinas an ethical connotation. To Levinas, moral responsibility precedes any 'objective searching after truth', and is conceived as the origin for communication, truth and knowledge. Ethics is for Levinas that *prima philosophia* par excellence.

Levinas analysis of the other who imposes moral responsibility upon us by transcending the present and giving us a future, shows why Levinas is troubled by the nature of the artwork. In Levinas' phenomenology, art is seen as the medium the least capable of acting upon reality or transcending the anonymous moment revealed by the *il y a*. Art is primarily a movement away from meaning and signification and a movement away from presence.

The pleasure that art gives us is furthermore troublesome. The pleasure the artwork offers is nothing more than a 'concentration on the instant'. This kind of pleasure is shallow and inauthentic and can be classified as a form of escapism. The movement away from reality disables furthermore the possibility to overcome the anonymous moment and taking up being.

The escapism art offers is an opportunity to slip away from reality and to retreat from the world. To Levinas, escapism paralyzes the subject, withholding him from his ethical responsibility to the other. This makes art and idolatrous object which is monstrous, deceptive and irresponsible.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed Levinas' philosophy of art in relation to time and morality. I focused on clarifying Levinas ambivalent attitude towards

art, showing his admiration at one side and condemning art on the other side as 'monstrous' and 'irresponsible'.

For Levinas, art can reveal the naked materiality of experience, or the *il y a*. Art is 'exotic' because it can make objects stand out and reveal existence without a world. Art is able to integrate the exotic into our world by covering or concealing inwardness. The *il y a* is exposed as 'being in general' which is anonymous and resists a personal form. Levinas defines art thus as a movement away from reality; a 'deworldling' or the world's 'shadow'.

Art is not something which can clarify or explain anything of our world. Rather than enlighten it, it obscures and conceals it. When an artwork is finished, it will never be anything more or less than it already is. As such, it is closed off from time and is nothing more than an infinite repetition of the anonymous instant. Art seeks thus to draw out of the light and to deform the world, breaking with the continuity of time.

For Levinas, time is the inner structure of subjectivity. The event of hypostasis in which an existent takes up existence as one's own, produces presence and present. The present is a situation in being where there is not only being in general, but a particular being; a subject. Art can never relate to such a present, because it disengages from reality and as such cannot make a stance because it conceals the inwardness that is necessary to take up being.

To Levinas, art seems to reveal absence rather than presence; the artwork presents the meaningless void of pure materiality; the 'shadow' of the world that is disengaged from subjectivity. Art cannot transcend the anonymous instant and relate to the present and is stuck in the the meaningless void of the *il y a*.

Levinas localizes meaning and signification in the event of the hypostasis. By becoming present, by taking a stance, being is assumed and this creates the inwardness that is a prerequisite to master being. To Levinas, art is thus powerless, because it cannot act upon being.

To Levinas, the subject is however in some way powerless as well, because the subject is not able to transcend presence and relate to the future. Transcendence in Levinas is always the desire for something else, - for something radical different than being. It is the relation to the Other which gives us the future and gives us the opportunity to alter our actions.

Redemption and forgivingness has its origin in the relation to the Other. The relation to the Other is therefore classified as 'ethical'.

The Other who is the radical alterity who bears a trace of God in the epiphany of the face, is the origin of moral responsibility. The moral responsibility to protect the alterity of the Other is a call that precedes my existence and hence transcends being. The infinite demand for moral responsibility is an infinite call to protect that which is radical different than being. It is the face of the other who says to me: you shall not kill. My duty to respond to the Other suspends everything; even my *droit vitale*.

The moral responsibility to the Other is infinite, beyond being and undeniable. However, escapism offers us a deceived way of fleeing from reality and conceals our moral responsibility.

The problem of art is that it offers a retreat from the world and a slipping away from the present. The artwork offers a way to escape from reality, an escape from ourselves and a 'stoppage of time'.

Theaesthetic pleasure art gives us is monstrous because it offers us a way to retreat from the world and to experience the nakedness of the elements. But at the same time art keeps us away from reality and conceals our infinite responsibility to the Other. It is not that art can suspend our infinite responsibility to the other, because the radical alterity precedes being and thus the6 as well, but it conceals it; it covers up our inwardness, our subjectivity and our power to act upon reality. As such, art is monstrous and irresponsible as 'feasting during a plague'.

It seems thus that art indeed reveals something about reality, but it does so in a very concealing and obscuring way. Art's problematic nature lies for Levinas however in its detachment from ethics. Even the most horrendous event that is represented by art can give usaesthetic pleasure, something which is to Levinas who survived the Holocaust, indeed 'monstrous'.

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Is Moderate Intentionalism Necessary?

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this paper is to show that the project of founding a Moderate Intentionalism on the compatibility between intentionalism and conventionalism, instantiated in Stecker's *Unified View* of meaning, could be unnecessary. To that end, I will appeal to Davidson's non-conventionalist view of communication, and to the concept of 'fulfilled intention' that can be deduced from such a view. Finally, I will defend that by denying the necessity of convention to fulfil a communicative or an artistic intention, we can establish a relationship between intention and creativity, as much in the use as in the interpretation of language, that affects positively on the justification of intentionalism.

1. Introduction

Moderate Intentionalism has its origin in the problems of Absolute Intentionalism, whose thesis was that the meaning of a work of art is determined by its author's intention. Anti-intentionalists objected that, if what a work of art means is what its author intends it to mean, then intentionalism falls into Humpty Dumpty's view of meaning. Such a view involves the speaker's infallibility since Humpty Dumpty thought that when he uses a word it means what he chooses it to mean for the only reason that he is the master. On their behalf, conventionalists considered that the author's infallibility could just be avoided by admitting that conventions determine the meaning of the work, that is, by denying intentionalism. Thereby, the meaning of the work and the artist's intended meaning could be different in those cases of unfulfilled intentions. One of the strategies of intentionalism in order to face this objection has been to recognize the relevance of conventions, and to explain their role in an intentionalist view of meaning. This is what R. Stecker has done by his *Unified View* of work meaning, in

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the framework of his defence of Moderate Intentionalism (Stecker, 2003, p. 42).

2. Intention and Convention in Stecker's Unified View of Meaning

Stecker has explained how intention and convention could coexist in Moderate Intentionalism: "the last account of work meaning attempts to combine two views we considered earlier and found to be inadequate in their own right as accounts of such meaning. These are actual intentionalism and conventionalism, and the present view, call it the unified view, says, roughly, that work meaning is a function of both the actual intentions of artists and the conventions in place when the work is created" (Stecker, 2003, p. 42). The key point to understand the role of intention and convention in the unified view is to clarify what this "function" consists in and an explanation can be rebuilt by paying attention to some Stecker's extracts.

According to Stecker, the meaning of a work of art is analogous to the meaning of a linguistic utterance (Stecker, 1997, p. 116), whose meaning is determined in the following way: "the meaning of an utterance is the meaning successfully intended by the speaker or, if the speaker's intention is not successful, the meaning is determined by convention and context at the time of utterance" (Stecker, 2003, p. 14). The same happens in the case of artworks: "when the artist succeeds in expressing her intention in the work (which, of course, will commonly involve the exploiting of conventions and context), that is what we should identify with the meaning of the work; but when actual intentions fail to be expressed, conventions in place when the work is created determine meaning" (Stecker, 2003, p. 42). So to speak, this means that conventions work when intentions do not work since, intention determines the meaning in those cases of fulfilled intention and conventions determine the meaning in those cases of unfulfilled intention. Thus, the notion of fulfilled intention seems to be in the core of the 'function' that regulates the relationship between intention and convention. Then, what does fulfilling an intention consists in?

Following Grice's view of meaning, Stecker considers that fulfilling an intention depends on the agent's – either a speaker or an artist – capacity of

generating the appropriate “uptake conditions” of meaning (Stecker, 1997, p. 175). In Stecker’s model these uptake conditions seem to consist in something very specific: “a speaker, using a language L, means something by uttering x in L, only if she intends to do A by uttering x and intends the audience to recognize this, in part because of conventional meanings of x or contextually supported extensions of those meanings” (Stecker, 2003, p. 13). This indicates that the meaning of a linguistic utterance depends on the speaker’s intentions as long as the interpreter can recognize then resorting to linguistic conventions and taking into account the specific context. As we can see, conventions lay a role in order to fulfil an intention. Therefore, conventions are a part of the uptake conditions of meaning.

Nevertheless, Stecker ties fulfilled intention and convention more clearly at considering that: “an utterance means whatever its utterer successfully intends (i.e., intentionally does) in uttering it, and success will hinge on correctly employing conventions and exploiting the context of utterance” (Stecker, 1997, p. 173). If fulfilling an intention consists, at least in part, in doing a correct use of conventions, then the meaning of an utterance depends on conventions as much in those cases of unfulfilled intentions – where conventions determine the meaning totally – as in those cases of fulfilled intentions – where conventions determine the meaning at least partly.

In addition, Stecker even suggests that a kind of convention is involved the relation between what is said and what it is implied by what it is said in some contexts as being regulated for a sort of convention. Following his own example, Stecker considers that the possibility that I can say “there are ten sheep in the field” with the intention you to realize there are two missing sheep “relies on a shared understanding between you and me about my point in using those words. That may lead to the establishment of a miniconvention to enable me to express a certain intention in a certain contexts” (Stecker, 2003, p. 49).

By thinking that the success of an intention hinges “on correctly employing conventions” and even that a sort of miniconvention regulates some contexts, Stecker bestows a so relevant role on conventions that a conventionalist would hardly reject the unified view. Hence, it could be thought that this approach turns Stecker’s moderate intentionalism into an indistinguishable theory from a moderate conventionalism. Surely, it

would not be a problem for Stecker's theory itself, since his purpose was to combine intentionalism and conventionalism. Nevertheless, Stecker has moderated the relevance of conventions in the unified view recognizing that "context and convention won't do it all in the business of determining meaning at all levels", since "very often there is no even a miniconvention" that regulates the determination of meaning as happens in the case of irony and metaphor (Stecker, 2003, p. 49).

Thus Stecker minimizes the relevance of conventions only in some special usages of language. But, if those cases where there is not even a miniconvention are – as he recognizes – "very often", then why should we recognize a relevance of conventions in our intentionalist view of meaning beyond being just one among the different ways we implement our intentions? In addition, if it could be thought that conventions lack such a relevance, not just in such very especial – though frequent – cases, but also in our more ordinary communicative intentions, we had another reason to doubt whether the unified view and Stecker's moderate intentionalism are necessary.

3. Davidson's Non-Conventional View of Language and Fulfilled Intention

Playing down the relevance of conventions is possible by appealing to Davidson's non-conventionalist view of communication (Davidson, 1984). Defending such a view could be problematic, since the relevance of conventions in our successful communicative relationships seems to be undeniable. But Davidson's view does not contravene our common sense intuitions, since he does not deny the usefulness of conventions, but their necessity in communication. That is, he considers that convention and communication are not intrinsically related, since there can be communication without convention.

According to Davidson "[...] linguistic communication does not require, though it very often makes use of, rule governed repetition; and in that case, convention does not help explain what is basic to linguistic communication, though it may describe a usual, though contingent, feature" (Davidson, 1984, p. 279). By alluding to a "rule governed repetition" Davidson is challenging Lewis's conception of convention, in virtue of which

“(a) regularity *R* in the behaviour of members of a population *P* when they are agents in a recurrent situation *S* is a *convention* if and only if, in any instance of *S* among members of *P*, (1) everyone conforms to *R*; (2) everyone expects everyone else to conform to *R*; (3) everyone prefers to conform to *R* on condition that the others do, since *S* is a coordination problem and uniform conformity to *R* is a proper coordination equilibrium in *S*” (Lewis, 1986, p. 42). The key point of Lewis’s definition of convention for Davidson is that “regularity in this context must mean regularity over time, not mere agreement at a moment. If there is to be a convention in Lewis’s sense (or in any sense, I would say), then something must be seen to repeat or recur over time”.

The idea of repetition is in the core of the idea of regularity, which is, in turn, in the core of the idea of convention, and it has a twofold nature. In order to something is considered as a convention it must fulfil two conditions: it must happen more than once, and it must involve more than one person. Thus, something that happens just once could not be a convention, even if it involves more than one person, and something that involves just one person could not be a convention, even if it happens more than once. Under this definition of convention, the “shared understanding” that Stecker identifies as the cornerstone in virtue of which you understand that there are two missing sheep when I utter “there are ten sheep in the field” cannot be considered as a convention at all, not even a miniconvention. We do not have reasons to think that the next time I utter “there are ten sheep in the field” you can properly interpret it as meaning “there are two missing sheep”, since my intention can be a different one, and we do not consider a convention something that works just once. If a miniconvention refers to something that works just once, then we do not have reasons to consider it as a convention at all.

According to Lewis’s notion, convention involves a shared regularity, in virtue of which two or more people coincide in something. That is, they do the same regarding a certain aspect, and they do it more than once. In the case of linguistic conventions, it could be considered that what speakers and interpreters do equal is bestowing the same meaning on the words of the speaker’s utterance. However, we cannot suppose that this kind of coincidence is necessary in order to be successful in our communicative relationships. For Davidson “different speakers have different

stocks of proper names, different vocabularies, and attach somewhat different meanings to words; in some cases this reduces the level of mutual understanding; but not necessarily, for as interpreters we are very good at arriving at a correct interpretation of words we have not heard before, or of words we have not heard before with meanings a speaker is giving them" (Davidson, 1984, p. 277). For instance, this is what happens in radical interpretation, where one tries to connect the speaker's sounds to the given evidence in absence of any shared convention. But it also happens when, being the speaker and interpreter perfectly competent in the usage of a language, the speaker produces an innovative usage of conventions, uses a new word, or simply makes a mistake.

This does not necessarily involve the understanding being affected, since we have interpretative sources beyond conventions. In *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), A. Burgess invented *Nadsat* language, the slang used by the protagonist – Alex – and his friends – his *droogs* –. When Alex's mother asks him to wake up and to go to school, he answers: "Mum, I can't go to school today, my *gulliver* hurts". In this case, even if we do not know what 'gulliver' means in *nadsat*, it is not difficult to guess that Alex is saying that he has a headache, since we know that it is very common to say that the head hurts as an excuse in order not to do something. Unless we have already read a dictionary about *nadsat*, it is not because of the knowledge of a linguistic convention that we tie 'gulliver' and 'head'. Nevertheless, it could certainly be objected that one can guess the meaning of 'gulliver' because of a non-linguistic convention, but a convention after all. Saying that 'my head hurts' could be considered as a convention because it is a regularity: it is something that more than one person does and it is something that happens more than once, since to say 'my head hurts' is what we usually do when we want merely to make an excuse. But imagine that our most common excuse would be a different one – as it could easily be since conventions are arbitrary –, such as 'my stomach hurts', and imagine that the author tells us that when Alex says 'my gulliver hurts' he is massaging his temples. In this case, we would have a non-conventional evidence to say that 'gulliver' means 'head', and we do not need to guess the meaning because of a regularity.

The example shows that speaker and interpreter must coincide in the meaning they bestow to the utterance in order to achieve mutual under-

standing; but only in the very communicative act. They do not have to have coincide in the meaning previously and they do not have to maintain the same meaning in the future, that is, the coincidence is valid for understanding even if it happens only once. Therefore, they do not understand to each other in virtue of a regularity. The shared regularity implicit in Lewis's concept of convention is not demanded for successful communication, so that conventions are not necessary to generate proper uptake conditions of meaning; Therefore, they are not necessary to fulfil an intention.

If this is so in communication – and if we endorse, as I am doing, the analogy between artistic and linguistic meaning embedded in intentionalism –, then fulfilling an artistic intention should not require convention either. Needless to say that the artist and the interpreter must coincide in many things if we can say truly that the former has fulfilled his intention and the latter has grasped the meaning of the work. But not everything that we share is conventional, since not everything involves a shared regularity. The understanding of a work of art does not obey to a previous coincidence between the artist and the interpreter regarding a certain aspect. Interpreters cannot resort to a regularity of previous similar cases to grasp the meaning when they find a new usage of conventions, or they face something absolutely new that does not constitute a convention at all. Therefore, fulfilling an artistic intention does not require conventions and conventions are not necessarily a part of the uptake conditions of work meaning.

Thinking that conventions are a very common vehicle through which we can generally fulfil our intentions does not mean that they are the only one, much less in an artistic context. That is why considering that conventions, or a correct employment of them, are necessary to fulfil an intention would involve a too *narrow* view of what fulfilling an intention is. Having said that, if fulfilling an artistic or communicative intention does not consist in “correctly employing conventions”, then what does it consist in?

As Stecker thinks, fulfilling an intention has to do with the speaker's capacity to generate the uptake conditions of her intention. But an agent – either an artist or a speaker – does not have to restrict herself to a shared regularity in order to generate the conditions that allow her to fulfil her intentions. The scope of these uptake conditions goes beyond conven-

tions, since they can be successfully generated, even though the agent violates conventions, and even in absence of them, by appealing to non-conventional shared things. This indicates that it might be endorsed a wider view of fulfilled intention. Nevertheless, making explicit all the conditions in virtue of which an agent makes herself interpretable, and an interpreter makes her interpretable, is not possible since the uptake conditions are different in each case (Davidson, 1984, p. 278). But this does not mean that some considerations about fulfilled intention cannot be pointed out.

From a Davidsonian point of view, the main requirement of fulfilled intention is to have a *reasonable* intention (Puolakka, 2011, p. 47). An agent has a reasonable intention when she has two beliefs embedded in her intention: (i) the belief that the intention is logically and empirically achievable – notice that one does not have actually the intention of doing something when one believes it is impossible to do (Davidson 2005: 180) –, and (ii) the belief that the intention achievable in the way she is trying to achieve. In the case of a communicative intention, condition (ii) would be the belief that one is generating proper uptake conditions of what one means.

For example, suppose that grasping the meaning of the famous portrait of the Pope *Innocent X* by F. Bacon (1653) requires experiencing the work in the light of the portrait of the Pope *Inocencio X* by Velázquez (1650). In this sense, we should establish a range of relationships between such as perceiving the former as a distortion of the latter, or as revealing the Pope's actual self, and so on. Now we can wonder how Bacon generated the uptake conditions of the work meaning and how he provided the necessary elements in order to interpreters are able to link both artworks. By entitling the work as *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of the Pope Innocent X* the author gives us a clue of what we have to do at interpreting. In addition, Bacon also bestowed his picture a degree of resemblance with respect to the picture that it refers to: he drawn the Pope in the same position, from the same perspective, sat in the same chair, and so on. If the author had not given us such clues, we probably would see the portrait as merely portraying *Innocent X*, instead of seeing it as being a portrait referring to another portrait. In this way, Bacon provides the conditions that allow us to make a link between both artworks.

We can also wonder whether Bacon had a reasonable intention. The fact that Bacon keeps these resemblances makes in able to preserve the intention of his work refers to Velazquez's work as a reasonable intention. Besides, he fulfilled conditions (i) and (ii): he had a logical and empirically achievable intention, and it was achievable in the way he tried to achieve it, namely, making the interpreters capable to perceive the relationship and the contrast between both works by his successfully satisfied tension between distortion and fidelity.

As Puolakka has pointed out, in the case of a communicative intention, the intention is reasonable when the speaker has "a reasonable belief that that the hearer is ultimately able to interpret the utterance in the way he intends it to be interpreted" (Puolakka, 2011, p. 47). Then, how can the speaker acquire this 'reasonable' belief? In art and in communication, the main criterion in virtue of which the agent decides which way make her intention achievable is the very interpreter. An agent configures her intention depending on her knowledge about the interpreter's readiness to understand her intention performed in a certain way. In this sense, Davidson says: "the speaker wants to be understood, so he intends to speak in such a way that he will be interpreted in a certain way. In order to judge how he will be interpreted, he forms, or uses, a picture of the interpreter's readiness to interpret along certain lines" (Davidson, 2005a, p. 101). Following the previous example, if we could think that Bacon formed "a picture of the interpreter's readiness" by considering that it was a reasonable belief to think that his interpreters became familiar with Velazquez's work, then we have another reason to say that he had a reasonable intention.

This view of fulfilled intention is related to Davidson's non-conventionalist view of language in the following way: if the agent has reasons to think that her interpreter is able to understand the utterance or the work even though she does not restrict herself to conventions, then the agent can have the reasonable intention of not expressing herself conventionally. So to speak, speakers and artists can do whatever they want – even try to do something without restricting themselves to conventions –, provided their interpreter's readiness to understand allows them to do so. The very interpreter is the main factor that conditions the agent's way of performing her intention, not conventions. Thus, rephrasing Stecker, we can come to an approximate definition of fulfilled intention: the success of the in-

tention hinges on agent's correctly employment of the knowledge about the interpreter's readiness to grasp her intention performed in a certain way (which is not necessarily a conventional one).

4. Intention and Creativity

Finally, we can wonder how this view of the role of convention and this view of fulfilled intention are more suitable for intentionalism. The counterpoint of minimizing the relevance of conventions is emphasizing the role of intention, and, according to Davidson, "to emphasize the role of intention is to acknowledge the power of innovation and creativity in the use of language" (Davidson, 2005b, p. 143). If an agent can get rid of the conventional narrowness, then she is able to innovate, to be creative. Precisely, this is what makes intention emerge as a legitimate and necessary criterion to determine the meaning, which is, in turn, what ultimately justifies intentionalism. Intentionalism should not hold a naïve view of language, in virtue of which the only speakers' skill is to combine some given elements in accordance to established rules and conventions. Speakers can introduce new elements and new rules for their combination, provided the rest of speakers allow them to do so. Otherwise, we could not be creative as speakers at all. For Davidson "there is no word or construction that cannot be converted to a new use by an ingenious or ignorant speaker", what's more "sheer invention is equally possible" (Davidson, 2005a, p. 100).

We are not confined to conventions, and what we can successfully do with words goes beyond their conventional meaning. But if we do not need conventions to implement our intentions, we do not need conventions to grasp the intentions either. This means that creativity is equally relevant from the agent's point of view as the interpreter's. Davidson takes Joyce as the paradigm of an agent with very adventurous non-conventional but, ultimately, reasonable intentions. For example, Davidson points out that "when he (Joyce) uses the word —if that is what it is— "Dyoublong", there is not much chance of guessing what Joyce means, despite the capitalization of the first letter, unless one has Dublin in mind, something Joyce's readers cannot fail to do" (Davidson, 2005b, p. 152). In order to grasping the pun, one should notice the phonetic similarity among "Dyoublong",

“Do you belong?” and “Dublin”, in such a way that “Dyoublong” contains, somehow, as much a question as its answer.

For Davidson, Joyce, like any writer, “must depend on the knowledge his readers are able to bring to his writings. Much of this knowledge is verbal of course, knowledge of what words ordinarily mean. But in Joyce’s case much of what is required must come from other sources”. Certainly, there is no way of understanding the interpretative play that Joyce offers, unless one knows the relevance of Dublin in Joyce’s literary work. However, in order to this knowledge gives a fruitful interpretative result it is not enough to possess it. The interpreter must exploit another skills, such as originality, inventiveness, etc., in order to put this knowledge into operation, since an interpreter could know perfectly well the relevance of Dublin in Joyce’s work and not be able to grasp the pun. Thus, creativity is as important as knowledge, and creativity is as relevant for the user as for the interpreter. Being creative in the use of language would not have any interest if the interpreters lacked the creativity necessary to grasp innovative usages.

This connection between intention and creativity makes better intentionalism because it provides a view of linguistic interpretation that conforms better to our experience of interpreting art, where we need be creative and use our imagination in order to put our knowledge into operation. The non-conventionalist approach shows that we do the same in our linguistic actions as in their interpretation. Since the project of a kind of moderate intentionalism which maintains the necessity of conventions in an intentionalist view or work meaning would hardly leave a room for creativity, it seems to me not just unnecessary, but also detrimental.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to counteract the view of intentionalism that tries to make it compatible with conventionalism. But my purpose of justifying the unviability of this approach of moderate intentionalism does not obey to a desire of recovering a stronger view. Mainly, it has to do with two ideas: firstly, I consider that minimizing the relevance of conventions underpins and widens the explanatory capacity of the linguistic paradigm

intentionalism is generally based on, and secondly, I think that by paying attention to what happens in language and in art, a non-conventionalist model conforms better to reality. Thereby, rather than focusing on how intentionalism could explain the author's fallibility without resorting to conventions, I have intended to show why including conventions is not a good solution for this problem. Certainly, this does not demonstrate that moderate intentionalism is not totally necessary. Saying that convention are not necessary in order to get over problem of author's infallibility says nothing about how intentionalism could face this problem without resorting to a moderate approach. Given this paper is a part of a wider project, I have an idea on how this could possible. According the notion of fulfilled intention that I have defend, an agent provides the uptake conditions of her intention taking into account the interpreter. That is, the agent cannot choose unilaterally the uptake conditions of meaning. This gives us the clue; could we say, in any sense, that an agent be infallible if fulfilling the intention does not depend on herself totally? I do not think so, but this is a matter for another paper.

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Forgetting Architecture — Investigations into the Poetic Experience of Architecture

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ABSTRACT. To forget architecture means to show that architecture is not solely related to the execution of a functional plan but is also a creation whose shapes possess a material order as well as an emotional, historical and symbolic one. Architecture is different from construction in that it is the expression of the human need to occupy space and to possess and dwell in places created for life, gods and history. Architecture is a stage (Rossi), which is to say that we are dealing with the conditions that permit life to manifest itself in all its ambiguity and uncertainty. For this reason, architecture must be uncertain and ambiguous. Forgetting architecture means neither that its rigour and precision should be abandoned nor that the development of construction strategies and methods is unimportant. In this case, forgetting serves to highlight three aspects: 1) man does not inhabit abstract spaces but places that are configured by taking into account the most common human activities and experiences; 2) architecture is the expression of a way of thinking (Wittgenstein); 3) architecture should become invisible in the name of human experiences and actions; in other words, architecture extends a form of life.

*“There was a time when I experienced architecture
without thinking about it.”*

(Zumthor)

*“In order to be significant,
architecture must be forgotten.”*

(Rossi)

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1. Introduction

Forgetting architecture means showing that architecture is not solely related to the execution of a function but is also a creation whose shape possesses a material order as well as an emotional, historical and symbolic one. Architecture is different from construction in that it is the expression of the human need to occupy space and to possess and dwell in places created for life, gods and history.

According to Rossi's poetic-architectonic intuition, architecture is a stage, which is to say that we are dealing with the conditions that permit life to manifest itself in all its ambiguity and uncertainty. For this reason, architecture must be *uncertain and ambiguous*, which does not refer to any kind of imprecision but the demand that each building must always have some emptiness and incompleteness that can only be fulfilled by a certain human dwelling, its history and demands.

Forgetting architecture means neither that its rigor and precision should be abandoned in favor of a pure poetics of construction, nor that the development of construction strategies, methods and technologies is unimportant.

But it serves to highlight three aspects:

1. Man does not inhabit abstract, geometrical, transcendental and absolute spaces but places that are configured by the most common human activities and experiences.
2. Architecture is the expression of a way of thinking whose sphere should be described, a thought process that is not technical but related to the presence of man on earth, and in this respect "architecture is like philosophy" (Wittgenstein).
3. Architecture should disappear and be forgotten in order for life to happen, that is, architectural "objects" should become invisible in the name of human experiences and actions; or to use a Wittgenstein concept, architecture is a form of life.

In what follows I will discuss these 3 points moving from the identification of the original conflict in architecture, to the discussion of architecture as

a way of looking at things and finally to Zumthor's poetic demand that one lives architecture without noticing it.

2. Architecture: between Logic and Contingency

We can consider that the original conflict in architecture is the one between a will-to-order *versus* construction, use and site. These opposing modalities organize much of architectural discourse, theory and practice. In the first one we have a kind of architectonic *a priori* that independently of any kind of resistance (empirical, material) forces a certain form. A desire of the dreamed design, an ambition for the materialization of the primary abstraction and model. Not planned according to a certain experience, but driven by an ideal solution. In this, any kind of alteration of the original is understood as a deviation and disorder. But any architect [and in this respect any artist] will know that absolute materialization of the desired form is impossible and architecture is an ambivalent process between the design abstraction and the concrete conditions of construction and use.

Jan Turnovsky describes this situation in terms of the relation of architecture with the conceptual and the concrete existing orders:

When architecture follows an abstract concept, it is defined by a categorical compositional will-to-order. The alternative approach produces architecture that is committed to concrete existing conditions related to constructions, use or site; in this case, compositional intentions and rules — to the degree that they are even evoked — are subject to, or diverted by, such contingencies [...]. In the first case we have rigid geometry and absolute order, with forms and alignments that disregard contingent conditions — a heroic distancing of the man-made from the natural. In the second case there is a casual pragmatism, an almost ad hoc, incidental accommodation of anomalous and unique conditions.¹

In a certain sense we can speak of the need for negativity and for the accident that form a fundamental ambivalence experienced in architecture.

¹ Turnovsky, Jan, (2009) *The Poetics of a Wall Projection*, p. 21

There is a moment when one can no longer speak of functions, forms or construction logic and is confronted with an undetermined space. And it is precisely in this fundamental ambivalence that Jan Turnovsky places the poetic of architecture.

The fundamental poetics that emerge from the continual oscillations between pragmatic and aesthetical functions, which can tip even the most straightforward object into a state of ambiguity.²

The ambiguity here under discussion is related to a fundamental distinction in architecture, a kind of two opposing tendencies, or factors. This opposition is between structure and individual elements or accidents; in philosophical terms, the question here is the polarity between logic-conceptual and the empirical or, if one prefers, between formal and material.

In terms of the discussion of architecture we are dealing here with, the main opposition that is the one that exists between architecture as object and architecture as scenario or landscape. This original ambiguity is not an accident or something one must fight to get rid off, but it is this ambiguity that allows the life of architecture and its relation with the various forms of life. These are the reasons why for Aldo Rossi architecture should retain this ambiguity (which can be seen as essential) at its core and as one of its primal forces. I will get back to Rossi, but it is important to further characterize the mentioned architectonic primal conflict.

3. Wittgenstein in Architecture: a House Turned Logic

Wittgenstein plays an important role in the argument being developed here. And for two main reasons: first, because of the role the house he designed and built plays in my discussion and second because of his later very brief writings on architecture.

The first point is taken up in the text by Turnovsky where he makes a brilliant exegesis of the Wittgenstein house and establishes some important connections between architecture, philosophy, aesthetics and poetics. But my point here is not a discussion of the Wittgenstein house or the way

² Turnovsky, Jan, (2009) *The Poetics of a Wall Projection*, p. 84

a certain logical philosophy can be translated into a house. For our purposes, it is enough to bear in mind the known conflict between the built reality and the abstract concept which is displayed in all the stories about the design and construction of that famous Vienna House. Common to all those stories is the existing conflict between Wittgenstein's design and the construction and its materials, i.e., the concrete conditions of architecture; a conflict that demanded a continuous re-design. The most famous examples are the door handles and the corner radiators: unsatisfied with all the door-handles, heaters and all the ironmongery, he forced the contractor to find a factory that created special pieces for his house. What is remarkable is that this strain is a kind of extension from the strain played by Wittgenstein philosophy: namely, and to keep it simple, between the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. I do not intend to establish any kind of illustration of his philosophical ideas and development, but to underline — following Turnovsky's argument — a certain “analogy of failure”:

It is entirely possible that the *Tractatus* and the Wittgenstein House share certain similarities, or ‘structural’ elements. What is noticeable for us, however, is the analogy of failure. More apparent and more meaningful than the resonance of certain passages of the *Tractatus* with the ‘simple and static beauty of the house’ is the process of escalating complication that plays out in the hands of the designer, or before the eyes of the beholder. A respect for empirical facts is a prerequisite for any meaningful confrontation with the problems of architecture. Such respect is characteristic of Wittgenstein's later philosophy.³

Besides all these important aspects — which would open a new line of reasoning, namely about the need for reconciliation in architecture between the practical and the aesthetical, interest and pure contemplation and to speak of a kind of useful poetics — Wittgenstein was able to make some important and striking contributions to the clarification of what is the heart of architecture.

In one of his fragments he liberates architecture from the burden of function:

³ Ibidem, pp. 35-36

*Architecture is a gesture. Not every purposive [zweckmässige] movement of the human body is a gesture. Just as little as every functional building is architecture.*⁴

The main point is not that architecture is not dedicated to the fulfillment of a certain function, it is not the dismissal of any kind of purpose in building, but a kind of postulate that architecture is not defined by any function because (and here we can also hear Rossi's words) architecture can serve many purposes, many lives, many people, because — says Rossi — architecture has to do with the pursuit of happiness.

In Rossi's words, the usual function with which we are used to define architecture is replaced by its being a vehicle for life and its unforeseeable events:

Architecture becomes the vehicle for an event we desire, whether or not it actually occurs [...] It is for this reason that the dimensions of a table or a house are very important — not, as the functionalists thought, because they carry out a determined function, but because they permit other functions. Finally, because they permit everything that is unforeseeable in life.⁵

And it is the unforeseeable that composes the expression of architecture. Of course, in any case, the architect must not forget that his gesture must also respond to a certain functional demand, but what I am stressing here is that the optimization of a function does not exhaust architecture. On the contrary:

It is evident that every object has a function to which it must respond, but the object does not end at that point because functions vary over time. This has always been a rather scientific assertion of mine, and I have extracted it from the history of the city and of human life: from the transformations of a palace, an amphitheater, a convent, a house, or of their various contexts.⁶

⁴ Wittgenstein, L., (1998), *Culture and Value*, MS126 15r: 28.10.1942

⁵ Rossi, Aldo, (1984) *A Scientific Autobiography*, p. 3

⁶ *ibidem*, pp. 74-75

Rossi speaks of this freedom from function and relates it with issues about typology and its importance. In the sense when a building has the right geometry and clear typology it can serve many functions, many times, many people. What Rossi is thinking is that the stiffness of the geometrical design - the strong typology — is what allows a given building to be pertinent in several different contexts: to be able to stage several different plays, to use Rossi favorite metaphor for architecture.

Getting back to Wittgenstein identification of architecture with a gesture it is important to underline that in the comparison the philosopher makes what is remarkable is how he shows that architecture is not concentrated in itself, but is rather a response or, if one prefers, a reaction. But what architecture expresses is fundamentally a thought:

Remember the impression made by good architecture, that it expresses a thought. One would like to respond to it too with a gesture.⁷

I will not develop here Wittgenstein's argument about gesture and the role it plays in aesthetic reactions. For my purposes, it is enough to state that a gesture is not a mechanic movement, without intention or purpose, but has a crucial part in the action of experiencing certain music, poems or paintings. It is as if a gesture is an external criterion for understanding something the subject experiences and understands but for which words are lacking [Rossi quoting Hölderlin will speak of his own architecture as *sprachloos*]. And so the gesture is not only a response but also a description of a certain impression, experience or, as Wittgenstein will add, thinking.

But the gesture does not express itself, rather it expresses a certain way of thinking, imagining and looking at things. And so architecture in its being a gesture is also this thinking, imagining and looking at things: a way of understanding one might say.

Wittgenstein writes:

Work on philosophy — like work in architecture in many respects — is really more work on oneself. On one's own conception. On how

⁷ "Erinnere Dich an den Eindruck guter Architektur, daß sie einen Gedanken ausdrückt. Man möchte auch ihr mit einer Geste folgen." Wittgenstein, op. cit., MS 156a 25r: ca. 1932-1934

one sees things. (And what one expects of them.)⁸

This proximity between philosophy and architecture is based on methodological affinity (the need for a clear, unobstructed vision being its main foundation) and on the fact that both of them aim at reaching a feeling of well-being and harmony, what Wittgenstein calls a homecoming. This place is not so much the maternal womb of Freud and the Surrealists (timeless and imageless), but that place in which philosophy stops (to the philosopher philosophy stops when he/she “is no longer tormented by questions“ and finds peace) and where architecture is so much a part of life that we stop noticing it. Finding home is not only the main desire of philosophical activity, but also of architecture: to find the place where we can honor the dead and the gods, celebrate the living and wait for the future. The radical possibility raised by Wittgenstein is that maybe this house we want to return to, where all questions will cease and we can be happy, is a place where we have never been and so we have to return to a place where we might have never been and thus we won't be able to recognize it. This way the return turns out to be a creation of one's own place in world: home. An idea of home closer to Rossi's own ideas of homeland:

My country may be nothing more than a street or a window; and while it may be difficult to recover one's 'homeland' once it has been lost, the concept need not to contradict the notion of the citizen of the world.⁹

This possibility demands that we invent not only our future but also our past: our origin, the place we came from. For this reason, for Rossi architecture has to be “an architecture from the interior.”¹⁰

⁸ “Die Arbeit an der Philosophie ist — wie vielfach die Arbeit in der Architektur — eigentlich mehr die Arbeit en Einem selbst. An der eignen Auffassung. Daran, wie man die Dinge sieht. (Und was man von ihnen verlangt.)” Wittgenstein, op. cit., MS 112 46: 14.10.1931

⁹ Rossi, A., op. cit., p. 55

¹⁰ Rossi, A., p. 26

4. The Need for Ambiguity

I wish only to emphasize how a building, how architecture may be a primary element onto which life is grafted.¹¹

All I have been doing so far is showing that the primary aspect of architecture is its being a place where life can happen. And life in its multiple variations is not compatible with a straight and strict architectonic order, and for this reason ambiguity and incompleteness are necessary in order to respond to life's manifold manifestations. Rossi sees this ambiguity and incompleteness in theater. His frequent use of theater as a metaphor for the ambitions of his projects and for all architecture to come is related with the fact that a theater is only a frame, a kind of silent presence that gives a solid structure to different situations; it is there but keeps vanishing and never appears as an autonomous object: it is only a platform for events to take place on.

The theater is inseparable from its stage sets, its models, the experience of every combination; and the stage is reduced to the artisan's or scientist's work-table. It is experimental as science is experimental, but it casts its peculiar spell on every experiment. Inside the theater nothing can be accidental, yet nothing can be permanently resolved either.¹²

The question (a version of which I have identified in the beginning as the primal conflict of architecture) is that even though architecture has to contain life and its unpredictable events, this unpredictability is not a way to dismiss the need for rigor and the awareness that buildings are not accidental, but solid structures that resist time.

My purpose here is not to state a definition of architecture as being mainly and essentially performatic, but to underline that the form produced by architects is defined not by a *a priori* function, condition or order, but by its use [to continue the approaches to Wittgenstein philosophy, it is interesting to think of the role that 'use' has in the definition of a word]. This use-value does not mean the contingency of any given built form, but

¹¹ Rossi, A., op. cit., p. 20

¹² Rossi, A., op. cit, p. 33

draws attention to the fact that architecture is constantly being defined and gaining new orders, new uses, new lives. A permanent metamorphosis of architecture that in contemporary practice has gained the name of re-use. This practice is directed to the fact that it is not the initial function according to which a certain building has been built that defines it and that gives it a certain quality, but rather the ability of being permanently converted into several different functions, resisting time and a multitude of uses and people. The need to accommodate new uses, new forms of life, new functions, requires architecture to be forgotten just as in a theater one forgets the stage and what comes to attention is the life performed in a given frame: it is as if this frame-space was a kind of condition of possibility for life itself. For this reason forgetfulness and silence are so important for architecture to carry out its destiny.

The architect must prepare his instruments with the modesty of a technician; they are the instruments of an action which we can only glimpse, or imagine, although he knows that the instrument itself can evoke and suggest the action. I particularly love empty theaters with fez lights lit and, most of all, those partial rehearsals where the voices repeat the same bar, interrupt it, resume it.¹³

And architecture needs to be uncertain and ambiguous because life is also uncertain and ambiguous. An ambiguity one can see when a building appears open to be completed by people, their desires, a space where life and death can happen. All the happenings to-come that will take place in this theater are allowed by architecture, but they are not anticipated by the architect. New possibilities are always unexpectedly added, they are unimaginable possible uses of constructed sites that could not have been anticipated by the designed project.

5. Forgetability, Silence and Muteness

I have translated the last lines of a Hölderlin poem into my own architecture: "The walls stand mute and cold, in the wind the banners

¹³ Rossi, Aldo, p. 20

creak". I concluded one of my lectures at Zurich with this quotation, which I apply to all my projects: My architecture stands cold and mute.¹⁴

This depiction of Rossi's architecture must not be confused with any kind of severity or aesthetical austerity, but his architecture is cold and mute because it is not the buildings that have the fire and the words but the people who inhabit them. It is always the dwelling that gives architecture its expression and its words: its warmth and fire. Being cold and mute is another way of saying the need to forget architecture:

In order to be significant, architecture must be forgotten, or must present only an image for reverence which subsequently becomes confounded with memories.¹⁵

Forgetting Architecture comes to mind as a more appropriate title for this book, since while I may talk about a school, a cemetery, a theater, it is more correct to say I talk about life, death, imagination.¹⁶

The need to forget architecture comes not only because the sites built by architecture should allow the unexpected, but also because architecture is not about itself. Rather it is concerned with life just as it is lived by real people in real lives [and it is in this sense that the ethical commitment of architecture is strongly present]. In this we can detect a strong criticism by Rossi against the modern discourse on the autonomy of architecture and its focus on its own conditions, its own processes. For Rossi — as for Wittgenstein — architecture — and we should add philosophy — is an activity turned towards the exterior, the outside, to the imperfections of constructions, their cracks, ruins, and failures.

At this point, it is worth making an important remark. I am not proposing that architecture should only be receptive to life, site, construction conditions, etc. It is true that architecture, just as philosophy, is an effort of clear vision, an effort to see things clearly and to dismiss all possible

¹⁴ Rossi, A., op. cit., p. 44

¹⁵ Rossi, A., op. cit., p. 45

¹⁶ Rossi, A., op. cit., p. 78

confusions and discomforts. It is useful to remember Wittgenstein's image of the philosopher as the one who looks for the place where the shoe tightens and when he finds it the discomfort goes away:

One of the most difficult of the philosopher's tasks is to find out where the shoe pinches.¹⁷

Rossi does not speak of uncomfortable places, but of happiness and love. And for life to be happy it must have a structure inside which to happen: a theater performance can only happen inside the frame of a stage. The stage can have many and unimaginable forms, but in order to bring a certain action to life the actor always needs a certain frame. And it is to building this structure of allowance of action and events that architecture is committed too.

The architectonic aspects I have been discussing do not constitute an architectural program in the strict sense of the projection of a space, nor do they try to establish a manifesto for future architecture. Rather, they are paths for the development of an understanding of a certain kind of architectonic experience which is centered not on the invention of form, function, materials or construction systems but on the discipline's relations to people, nature and memory. This commitment forces not only each architectural proposal to spring from a strong attention to the outside world and to the rites of people [remember that for Rossi architecture is a rite and for Wittgenstein man is a ritual animal], but also reveals that its commitment is to the grafting of life and to putting things in their right place and giving things a certain order: that is why typologies are so important.

In this sense, the architectonic experience here at stake exceeds in a kantian sense all that is given, all logic and function, and it reveals itself, to use Peter Zumthor words, as an atmosphere. A concept that does not set something exterior to architecture itself, but indicates what an architectonic quality is. Atmosphere is not an element one can simply add to a given building, but the condition of life itself:

Put someone in the wrong atmosphere [Atmosphäre] & nothing will function as it should. He will seem unhealthy in every part. Bring

¹⁷ Wittgenstein, L., (1984), Notebooks 1914-1916, 15.6.1915

him back into his right element [das richtige Element], & everything will blossom and look healthy.¹⁸

I will not dwell here on the importance of Peter Zumthor's insights on architecture but he really is a permanent presence in all of my discussion. Just two brief notes: he states that when doing architecture one must go back to the times when one lived architecture without noticing it and with this he is stating the need to forget architecture in order to be able to make architecture. And what one must forget is the technical, the ready-made solution, the idea of Style. Modernism and its international style, proposing identical building design and site solutions anywhere in the world [one single example: Courbusier *Unité d'Habitation* that has the same measures, volumes, forms and materials in Marseille, Berlin or Chandigar in India], is here under a strong attack. Finally, the way Zumthor identifies architecture as a commitment in creating atmospheres, as the need for architectural thinking to deal with elements such as light, sound, sensuality, etc. architecture is not about exquisite design, expressive forms, pure innovation, but it is a way of allowing life to happen, and for this it must remain attentive to the world, to imagination, life and death. Finding the place where life can work without any kind of restraints is the big architectonic utopia.

6. Poetics of Architecture

In a very brief, but accurate remark, Turnosky states:

True poetics is always both poetic and non-poetic, i.e. practical, this kind of fundamental ambiguity is actually more compatible with architecture, where it is supported by the heterogeneity of components and functions, than it is with literature, where it is only conceivable in opposition to the implicit monofunctionality of the text. [...] An architectural poetics based on these two forms of ambivalence reveals two mutually reinforcing conditions: 1) the fundamental poetics that emerge from continual oscillations between pragmatic and aesthetic functions, which can tip even the most straightforward

¹⁸ Wittgenstein, L., (1998) *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, MS 125 58v: 18.5.1942

object into a state of ambiguity; 2) the poetics of fundamentals that emerge from the immutable principle of syntax, which turns architecture into a quagmire of formal / aesthetic intentions¹⁹

These words go straight to the main argument I have been trying to get to. Namely that the poetic meaning and content of architecture is achieved when one forgets architecture. That is: one must forget the program that gave birth to a certain project, all the social, political and economical constraints, all the functions a building was primarily designed to fulfill, and concentrate instead on the way buildings perform a continuous oscillation between function, pragmatism, successful performativity [all the interests that in a strict Kantian sense would negate all aesthetical experience] and all those things that exceed the original purpose, the original plan and destination. And what exceeds architecture are smells, sounds, the warmth of a wall, the shades, the feeling of a door handle, the variety of movements people perform, and so on: all those things that Zumthor would call it's atmosphere. But these same elements that exceed architecture are what make us forget the walls, the typology, the structure, and draw our attention to the life happening in it.

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The Aesthetic and Cognitive Value of Surprise

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ABSTRACT. It is a common experience to be surprised by an artwork. In this paper, I examine how and why this obvious fact matters for philosophical aesthetics. Following recent works in psychology and philosophers such as Davidson or Scheffler, we will see that surprise qualifies as an emotion of a special kind, essentially “cognitive” or “epistemic” in its nature and functioning. After some preliminary considerations, I wish to hold two general claims: the first one will be that surprise is somehow related to aesthetic appreciation, because it is often the ground to judge of a work’s value. The second point will be that a functional analysis of surprise provides support for cognitivist accounts of aesthetics. If this picture is right, surprise would generally play an important part in aesthetic experience and should also be seen as a paradigm to study the cognitive powers of art.

Schiele’s paintings, Proust’s novels, Gaudi’s buildings, and Schönberg’s pieces, beyond being considered great artworks, all have at least one thing in common. They are all very likely to surprise anybody encountering them for the first time. But why is that? Is this phenomenon susceptible to philosophical analysis, and is it of any interest for aesthetics? I will try to show in this paper that the answer to this question is a double yes.

Surprise, I take it, is a common reaction to artworks - although it does not need to be a systematic or even a frequent one. Roughly, we can think of three familiar scenarios: (a) an artwork may be experienced as so provocative, original, complex, or innovative, that surprise is a reaction to the work taken as a whole. Any of the artistic pieces cited above could be associated with this kind of experience. (b) Surprise can also be produced by some definite and distinct part of the artwork in its relation to the whole: thus, a *coup de théâtre* in a narrative or a switch and a mismatch (in rhythm, style, tempo, volume, pitch, etc.) between two parts of a song may produce surprise in varying degrees. (c) Eventually, an artwork may

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be experienced as surprising merely on the grounds of our prior beliefs and expectations, and even if there is nothing very special about it. This commonly happens as, for instance when a supposedly bad movie proves to be entertaining after all, or when a much anticipated novel turns out to be disappointing. It is a difficult matter to clear the relations between these sorts of surprises (and certainly, the picture could be refined) or to account for their variety in nature and degree. My aim here will be less to provide a *qualitative* analysis of surprise in the arts than to account for its *functional* role in aesthetic appreciation and more generally in knowledge. In other words, instead of seeing in how many ways artworks may surprise us, we will have to examine why and how they do so. I wish to defend two claims: the first one will be that surprise is linked to aesthetic appreciation taken in a broad sense, because it provides grounds for determining the aesthetic value of artworks. This does not mean, however, that surprise is a necessary or sufficient condition for aesthetic experience or enlightened judgment; and even less that it should be systematically praised as a proof of aesthetic merit. I merely want to hold that the emotion of surprise has something to do with the value we ascribe to artworks. The second claim is that a philosophical analysis of surprise provides the ground for a *cognitivist* account of aesthetics. According to this view or family of views, one must recognize to artworks the capacity to produce new knowledge and beliefs, or at least to have an impact on the epistemic life of individuals¹. I think an analysis of surprise offers a good argument to prove them right, as will be shown. First, I will try to define surprise more accurately and underline its essential link to belief and other epistemic states. In the second part, I will consider several arguments to show there could be a correlation between the aesthetic value of an artwork and its capacity to surprise us. To finish, I will show why surprise can be seen as a support for aesthetic cognitivism, and consider answer to a few possible objections.

¹ See for instance Beardsmore 1971, Elgin & Goodman 1988, Novitz 1987, Nussbaum 1990, Scheffler 1997, Walton 1990.

1. Defining Surprise

What, exactly, is surprise? It is undoubtedly a kind of *emotion*, consisting in the individual's response to some event experienced as unexpected, puzzling, or extraordinary. Surprise is thus felt as a reaction that one can identify by different *physiological* (eyebrows and jaw movements, dilation of the pupil, muscular contractions) and *psychological* (feeling of shock, puzzlement, fear, joy) signs². This emotion can obviously vary in intensity, going from the lightest puzzlement to the most extreme sort of shock or amazement. Psychologists have also remarked that surprise has no *valence*, which means it can be experienced as pleasant or unpleasant (surely, we can have bad surprises). If surprise has been of interest for philosophers and psychologists, this is also -and especially- because of its relation with other cognitive processes. There is no doubt, indeed, that surprise has some kind of *epistemic grounding*, or, to put it otherwise, that it relies on beliefs and knowledge for its proper functioning. If, as we said, our feeling surprised results from facing something unexpected, this necessarily implies that some prior expectation or belief was there in the first place. This link between surprise and other epistemic states has been made clear by Davidson:

“Suppose I believe there is a coin in my pocket. I empty my pocket and find no coin. I am surprised. Clearly enough I could not be surprised (though I could be startled) if I did not have beliefs in the first place. And perhaps it is equally clear that having a belief, at least one of the sort I have taken for my example, entails the possibility of surprise. If I believe I have a coin in my pocket, something might happen that would change my mind. But surprise involves a further step. It is not enough that I first believe there is a coin in my pocket, and after emptying my pocket I no longer have this belief. Surprise requires that I be aware of a contrast between what I did believe and what I come to believe. Such awareness, however, is a belief about a belief: if I am surprised, then among other things I come to believe my original belief was false. I do not need to insist that every case of surprise involves a belief that a prior belief was

² See Darwin 1872; Bain, Woodworth & Schlosberg, 1954; Izard, Meyer & Niepel, 1994; Schützwohl, 1998, Huron 2008.

false (though I am inclined to think so). What I do want to claim is that one cannot have a general stock of beliefs of the sort necessary for having any beliefs at all without being subject to surprises that involve beliefs about the correctness of one's own beliefs. Surprise about some things is a necessary and sufficient condition of thought in general". [Davidson, 1989: 326]

According to Davidson, surprise can generally be used as a test for ascribing beliefs and expectations to individuals. Indeed, the person surprised to find a coin in her pocket only feels that way because she was thinking something different in the first place (e.g., assuming that the coin was in her wallet, or that she had nothing in her pocket etc.). We could not make sense of this emotion without supposing some kind of *doxastic background*, that is, without the individual having some prior opinion, expectation, or idea³. But Davidson shows something more. Surprise has a deeper cognitive function; insofar its occurrence provokes some kind of realization about one's own beliefs. When my (potentially implicit) expectation to find a coin in my pocket turns out to be frustrated, it becomes all the more obvious that I had such a belief, and it immediately entails a realization about how and how much it differs from what is actually the case. This is why Davidson sees the experience of surprise as entailing: (a) some kind of awareness about one's own beliefs; (b) the realization of an objective state of the world, that is, of what is or is not the case, independently of what we previously held to be true; and (c) some kind of change in beliefs, because I must come to realize that my previous belief was inadequate in order to be surprised. For Davidson, thus, surprise is closely related to other notions such as objective truth, error, and belief. The important point is to see that surprise is an emotion of a special kind, because it is made possible by and related to the individual's epistemic attitudes towards the world. It may therefore be defined as a *cognitive emotion*, to borrow the words of Israel Scheffler (2009).

A distinction, however, needs to be made: surprise is not a reaction to mere *novelty*. Unprecedented phenomena constantly occur without surprising us at all, as, for instance, when one goes to a new city. Cer-

³ As Daniel Dennett puts it, "surprise is only possible when it upsets belief" (Dennett, 2001: 982).

tainly that would not count as a kind of surprising event (unless, for some reason, this situation conflicted with the one's beliefs or expectations). Conversely, one can be surprised by ordinary and familiar facts (seeing a friend in the street, getting six tails in a row on a coin toss, etc.). We see that the only necessary condition in order to be surprised is to experience a *conflict* between a *genuine* belief or anticipation and the current state of the world. We can then propose the following model to account for surprise (following Casati & Pasquinelli 2007):

Strong Expectation View

If I genuinely believe or expect that p , and event F occurs such that $\neg p$ is the case, I am surprised.

If I genuinely believe or expect that $\neg p$, and event F occurs such that p is the case, I am surprised

This picture surely accounts for most of the cases we could think of. It however faces one problem: we can clearly be surprised without having specific expectations or beliefs in the first place. For instance, I could be surprised to receive a gift from a friend while having no prior idea that he was going (or not going) to offer me something – e.g., if it is not my birthday, or Christmas. In a way, genuine surprises even seem to exclude any sort of anticipation. How are we to account for this kind of possibilities? The answer is that the epistemic background necessary for surprise does not always need to be *explicit* or even fully *conscious*: it might involve latent stereotypes, habits, inductive associations, implicit inferences, probability reasoning, etc. If we consider all these things as pertaining to our general system of beliefs S , we can propose a second picture to account for these problematic cases (I still follow Casati & Pasquinelli, though I modify their account):

Weak Expectation View

If, even when I do *not* explicitly expect or believe that p , event F occurs such that $\neg p$ is the case and such that $\neg p$ conflicts with my system of beliefs S , I am surprised.

If, even when I do *not* expect or believe that $\neg p$, event F occurs such that p is the case and such that F conflicts with my general system of beliefs S , I am surprised.

This refined framework accounts for the no-expectation cases of surprise, without postulating countless actual and particular entities or propositions in the individuals' minds that would correspond to what is negated in the surprising experience. If we take it that we have some comprehensive, implicit, and higher-level beliefs, we can thus account for any particular surprising experience: it would be puzzling to see a hobbit pop out in my living room not because I held it to be impossible *for a hobbit to pop out in my living room*, but because I more generally think that nothing appears out of thin air or that fictional characters do not exist. If we accept this "layered" view of cognition, then we can also say that surprise is experienced when a specific situation contradicts a fundamental or common belief. My aim in this first part was to provide a clearer account of the nature and functioning of surprise. We saw that it must be defined as a cognitive emotion, consisting in the reaction to the violation of a genuine or of an implicit belief or expectation. It is now time to see why aesthetic surprises matter.

2. Surprise and Works of Art

As we said, artworks sometimes surprise us. But is there any link between this fact and the merits and qualities we grant them? In other words, is surprise significant for our appreciation of art? I will try to provide three arguments in support of an affirmative answer to this question.

(i) The first point we can think of associates surprise with an artwork's functioning. It seems that surprise is necessary to the correct understanding or proper experience of *some* works. There are certain creations specifically intending to produce this emotion and we would probably fail at grasping these works at their full value if we didn't experience any such feeling. By value, I simply mean the qualitative appreciation we can have of a work, resulting from our perceptual, affective, and cognitive encounter with it. Talk about aesthetic value is certainly controversial, but we can stick to a common usage seeing it as the sum of aesthetic merits or flaws in a work of art.

Surprise, I take it, is essential to our experience of certain particular artworks. A good example would be *Him* by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan. The work functions as such: one enters a room in which the sculp-

ture of a kneeling boy, seemingly praying, can be seen from behind. As one moves forward in the room, the face of the child turns out to be that of ... Adolf Hitler's. This is obviously meant to surprise the spectator and defeat his expectations. The work also intends to upset one's common beliefs: the presentation of Hitler as a praying child contradicts our general association of prayer with moral virtue or of Nazism with monstrosity, for instance. I argue that we have here the case of an artwork that relies on surprise for its proper functioning: our experience and judgment would have been altered if the sculpture's front had been seen right from the start, or if one had simply seen its back and moved on to another room. This particular example shows that surprise is central to the functioning of *some* artworks, which means that the latter intend to generate this emotion and that they cannot be experienced in the same way without it.

But couldn't we go further, and say that surprise is necessary for the correct functioning of certain *kinds* of artworks? The point seems obvious in the case of narratives, as long as they involve (dramatic or comical) suspense. Here again, surprise is generally part of the work's proper functioning: a detective novel would lose most of its interest if the identity of the murderer or the outcome of the story was given away right from the start. Even when we know how things will end up (fairy tales, tragedies), we want to see *how* the events are going to take place, that is, have some uncertainties about the development of the narrative⁴. Things should not be transparent-clear right from the start. When a narrative is too obvious, it becomes dull. We want, at some point, to face the unexpected⁵.

The point could also be made in the case of music. Following the seminal intuitions of Meyer (1956), Huron (2006) has laid the stress on certain neurological mechanisms involved in the arousal of surprise and shown that it has an essential relation to other basic emotions (*awe, laughter*;

⁴ Huron suggest something similar: "Suppose you had the opportunity to know in advance all of the future times and places when your most cherished goals or ambitions would be fulfilled. I doubt that many people would want such knowledge. Part of the joy of life is the surprise that accompanies achieving certain wishes. When all of the uncertainty is removed, the capacity for pleasure also seems to be diminished" (Huron, 2006, 39)

⁵ It is worth noting that this idea is not very new: Aristotle says in the *Poetics* that tragedy must produce the *thaumaston* (which means the surprising) by the reversal of the events (*peripeteia*) in order to function properly.

and *frisson*). What matters for us is his idea that music involves certain expectation-fulfilment or anticipation-disappointment patterns, which are biologically grounded but also culturally learnt. It is patent that composers have learnt to play with these entrenched norms in different ways, as Huron remarks:

“There are four basic forms of surprise [...] A *schematic surprise* arises when a commonplace (schematic) event is displaced by an event of lower probability. Musical examples of such surprises include deceptive cadences and chromatic mediant chords. A *dynamic surprise* arises in response to events that have a low probability given the listener’s encounter with previous passages in that same work thus far. Musical examples include rhythmic hemiola, and the “surprise” chord in Haydn’s Surprise Symphony. A *veridical surprise* arises in response to events that have a low probability of occurrence given past experiences with the work. Musical examples of such surprises include performance errors, intentional misquotations (such as Schickele’s thematic joking), and unfamiliar interpretive nuances applied to works that are otherwise highly familiar to a listener. A *conscious surprise* is a rare form of surprise [...] it arises when a knowledgeable listener consciously infers some future event, which then does not take place” (2006: 303).

Huron is proposing what we called a qualitative account of (musical) surprises, and we can see that there are many potential ways for musical works to be surprising. From here, it could certainly be argued that, although music need not necessarily surprise us to be pleasant or valuable, it is essential to its functioning to rely on and sometimes defeat our expectations.

To summarize, entire kinds of artworks rely on the (possible) production of surprise to function properly and to be experienced as they should. We need of course to distinguish the surprise an artwork intends to produce and the one we actually feel. A work may try to be surprising and not succeed (and vice versa). But in any case, it seems clear that surprise plays some role in our experience of the artwork, in the determination of its qualities or interest, that is, in its *value*. The argument is then the following:

- (a) The (possible) experience of surprise is necessary to the correct functioning of some artworks or kinds of artworks.

(b) When they fail to surprise us, these artworks do not function correctly.

(c) Correct functioning is significant to determine an artwork's value

(Conclusion) Surprise is therefore significant to determine some artworks' value.

(ii) I come to my second argument. Is it possible to go further, and to claim that *generally*, the higher our surprise, the more grounds we have to judge of the work's merits and flaws? That is, can we correlate our level of surprise with our ascription of value? This idea is promising. Indeed, we often say of good art that it surprised us one way or another (e.g., in expressing original ideas, using new techniques or styles) and of bad art that it failed to do so, being boring, dull, and ordinary. Masterworks are also generally considered to be the most surprising ones, because they convey something revolutionary, absolutely new, and irremediably rich. What about bad surprises, though? Certainly, some artworks can disappoint us, or shock us in a bad way. Well, even in these cases, surprise still proves to be correlated with a judgment of value. For instance, if I am disappointed in my expectation that a novel is going to be great when I read it, it is still a response to the work, and it is still a ground for judging of its value or its interest. To be struck by a mismatch or an inconsistency is still a relevant response for aesthetic judgment. Avant-garde works, such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, or Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, often lead to this sort of reactions in the first place ("This is not art!"), where the surprise or shock of the audience was immediately associated with an aesthetic appreciation. Surprise, then, seems to be a basis for many aesthetic judgements. Once more, I do not claim that all artworks have to surprise us to have an aesthetic value, or that a good artwork should be surprising. I simply hold that it seems possible to *generally* correlate the amount of surprise produced by a work with the intensity of our response to it, and thus with our judgments of value. The point could be put as such:

(a) The more an artwork surprises us, the stronger is our reaction to it.

(b) The stronger our reaction is to an artwork, the more ground we have to determine its value (merits and flaws).

(Conclusion) The more an artwork surprises us, the more we can determine its value.

(iii) I come to the last point. There seems to exist a strong link between surprise and creativity. Indeed, we generally consider creative artists to be the ones breaking or renewing the established codes and conventions, proposing something unprecedented, making us think or feel in a new way. The ability to produce surprise, then, could perhaps be seen as a sign of artistic mastery or a criterion for creativity. If this is true, it would provide support for our claim that surprise is significant to determine a work's aesthetic value. According to Margaret A. Boden (2004), there are several ways in which the ability to produce surprise is essentially linked to creativity:

“Creativity is the ability to come up with ideas or artifacts that are new, surprising and valuable [...] An idea may be surprising because it's unfamiliar, or even unlikely [...] This sort of surprise goes against statistics. The second sort of surprise is more interesting. An unexpected idea may 'fit' into a style of thinking that you already had – but you're surprised because you hadn't realized that this particular idea was part of it. Maybe you're even intrigued to find that an idea of this general type fits into the familiar style. And the third sort of surprise is more interesting still: this is the astonishment you feel on encountering an apparently impossible idea. It just couldn't have entered anyone's head, you feel – and yet it did. It may even engender other ideas which, yesterday, you'd have thought equally impossible” (Boden, 2004: 2-3).

For Boden, three kinds of creativity correspond to these three sorts of surprises. *Combinational creativity* consists in the association of familiar ideas or elements in some novel and unfamiliar ways. One can see it at work in successful analogies and metaphors (think of Eluard's verse, “*La terre est bleue comme une orange*”) or in fusions of styles. Secondly, there would be the *exploratory creativity*, in which a familiar “conceptual space” (i.e. a style of thinking or established practice) is used in some unprecedented way. It may consist for instance in the modification of an entrenched artistic tradition (e.g. *Still life with eggplant* by Matisse). This

sort of creativity prompts the reader, spectator, or audience to consider something that could have been thought of within the familiar conceptual space, but with an acuity that brings to light new aspects or consequences. Lastly, *transformational creativity* consists in some extreme modification or replacement of a whole conceptual space, as when Schönberg decided to break the traditional laws of occidental harmony, or when perspective was (re)discovered and theorized in Renaissance Italy. This sort of creativity is obviously the most impressive one, because it leads to completely unexpected works or ideas, such as they could not even have been imagined before. Boden's account could be discussed further. What matters to us is the point that creativity often consists in the ability to generate surprises. This does not imply, once more, that surprise is necessary or sufficient condition for anything: a work may be creative just because it conveys some minor changes that will generate no strong surprise or no surprise at all (one can get this feeling when several works of a painter are exhibited in chronological order, for instance). Surprise may also be provoked by non-creative works. Still, we should grant that generally, creative works do surprise us, somehow. Our argument can then be summarized as follows:

- (a) Creativity often involves the artist's ability to surprise.
- (b) The creativity of an artwork is a ground for determining its aesthetic value.
- (Conclusion) Surprise is significant for determining a work's aesthetic value.

3. Surprise, Artworks, and Cognitivism

I have tried to show that surprise is a ground for our aesthetic judgements, that is, for our appreciation of a work's merits or flaws. We can now come to our second claim, namely, that a philosophical analysis of surprise supports aesthetic cognitivism. What I intend to do now is to show that surprise is not only cognitive in its origins, but fundamentally in its outcome or *consequences*. Aesthetic cognitivism, as we said, is the philosophical view according to which art can produce knowledge or have an impact on our epistemic life. Cynthia Freeland defines it more precisely as the thesis that "(1) Artworks stimulate cognitive activity that may teach us about the

world; (2) The cognitive activity they stimulate is part and parcel of their functioning as artworks. (3) As a result of this stimulation, we learn from artworks: we acquire fresh knowledge, our beliefs are refined, and our understanding is deepened ...” (Freeland 1997: 19). Why would an emotion such as surprise provide support for such a view? The answer, I think, has already been sketched: being the reaction to a conflict between our beliefs and reality, it commands a modification of our thinking in order to adjust with the world’s objective state. If I experience a mismatch between my expectations or beliefs and a current perceptual input (“Wait! Is that a hedgehog on my couch?”), I can try to *verify* whether this is really the case. If, after verification, I come to correct the input (“it was just my cat after all”), the conflict is solved; but if the mismatch persists (“I am sure my cat doesn’t have spikes on his back”), then I am genuinely surprised and I have either to revise my beliefs or to find an explanation to make sense of this event. Generally, when facing something implausible or unexpected, we have two options: we can either decide to accept this new fact and consequently change some of our beliefs; or we can stick to our old ideas and try to find an explanation to deny or account for the occurrence of the surprising event.

Surprise, to sum up, often entails a process of *reflective equilibrium* between the web of our beliefs and experience, in order to end the state of epistemic distress or dissonance caused by the surprising event. In any case, its occurrence tends to initiate some epistemic change. It is worth noting that such a claim is also found and investigated in evolutionary psychology, where one can understand the belief-change induced by surprise as a functional, adaptive mechanism:

“One of the adaptive functions of surprise is exactly this. Belief change in cognitive agents is triggered by very surprising incoming input. The intensity of surprise relative to the incoming input “signals” to the agent that things are not going as expected and that the knowledge of the environment must be reconsidered. Indeed, wrong beliefs generally lead to bad performances and to failure in the intention and goal fulfillment. On the other hand resource bounded cognitive agents do not generally reconsider their beliefs and expectations when the input data are not recognized to be incompatible or implausible with respect to their pre-existent knowledge [...] When

the world flows as expected and we are not aware of the inadequacy of our knowledge of the world, we do not need to criticize and re-consider this knowledge". [Lorini & Castelfranchi, 2006: 19]

If surprise results from a failure to predict and anticipate the actual course of events, it is natural to think that it must provoke a modification of an individual's behaviour and beliefs. But how does all this relate to artworks?

We could argue that many artworks intend to produce such belief revision, by intentionally frustrating our expectations. A good example would be the following: Spanish artist Joan Foncuberta produced a series of photographs called '*Constelaciones*' (1994). In the first place, they seem to be pictures of the sky, evoking the traditional sublime theme of cosmic immensity. During the exhibition, however, some hints are given to suggest that something is not quite right. By the end, the spectator just realizes (or is told) that these pictures are in fact photograms of the artist's wind-screen after he drove several hundred kilometres on the highway. All these stars, comets, planets, and moons, are just insects who met a rather a sad fate. Here the artist makes one looks at insects in a rather novel way, but he also questions the audience about the trust they have in museums and artists (this idea is a constant theme of his work). Here, we can see that surprise provokes a realization (and a possible revision) of some generally held beliefs, say, that "insects are gross", that "artists don't lie"; or that "the beauty of the night sky has something unique about it". The surprise produced by an artwork, as suggested by this example, can be seen as an invitation to review or even to revise our beliefs, be it about art in general or about something else.

Surprise, in the end, proves to be cognitive in its outcome, because it can impact our thinking. When an artwork (or anything else) surprises us, we generally seek for an explanation in order resolve the conflict -even if we could also choose a retreat into terror, denial or indifference. This is why, following the seminal claims of Nelson Goodman (1968), Israel Scheffler has depicted surprise (along with what he calls the "joy of verification") as a driving force for inquiry and further discoveries:

"Surprise may be dissipated and evaporate into lethargy. It may culminate in confusion or panic. It may be swiftly overcome by dogmatism. Or it may be transformed into wonder or curiosity, and so

become an educative occasion. Curiosity replaces the impact of surprise with the demand for explanation; it turns confusion into question. To answer the question is to reconstruct initial beliefs so that they may consistently incorporate what had earlier been unassimilable. It is to provide an improved framework of premises by which the surprising event might have been anticipated and for which parallel events will no longer surprise. The constructive conquest of surprise is registered in the achievement of new explanatory structures, while cognitive application of these structures provokes surprise once more. Surprise is vanquished by theory, and theory is, in turn, overcome by surprise [...] The growth of cognition is thus, in fact, inseparable from the education of the emotions". [Scheffler, 2009: 139]

Scheffler's claim, which we will follow here, is rather moderate: although we cannot claim that all surprises are cognitive or even meaningful, we can hold that they *can* (and often do) have an impact on the epistemic life of the individuals. If we grant this point, and if we recognize that artworks can surprise us, we consequently have to admit that a surprise produced by an artwork may lead us to acquire new beliefs or to revise some prior ones. It entails that aesthetic cognitivism is true. The argument could be sketched as such:

- (a) Surprise only exists relatively to beliefs, expectations, and knowledge.
- (b) Surprise urges for belief-change or belief-justification.
- (c) Artworks can surprise us.
- (Conclusion 1) Artworks can induce belief change or new belief justification.
- (Conclusion 2) Artworks have a cognitive power.
- (Conclusion 3) Aesthetic cognitivism is true.

4. Some Unsurprising Worries

Several general objections could be made to what has been said here. I want to address the most obvious ones:

(i) First of all, one could argue that surprise is too context-sensitive and too loose of a concept to be included in any serious theory. After all, anybody could be surprised by anything, given different situations, and relatively to one's prior expectations or beliefs – with the bizarre consequence that the less you know, the more often you are to be surprised. Moreover, as we noted, a work may want to be surprising without succeeding at it (or vice versa) and it seems possible to enjoy or hate very ordinary art. There would thus seem to be no logical link between the felt surprise and the work's purpose or qualities. Surprise could not indicate anything about a work's value, unless one considers the latter as being also relative to context and individuals.

(ii) We have said that some surprises are aesthetic, while all of them are cognitive in their grounding. This could be challenged, since there seem to be events that would count as surprising without requiring any particular epistemic or intentional background. In a way, the expectation-requirement for surprise leads to the implausible idea that one must be ready to (or have reasons to) be surprised in order to be so. According to Benoist (2013), following Meyer (1956), we should make a distinction between the *unexpected* and the *surprising*. While the first requires some epistemic framework or expectation to arise, the second does not presuppose such a thing. For instance, to be startled by a firecracker that has gone off behind me, or by the loud and sudden cymbal in Haydn's 94 symphony, does not presuppose any expectation or anticipation, but seems just a purely emotional and reflex reaction. Far from being something *unexpected*, the essence of the surprising would amount to what strikes us when we were not expecting *anything* at all. We should thus deny that surprise is (always) necessarily linked to belief or knowledge.

(iii) One could eventually object that the correlation of surprise and aesthetic value does not work, because it seems that some of our judgments take place in the long run, after all the effects of surprise are gone. Psychologists have even shown that people are more likely to enjoy works they are more familiar with, so that presentations in a better-known style or by a better-known artist induce more positive responses (this is the so-called 'mere exposure effect'). Habit, thus, would prove as good a candidate as

novelty in judging of a works' value.

Are these objections definitive? We must concede to (i) that surprise is context-sensitive. Certainly, what surprises one leaves another indifferent, and it is hard to know in advance what will puzzle whom and why. This is the reason why, as said in the introduction, a qualitative theory of surprise seems difficult; it also explains why we cannot say that a work *will be good* because it is surprising, or bad because it is not. However, this context-dependence is not enough to prove that surprise does not play a role in our evaluation of artworks. It merely shows that surprise could be produced by *any* artwork (depending on the contexts and the individuals), but not that it isn't relevant for aesthetic judgments. The apparent consequence that judgments of value would also become relative should not worry us too much: as we said, talk of aesthetic value is itself controversial, but taken in a simple sense as we have proposed (where the value refers to the assumed sum of merits and flaws), its contextuality amounts to the obvious fact that we do not experience and appreciate artworks in the same way, depending on our prior history, expertise, and other idiosyncratic factors. We can therefore say that surprise plays a functional role in the ascription of value without going further in the philosophical minefield of aesthetic values.

As for (ii), whether or not we accept or not the idea of non epistemic surprises is of no impact for our main thesis. That some surprises might be non-cognitive in their origin does not entail that none of them are, as the fact that most surprises are cognitive in their origin does not entail that they will always prove to be so in their outcome (i.e., by systematically inducing significant belief change). The question of non-epistemic surprises is worth exploring, but this task pertains more to a qualitative theory than to the functional account we have tried to sketch here.

To the proponent of (iii), we could say that there need not be any conflict here. We do not require any unique basis for our aesthetic judgments. Familiarity and habit can indeed participate in the evaluation of a work's value. Maybe it even plays a greater role than we think. But this does not entail that surprise plays no part or that it should be overlooked. In fact, it even suggests the contrary, since we saw that surprise presupposes prior habits and beliefs in order to exist. As Huron puts it, "surprise requires

an expected outcome; and an expected outcome requires an internalized norm” (2006: 36). Our aesthetic judgments could thus result from a subtle alchemy between our habits or personal history and the novelty conveyed by the artwork.

We have shown that surprise can play an important part in our aesthetic judgments and experiences. Even if this claim can be challenged, surprise is still of interest for philosophical aesthetics, because it functions as a “cognitive emotion”, impacting the epistemic life of individuals. I have claimed that this provides a strong argument in favor of aesthetic cognitivism. It might be good to finish with a remark. From the obvious fact that distinct individuals have different expectations and beliefs at one time; and that the same individuals have diverse beliefs and expectations at different times; it follows that artworks can produce many kinds of surprises at various occasions. The changing and dynamic nature of our epistemic life explains why a work, even familiar, can still startle or amaze us after some time. We could thus account for the problem of interpretation and also explain what has sometimes been called the irremediably rich, saturated, and complex nature of artworks. A philosophical analysis of surprise is perhaps a path towards these other major issues in aesthetics.

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What We Do When We Ask What Music Is

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ABSTRACT. This essay states the differences between possible approaches to the ontology of music and definitions of music. I start by characterising the most important approaches in current philosophy of music as relying on a concept of “sound structure” and on a certain idea of how we come to know about them, that is, by hearing them (1.). This empiricist and realist conception has been criticised by drawing attention to the fact that music is not simply there, but has been made. It is a culturally constituted entity, and an ontological approach to it must take this fact into account: We have to know certain things about music which we cannot hear (2.). These criticisms point into the right direction, but they are not radical enough. I sketch a fresh approach to the ontology of music in order to point out that it can rely neither on hearing / listening nor on knowing alone, but has to accommodate a concept of interpretation (3.).

I.

In this paper I address the endeavour of “defining music” and the closely related field known as “ontology of music” by explaining its interdependence with a second endeavour which concerns the meaning of music and its understanding. Ontology is understood as the very general discipline which asks what something is and what its essential properties are. I start by sketching the basics of one classical view which defines music in terms of “sound structure”. This view is generally non-contextualist, and it lays one part of the foundations of formalism in music. The definition of music as a sound structure involves a positive and a negative principle.

The positive principle tells us *what* music consists of: sounds having definite pitches and definite durations, resulting in melody (and eventually harmony) and rhythm. (In order to do justice to contemporary music

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which makes much use of non-pitched ‘noise’, the thesis must be amended in various ways, but this is not my point here.)

The negative principle tells us that the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic structures are self-sufficient insofar as they do not depend on some material object or mental state they would represent or express. Accordingly, *understanding* a sound structure is not referential, but merely structural. This negative principle allows to draw one fundamental difference between the understanding of music on the one hand and the understanding of language and depiction on the other hand. The latter presupposes the knowledge of the fact that the (written or spoken) signs of language transport a meaning or that the visible surface of a depiction represents something which is part of a world beyond this surface.

The view of the nature and the understanding of music which rests on these two principles forms the backbone of much philosophical thinking about music over the past two centuries, including the largest currents in the discipline known as “analytic philosophy of music”. The supportive function of this theoretical backbone supposedly depends on the reciprocal relationship between ontological and epistemological suppositions. But this is where problems start; and I try to point out what follows for the “sound structure”-view if we inquire into these problems.

The easiest question to start with might be the following: How do we come to *know* that music is a sound structure? More formally: By means of which epistemic faculties could we establish that music should be defined above all in structural or formal terms? It is surprising to notice that a question of this sort is rarely raised explicitly in theories on the ontology and the definition of music. But a superficial look at much philosophical writing on subjects like meaning or expression in music makes clear that an answer to it has been presupposed from the start: We *hear* what music is (albeit our hearing / listening must have been educated in order to grasp many structural features appropriately), and we hear what it is not. I call this presupposition, however clumsily, the “hearing principle”.

The “hearing principle” is a principle which claims the validity of immediate experience. Let me try to illustrate it by showing how it is applied in a favourite field of inquiry: expression and meaning in music.

Music is very frequently described in emotion terms. What does this mean? Could it mean that it communicates a state of mind, for instance

the composer's, in the way a diary or a letter might communicate it? Think this way: If a letter communicates a state of mind, how do we know that it does? Silly question: just focus on what is written. If you know what reading means, you will see that there is no way of reading which would not communicate something to you – however inarticulate or insincere the written utterance might be. – Now focus on the music, which is supposed to be expressive. Applying the “hearing principle” means to ask: Can you *hear* if the music communicates a state of mind? If yes, tell me what it is – and I will show you that I do not *hear* it; or that I ‘hear’ a different state of mind; or no state of mind at all; and you will have no evidence for convincing me of the objective validity of your experience. Rather, we can do without hearing the music as a communication of meaning. Mostly, this line of thought is accepted as a confirmation of the negative principle: that music essentially is made of sounds without referential function. The same line of thought leads to the positive principle: The least problematic way to hear music – the way about which debate seems to be settled easily – is to hear it as a structured sequence of sounds.

To sum up: The “sound structure”-approach finds confirmation or evidence in the epistemological presupposition that (educated) listeners can decide about what music is and what it means or does not mean by describing what they *hear*. Diverging descriptions are taken by the philosopher as evidence that the described properties and structures are not really there, but pertain to personal associations or misleading practices of interpretation. Thus, they give no clue about what music *is*. This judgement, again, rests on the following rule of thumb: The least controversial theory or understanding must be the most evident one.

2.

“Sound structure” approaches have frequently met with a certain type of criticism in the past decades and again in recent publications.¹ Briefly, the critical remark formulates a requirement: Definitions and ontological

¹ Some of the more recent publications which make use of the following critical argument or parts of it include: David Davies 2009; David Davies 2012; Stephen Davies 2012; Kania 2008a; Kania 2008b; Thomasson 2005.

inquiries in the field of music must not neglect the fact that music is a human-made, cultural entity; they must take the cultural context of the entity which is to be defined into account for their ontological position. I abbreviate this as the “cultural entity requirement”. However frequently this requirement has been pointed out, little has been done in the philosophy of music in developing its consequences for some most basic principles and problems like the ones I sketched above (1.). I will dedicate the main part of this essay to a tentative explanation of this requirement and its consequences for the philosophical endeavours mentioned in the beginning, that is, for the inquiries into ontology and meaning and for the epistemological foundations they need. In order to make my own explanation clearer, I start by sketching another, common explanation of the “cultural entity requirement” which, in my opinion, misses the point of this requirement.

This explanation simply adds up the notions of culture and intention to the “sound structure”-principle. Thus, not every “sound structure” must be viewed as music, but only such sound structures made with a certain knowledge and a certain purpose, excluding, for instance, the sounds produced by a cat walking on a keyboard. Furthermore, acknowledging the fact that the composition of sound structures has developed through time adds a historical perspective to formalism without questioning its basic principles. They remain firmly in place; they are just complemented by further conditions upon which something may count as music and as a real property of it.

This is a well-known and quite obvious move in approaches to a definition of music. It adds a note of context-dependence to the ontological enterprise. However, I would like to argue that it does not meet, or at least does not exhaust, the “cultural entity requirement”. It may seem to succeed in defining music in a way sensitive to cultural context and productive intentions by saying that music is a sound structure produced with certain intentions and/or in certain contexts of cultural practice.

But remember that the definition in question is bound up with an epistemological standpoint, which now is the “hearing principle” *plus* some extra conditions. It is not sufficient to hear or to listen; we are required to *know* something about the sounds we hear in order to decide if they are, so to speak, real music or just an accidental sequence of sounds, and the

knowledge in question is the knowledge of the relevant extra conditions. For instance, there is an escalator in the Südkreuz railway station in Berlin which used to squeak quite accurately the first five notes of a minor scale. Mere listening would leave open the question if we were in front of a large mechanical musical instrument; *knowing* that escalators usually do not count as musical instruments gives us a reason to decide that the structured sound we hear is very probably not music.

A close look reveals that these extra conditions are, speaking in terms of epistemology, mere defeaters. They work in the following way: First, the “hearing principle” applies as it did before. We hear certain sounds with certain properties and have an immediate impression that these sounds must be music, endowed with, for instance, a certain kind of expression or even the property of being a certain work. (The latter is a way of talking one can find in ontological writings on music; I do not subscribe to it.) On the basis of this intuition, the defeaters work by uncovering that certain intentions or contexts are lacking and by thus undermining our initial intuition. Therefore, the position I am sketching does not undermine the “sound structure” approach in general; it takes the set of sound structures as given and defines music as a certain subset in this set.

The problem is that on this account the fact of being a cultural entity and the ensuing extra conditions play only a limitative role for the ontology of music. They do not make any positive contribution to it. In other words: They defeat or confirm intuitions which must have been there independently – intuitions whose content is generally understood as the presence or absence of structural, expressive or even “semantic” properties (in the case of music, the first two are taken to be present, the latter one to be at least problematic). Thus, acknowledging that music is a cultural entity contributes to definitions of music as *a certain kind of* sound structures, but paradoxically, it does not contribute to understanding what music *is as a cultural entity*. Being a cultural entity seems to remain external to the ontological and epistemological core problems.

3.

It remains to be seen what a positive role of the “cultural entity requirement” might look like. We have noticed that there is no positive role for

this requirement if it simply *follows* intuitions founded on the “hearing principle”. A different and more important perspective opens up if we ask if the “cultural entity requirement” forces us to revise the “hearing principle”, upon which the “sound structure”-approach is epistemologically based. I argue that this is indeed the case.

Questioning the “hearing principle”, however, bears directly upon the possible ontological or definitional positions: If we accept epistemic faculties different from auditory perception as starting points for establishing what music is and what properties it may have, we may find out that it is something other than what the “sound structure” approach allowed it to be.

Hence, if we accept the “cultural entity requirement”, we are bound to specify which epistemic faculties are constitutive for the discussion of essentially cultural entities. From this point, a fresh approach to the ontology of music is possible. This is a complex research programme of which I will only sketch one way how to proceed. The first step consists in making explicit the epistemological background required to do justice to cultural entities, that is, in asking how we can know what such entities are essentially and how we grasp their features (3.1). In a second step, I try to show what can be said to *be there* in the light of this particular epistemic access (3.2). As a tentative result, I finally would like to give a name to the ontological difference between music as conceived by the “sound structure”-approach and as conceived if the “cultural entity requirement” is taken seriously (3.3).

3.1.

The first step is based on a distinction between the ways of knowing involved in, on the one hand, the “sound structure”-approach and, on the other hand, an approach towards cultural entities. I have pointed out that the “sound structure”-approach appeals to the “hearing principle”, which, in turn, implicitly involves a certain conception of what perception is. In contrast, I propose to turn to the notion of “understanding” in the field of culturally constituted entities.

The “sound structure” approach favours the view that understanding music consists largely in the ability to *identify* its properties, which include properties like expression and higher-level formal events like closure, re-

capitulation, variation on a theme etc. These properties are said to be universally identifiable by (educated) listening alone. Epistemic access consists in the possession of a certain kind of perception. The function of perception, however, is equated with the identification of properties.

Let us discuss an example: the contested nature of something like “dramatic” or “narrative content” in music. I sum up how a “sound structure”-approach, exemplified by some arguments in Peter Kivy’s recent books, deals with this problem, so that an alternative way of dealing with it appears more clearly.

Kivy asks for the basis required for narrative content and says: the basis must be a semantic function. Semantic function, in turn, is understood as a property: a property which is there in language, but not in music, since it cannot be identified univocally. The test for the identification of semantic content consists in asking for “disambiguation” concerning “the ‘who’ and the ‘what’” (Kivy 2009, p. 148). This test may result either positive or negative, as Kivy writes, referring to Plato’s *Phaedo*: „[...] something cannot be more or less a soul – it is one or it is not. And the same, to be sure, is true of something’s being or not being a semantic artifact. Either it is or it is not; it does not come in degrees.“ (Kivy 2012, p. 176) If we try to disambiguate semantic content in music based on listening alone, we are likely to end up with unclear and ambiguous statements; but ambiguity is equivalent to an entirely negative result of the test. It follows for Kivy that music generally does not possess semantic content and, for that reason, cannot be narrative or dramatic in a strict sense.

This test on semantic content, and more generally, on the meaning of music, is used in the “sound structure”-approach as evidence against the view that music could be correctly analysed in terms other than structural ones. That it counts as evidence, however, rests on the assumption that the problem of deciding what there is in music calls for answers which have the form of propositions saying that a property X is there – or not – and that it can be analysed and classified according to an ontological framework of substances and properties.

Can the understanding of culturally constituted entities (in our case, of artworks) be captured by analysing it as the identification of formal, expressive or semantic properties? What do we really do if we ‘listen with

understanding' to some music; or if we 'read with understanding'² a piece of poetry?

If we take a culturally constituted entity seriously as such, it cannot be the case that we approach it in order to identify its properties and nothing more. This cannot be the case *for the reason that the thing in question has been made*. It is this 'making' we have to take into account when we try to describe our epistemic access to culturally constituted entities. The way of taking into account the making is directed to the intentions and purposes which have brought a certain "sound structure" into existence. It may suitably be called *interpretation*. In reaching for interpretation, we go beyond the identification of what is there. But where do we go? Answering this question is the second step on the way towards a fresh approach to ontology.

3.2.

Basically, the answer is very simple: we go for meaning. Meaning³ is that towards which interpretation is directed. The philosophical project which is required might then be described as an epistemology of interpretation and an ontology of meaning. I will leave open for the final section the question if such a project still may be called ontology; before that, it might be useful to pick up again the discussion on features like semantic content.

We have seen in Kivy's discussion that meaning, under the heading of "semantic content", is conceived as a property which can be discovered or not. This is in line with a position I have criticized for being an inadequate type of contextualism. There I objected that it merely adds the fact of being culturally constituted to an entity which essentially is already present. The same is now valid for the role of meaning. It is a feature an

² You might notice that the way I have just been talking picks up several concepts used by Roger Scruton. His discussion of musical understanding bears similarities with mine, but I won't discuss my relation to his theory in detail here. Readers acquainted with Scruton will note important differences in what follows.

³ Using the word "meaning" is not the best choice if we consider that it has mostly been considered in the sense of semantic value or propositional meaning. In German, I use the word "Sinn", which allows a distinction to the more narrow "Bedeutung". "Sinn" could be translated in some way with "sense", which, however, is far from being established as a philosophical term in English, except for associations with "sensualism". But this would be precisely the wrong association.

entity might have or might have not, while the entity remains essentially unchanged, since it is defined and identified by its *formal* properties, that is, by the properties of a sound structure.

If the adequate – and the only adequate and therefore unavoidable – epistemic access to culturally constituted entities is interpretation, and if the formal object of interpretation is meaning, a different way of discussing meaning is required. Now, meaning must not be conceived as a property which can be present or absent. It is there in any case because the process of making an artifact involves intentions, thoughts and backgrounds of cultural practice. If the process of making is constitutive for an artifact, those intentions, thoughts and cultural backgrounds *are part of what that artifact is*. They are constitutive for the meaning of the object in question; and they are sufficient conditions for meaning being there.

Thus, meaning does not stand among or besides other, formal properties. Instead, meaning is a function which essentially transforms the properties and the relations between properties in an artifact. Concerning music, that means that the properties which the “hearing principle” could have uncovered to us cannot enter our full understanding just in the guise of properties *as such* or *for themselves* (*an sich*). They pertain to our understanding only in the guise of properties *being where and how they are for a certain reason*, that is, being in place *for us*. The function “being there for a reason” or the function of meaning changes the ontological position of the entire object in question. Let me now sketch the consequences of this thought for the basic questions of ontology and epistemology: the questions of what there is in music and how we know.

In the “sound structure” approach, as exemplified by many elaborations in analytic aesthetics, the possible answers to these questions are quite straightforward: They are about properties which are ‘real’. The reality of properties is the basic thought, even though it is often qualified by some notion of “response-dependence” or dependence on other circumstances, like the one of being part of a cultural practice. ‘Reality’ comes in degrees in a certain way: for instance, talk about supervenience of aesthetic upon physical properties implicitly introduces such degrees. But everything is about reality and objectivity nevertheless. (This is another way of putting what I have been talking about before.) We know about these realities through perceptions and intuitions, which, more or

less schooled by the circumstances, identify those properties. This is the way we can know what music is and what there is in music, because if we ask what music is, that means to ask what is there.

The transformation of these basic questions through the function of “being there for a reason” yields the following idea:

The question what music is transforms into the question for the reasons for appearing the way it appears. But asking for reasons is not a matter to be settled through some kind of intuition or perception, although they may lead us for a part of the way. It is a matter of discourse: a discourse of interpretation. Thus, on a close look, the epistemological problem – how we can know what music is – transforms into a meta-epistemological question, that is, it becomes subject to a critical approach. Accordingly, interpretation is not an epistemic access on the same level as the “hearing principle”. It is not one epistemic access among others. Rather, it is a reflective and critical capacity which precludes the supposition that a certain epistemic principle, such as the “hearing principle”, may be decisive for the definition or the ontology of music taken as a culturally constituted entity. Interpretation involves that every method which leads to a statement about music can be questioned concerning its validity and its results.

3.3.

I announced that I would try to give a name to the difference between the ontological standpoints I have confronted with each other. The respective epistemological standpoints are, on the one hand, empiricist, and on the other hand, a critical hermeneutical standpoint. If they take music as their object, music is ontologically different in the one and the other case. In other words: music is a different ‘*thing*’ for each of them. In the first case, music is approached as *material*; in the second case, music is approached as that which is made from that material.⁴

Talking in terms of sound structure, the standpoint I have tried to bring to light would give the following answer to the question what music is: Music *is* not a sound structure, just like a painting *is* not a canvas and

⁴ I borrow the term “material” from Adorno (1970, p. 222) and the recent elaborate continuation of this concept of Adorno’s by Gunnar Hindrichs (2014). Of course, the Aristotelian background of this terminology must not be forgotten.

colours on it. Canvas and colours are what a painting is *made of*. In the same way, sound structures are what music is normally made of: They are the material of music, not the music itself. Accordingly, the two principles I mentioned in the very beginning – the principle that music is essentially a sound structure and that it is adequately describable in purely structural terms – may count as principles for musical material; but they are sublated through the personal and cultural use of the material.

But what name can be given to “that which is made from that material”? I admit that this is no easy question. One name which recommends itself due to the partly Aristotelian roots of the ontological problem we are confronted with is “form” (*eidos*). However, confusion is imminent, since “sound structure”-approaches abound in notions of “form” which are dimensions away from what I want to say. Here, formalist “form” is simply an aspect of material.

According to what I said before, a second name would be “meaning”. Meaning is the result of the composer’s and musician’s work with musical material. A prominent third name, favoured for instance by Hindrichs or by Albrecht Wellmer (2009), would be “work”: musical material is formed into a work. Taking these three proposals together gives the following idea: A musical work is the form given to the material, and the form of the work is its meaning, that is, the complex of thoughts resulting in the work’s being the way it is.

What kind of ontology do we end up here? It is obvious that the conceptual apparatus of recent analytic metaphysics is not sufficient to grasp the notion of “form” or “work” I just have mentioned, since it is a conceptual apparatus of objective entities and properties, but the concepts of work, form and meaning just sketched involve the activity which works with a material that might be grasped in terms of entities and properties. Thus, we end up with an ontology of human action in a broadly Aristotelian tradition.

But we also would have to go beyond it, since what is involved is a philosophy of the meaning of human action – the meaning which is manifested in artworks, among other things. The idea is that if we push ontology far enough into the realm of culturally constituted entities, we reach beyond ontology and become part of a project which has been given the name of “philosophical hermeneutics”, a project launched by philosophers unjusti-

fiedly forgotten in the analytic tradition such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Georg Misch, Helmuth Plessner and others.

At this point, we are beyond ontology in the sense that the entities to be dealt with are meaningful entities. But if their meaning is part of what they are, and if meaning is constituted in the interaction between an artist, the material he can use and the systems of practices of understanding and interpretation he is always confronted with, the entities constituted through meaning are in a certain sense fluid: there is something about them which essentially changes with the context from which they are looked upon. That means that epistemology and ontology are interdependent: the way in which such an entity can be understood makes it, at least partly, what it is. We are beyond ontology in the sense that an 'ontology of meaning' is no more an independent and self-sufficient discipline, since the entities it deals with are not independent and self-sufficient. They are entities *for us* and for our understanding.

But although being beyond, we are still connected with ontology since the background question still is: what music is and what there is in music.

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Inaesthetics — Re-configuring Aesthetics for Contemporary Art

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ABSTRACT. The testing of aesthetics that was performed through critical art practice in the late 1960's has re-emerged in the domain of continental philosophy, primarily through Alain Badiou's interrogation of aesthetics.¹ Badiou configures inaesthetics "against *speculative aesthetics*", insisting that the role of philosophy is not to interpret, but to reveal that art is "itself a form of thought". In formulating inaesthetics Badiou relocates thought from the external source of philosophy to the immanent space of art. Although Badiou proposes inaesthetics departs from aesthetics, this paper presents my reading of Badiou's prefix "in" as expanding rather than departing from aesthetics. This paper presents an artist's proposition that inaesthetics offers a reconfigured aesthetics that sustains a productive rather than a contentious bind with contemporary art.

1. Introduction

The relevance of aesthetics as philosophy's discourse of art that was contested in the early twentieth century by the early avant-garde re-surfaced in art practice in the late 1960's. Hal Foster, Arthur C. Danto and Peter Osborne develop their readings of contemporary art through their retrospective analysis the developments in art practice that emerged during

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¹ Although the continental/analytic opposition is contested, I use this term to distinguish the focus of my practice on philosophies associated with the continental tradition, namely phenomenology and existentialism. The term 'continental' thus differentiates my enquiry from the analytic tradition, which is predominately focused on logic. For more on the continental tradition please see Richard Kearney, (1994) *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, 2nd edition, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

this period. These particular readings observe that this troubling of aesthetics is central to our current reading of contemporary art. This question of the applicability and relevancy of aesthetics for contemporary art has re-surfaced through the work of Alain Badiou. Although Badiou is a philosopher, he sees the relationship between art and philosophy and the question of aesthetics in relation to contemporary art as consequential, so much so that he proposes inaesthetics as “necessary” for contemporary art because it relocates thought from the external source of philosophy to the immanent space of art.² Although Badiou proposes inaesthetics departs from aesthetics, this paper presents my counter position that inaesthetic reconfigures aesthetics for contemporary art because it that overcomes the impasse of aesthetics as the philosophical interpretation of art.

I develop this claim through four main discussions. The first discussion focuses on aesthetics, outlining its emergence as a discipline. This brief précis reveals an inherent “ambiguity” surrounding aesthetics by outlining the range of interpretations of aesthetics from its emergence as a discipline in the late 18th to the dominant configuration of aesthetics as a discourse on art.³ I argue that this ambiguity coupled with its continuing evolution as a series of ruptures, permit a re-interpretation of inaesthetics as a re-configuration of aesthetics. The second discussion draws on Foster, Osborne and Danto’s theories to outline the lineage of contemporary art and how it is bound up (albeit in a troublesome manner) with aesthetics. This discussion focuses on these specific readings of contemporary reading because they register how developments in art practice asserted thought as a condition of art. This discussion demonstrates how the interpretation of aesthetics as philosophy’s discourse on art is incompatible with a contemporary reading of art. However, it also functions to support my argument that a complete departure from aesthetics would obscure the complex bind between art and aesthetics that defines the current status of contemporary art.

The third discussion develop the claim that inaesthetics provides an applicable aesthetic framework for contemporary art. I argue that by performing a rupture to previous aesthetic categories, inaesthetics presents

² Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 8.

³ Osborne, *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, 61.

a new aesthetic framework that has the critical resources to engage with contemporary art. This discussion outlines how inaesthetics reconfigures a new schema between philosophy and art, demonstrating how this particular engagement between the disciplines is posited to reveal thought through Badiou's treatment of the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé. However, although Badiou proposes the necessity of inaesthetics for contemporary art, he makes no reference to any forms of contemporary art practice to support his thesis. (Instead, Badiou draws on literary examples, namely Mallarmé to explore the implications of this reciprocal engagement between art and philosophy.⁴) The fourth discussion addresses this gap in Badiou's thesis in its direct reference of contemporary art. By focusing on my post-conceptual practice I demonstrate how inaesthetics provides a theoretical guide to explore the integrated engagement between art and philosophy in my practice. This discussion focuses on my drawing *The Clear Apprehension of One's Own Limitations* (2003) to support the claim for the applicability of inaesthetics for contemporary art (a reading of art that promotes the understanding that art is a domain for thought) by demonstrating it providing an aesthetic framework that does not interpret, but to reveal the capacity of this work to *invite* thought. (My use of the term *invite* will be developed in this discussion). My correalating with inaesthetics from the side of art practice rather than from the side of philosophical argumentation further demonstrates how inaesthetics offers a reconfigured aesthetics that sustains a productive rather than a contentious bind with for contemporary art.

2. The Ambiguity of Aesthetics

The term aesthetics has repeatedly been misused, or rather used insufficiently, to describe the formal qualities of an art object. This conventional interpretation of aesthetics is indicative of glossing over its complexity. This complexity is noted by Peter Osborne who identifies an ambiguity surrounding aesthetics. Osborne maintains this ambiguity stems from the numerous interpretations that arose since its emergence from philo-

⁴ He also reflects on the writings of Beckett, Rimbaud, Celan, Milosz, ben Rabi'a and Pessoa in *Handbook of Inaesthetics*.

sophy to a discourse in its own right in the 18 century. Osborne notes how the subjective nature of aesthetics undermined its academic status. He proposes that the desire to develop a more coherent discipline of academic worth led to the different interpretations of aesthetics since it first emerged as a genre of philosophical enquiry. Mario Perniola furthers this point by identifying “turns” that have occurred within the development of aesthetics since the late 18th century.⁵ He observes how new configurations of aesthetics emerged through a series of ongoing ruptures within previous aesthetic categories. This account of aesthetics draws on Paul Oskar Kristeller’s analysis of art and aesthetics and the theories of Jonathan Rée. Although this brief précis invariably glosses over more nuanced interpretations of the discipline, it is offered demonstrate how the conception of aesthetics as the philosophical interpretation of art emerged. This discussion is offered to support my claim that inaesthetics presents a re-configured form of aesthetics for contemporary art.

Because aesthetics is multifaceted, it is necessary to capture how aesthetics evolved to define a particular relationship between art and philosophy that privileges philosophy as the domain for thought. Prior to the emergence of aesthetics philosophical reflections on beauty and art had engaged Western thought. The Third Earl of Shaftsbury and the Scottish Enlightenment thinker Francis Hutcheson looked to Plato’s insights that connected beauty and morality to form their own theories.⁶ However, although Shaftsbury and Hutcheson are credited with writing on issues surrounding aesthetics, it is now accepted that Alexander Baumgarten secured the term aesthetics from the Greek *aisthānesthai* in his academic thesis *Meditationes Philosophica* (1735) (Reflections on Poetry) and his unfinished textbooks *Aesthetica I* (1750) and *Aesthetica II* (1758).

Kristeller’s influential survey of the arts from antiquity to the 18 century reveals the emergence of art in its modern sense as coinciding with the emergence of aesthetics. Kristeller proposes Baumgarten as the founder of

⁵ Please see: Mario Perniola, (2007), ‘Cultural Turns in Aesthetics and Anti-Aesthetics’, *Filozofski Vestnik* XXVIII, no. 2, pp. 39-51.

⁶ For more see The Third Earl of Shaftsbury and Francis Hutcheson *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), written as two treatises; the subject of the first is aesthetics – *Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design* and the second morality – *Concerning Moral Good and Evil*.

aesthetics insofar as he conceived a general theory of the arts (namely poetry) as a separate philosophical discipline. Baumgarten substantiated the term through his compilation, developing his reading of aesthetics as ‘sensuous knowledge’, from the Greek meaning ‘perceive sensuously’.⁷ Baumgarten’s texts were used in an academic context to teach students how *aesthetica* should be articulated in discourse and text. However Baumgarten failed to develop this doctrine with reference to visual art or music. Felix Mendelssohn criticised Baumgarten on this shortcoming and suggested that these aesthetic principles should be formulated so as to apply music and visual art.

Jonathan Rée describes how Baumgarten’s term aesthetics became connected with the fine arts. He identifies Gotthold Ephraim Lessing as re-launching Baumgarten’s term as a theoretical attempt to connect the different bodily senses to the various fine arts, including the non-discursive arts that Baumgarten had failed to consider. Rée identifies Lessing’s *Laokoön* linking the *bildende Künste* - the ‘formative’ or plastic arts of sculpture and painting with aesthetics. This link between the fine arts and aesthetics that we know today was further advanced by Kant’s comprehensive attempt to integrate the system of the fine arts (which had recently been expanded to five domains from previous three that were established during the Renaissance) with judgments of beauty through his theory of sensory experience in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790).⁸

Kant’s public and highly prolific response to Baumgarten’s thesis furthered the discourse, connecting it with the speculation of the nature of art. An acknowledgment of sensuous knowledge in Kant’s *third critique* increased the gap between the discourse of art and empiricism. Kant’s *third critique* complicates quantifiable scientific analysis by advancing the notion of “disinterestedness”. Kant’s notion of “purposiveness without purpose” ran counter to the previous role of art. The subjective nature of a discourse on sensuous knowledge was not without issue as it destabilised the Platonic interpretation of the didactic function of art.⁹

⁷The enquiry into sensuous knowledge was further developed through J.G. Hamann in *Aesthetica in Nuce*, (1762).

⁸ It is noteworthy that Kant rejected the whole idea of a theory of arts or artistic value in his first critique, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

⁹ For more see: Andrew Bowie, (2003), *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 2nd edition,

The current interpretation of aesthetics as ‘the philosophy of art’ is a comparatively recent configuration, established by Hegel in the early 19 century expounded in his *Lectures on Fine Art* (posthumously published in 1835).¹⁰ Rée identifies the fulfilment of aesthetics as a philosophical discourse on art through Hegel’s synthesis of Plato, Lessing and Kant philosophical conjectures.¹¹ This dominant interpretation of aesthetics is problematic for contemporary art, as I will outline shortly, because it asserts the Platonic conception of philosophy as the locus of truth, thereby establishing philosophy as the space for thought. Although Hegel is associated with Romanticism through his contribution to *The Oldest System Programme ... his End of Art* thesis articulates his departure from the Romantic conception of art as the source of truth. Although Hegel claims art invites intellectual consideration, he maintains it is “not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is.”¹² Under these terms the relationship of philosophy to art is that of interpretation. By claiming philosophy ‘knows’ art, Hegel affirms the Platonic conception of philosophy as the locus of truth, locating meaning in the sole jurisdiction of philosophy.

3. Contemporary Art and the Troubling of Aesthetics

The notion that aesthetics, and accordingly the critic could impose meaning on art was brought to task from the domain of art practice at the turn of the nineteenth century. Practices now defined as early avant-garde complicated aesthetics through their explicit rejection of the prevailing standard in art. The introduction of unconventional artistic forms and gestures by Dada that included public gatherings, demonstrations, publications and performances at the *Cabaret Voltaire* such as Kurt Schwitter’s “psychological collages” or sound poems and Marcel Duchamp’s *ready-made* under-

Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

¹⁰ This series of lectures was delivered in Berlin and compiled in 1835 by his publisher, Heinrich Gustav Hotho.

¹¹ Rée, ‘The Aesthetic Theory of the Arts’, 58.

¹² It is acknowledged that this manifesto is handwritten by Hegel. However many consider the work to be that of Schelling. Please see: Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 55.

mined the role aesthetics by their resistance to interpretation.¹³ This concern with aesthetics that motivated the early avant-garde re-surfaced in the late 1960's and radically changed the nature of art and instigated a departure from the modernist to a contemporary reading of art. Foster, Osborne and Danto look to this moment in art practice that specifically problematised the role of aesthetics to formulate their readings of contemporary art.

Foster formulates his readings of contemporary art through his analysis of the neo avant-garde. Foster coined the term neo avant-garde to designate minimal and post-minimal practices that re-engaged with the concerns of the avant-garde, namely the troubling of aesthetics. Foster observes how an emergent concern with the dynamic between the 'subject/object' initiated a departure from a reading of the artwork as an autonomous idealised form. This shift of emphasis from the art object to the subject and their experience introduced new conditions for art that resisted traditional aesthetic categories. Like Duchamp's *ready-made*, Foster observes how minimal artworks no longer fulfilled the aesthetic requirements that applied to a modernist interpretation of art. Foster notes how Robert Morris' and Tony Smith's rejection of the plinth and Donald Judd's redefinition of the artistic form as a 'specific object' destabilised the notion of idealised, autonomous art object. The logic of Judd's definition is sound when we learn that his works, like those of his fellow minimalists, were fabricated in industrial factories.¹⁴ The minimalist departure from an overarching emphasis on the medium-specificity of the artwork that had been generally preserved since the late 18 century undermined formal traditional aesthetic categories that lacked the critical resources to engage with these specific objects.

By disrupting a visual bias associated with late modernism minimalist practices articulated a radical shift from an emphasis on the object to an emergent concern with the subject/object dynamic. This concern with

¹³ As. C. Foster observes, "The fabrication of Schwitter's collages is not simply a combinational task of fitting elements together; nor is it just an assembly of discovered materials. It is a more complex process of the constant reinvention and exploration of dialogues." Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 277.

¹⁴ The company that fabricated *Die* (1967) had a sign that read, "You specify it; we fabricate it."

experience and perception instigated a new, contemporary reading of art as an open contingent form. Smith articulates this radical shift in attitude in his now famous anecdote of his night ride on the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike. Smith articulates how his experience of this journey that was “mapped out but not socially recognized” did “something for me that art had never done.” His emphasis on experience is further asserted by his claim, “I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art. Most paintings look pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it.”¹⁵

The minimalist emphasis on the subjects experience and their perception over the formal qualities of work prompted minimalism's most vocal critic, Michael Fried, to charge minimalism as the “negation of art” because it disrupting the idealised notion of art by threatening the “disciplinary order in modern aesthetics.”^{16 17} Fried coins the term theatricality to articulate that such physical forms of engagement situate the viewer's experience in a palpable presence of the here. He uses this term to wager his claim that minimalism negates art because it denies the viewer a proper aesthetic experience by initiating an immediate encounter with their physicality. The scale of Smith's *Die*, (1968) at 6 ft. that and its placement directly on the ground demonstrate this disruption to the visual bias by necessitating a new form of engagement that is more physical.¹⁸ Rosalind Krauss articulates a new form of encounter by reinterpreting the viewer of Morris's *Three L Beams* (1968) as a “mobile beholder”.

Fried maintains that it is impossible to approach these artworks as complete because, he maintains, “the contingency of perception” undoes the “purity of conception.”¹⁹ However, although Fried coined the term theatricality as a term of derision, Foster observes how Morris and Smith deemed contingency productive because it relocated the source of the

¹⁵ Wagstaff, *Talking with Tony Smith*, 386

¹⁶ Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 153.

¹⁷ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 40.

¹⁸ Jonathan Rée examines the bias towards vision in his commentary on 20th century modernity. Rée looks to German philosopher Oswald Spengler's theory of culture in *Decline of the West* (1918). Spengler notes the underlying principles differ from culture to culture and observes through the development of perspective that the principles in the West became oriented by vision.

¹⁹ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 40.

meaning from the critic to the subject and the “body in a particular space and time.”²⁰ These artists reinterpreted theatricality to articulate the overarching concern with the encounter, the subject’s experience and their perception. By identifying the “special complicity that a work exhorts from the beholder” theatricality demonstrates how meaning is formed through the encounter with the artwork and in this way immanent to art. Morris ends his essay *Notes on Sculpture, Part I* claiming that the emergence of aesthetic terms that are not thematised by formal aesthetics potentialises a “new freedom” in artistic practice.²¹ Morris develops this in *Part II* by claiming “The object is but one of the terms in the newer aesthetic” that extends to incorporate more contingent categories of experience and perception.²² Instead of reading theatricality as the negation of art, Foster registers how minimalism used this term to further the understanding of the artwork as an open-process, an unfixed form that requires the viewer to realise and complete the work.

Although Foster focuses primarily on minimalism, the term neo-avant-garde can be expanded to designate conceptualism. Osborne claims that contemporary art is premised on a “complex historical experience” that followed the destruction of the ontological significance of previous artistic conditions that was instigated by conceptualism.²⁴ When Osborne speaks of contemporary art he does not use the term contemporary as a chronological descriptor defining the present but one that asserts a continued interrogation of the meanings and possibilities of art. Osborne also observes how our contemporary reading of art is bound up with this troubling of aesthetics, so much so that he claims an “ineliminable” bind between aesthetics and contemporary art. The conceptual mandate of Art as Idea demonstrates this bind in its explicit contestation of aesthetics. By reassigning the role of the art object as a functionary to mediate idea conceptualism undermined the philosophical role of interpretation. The various

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Morris, *Notes on Sculpture Part II*, 229–230.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ “Q. Why didn’t you make it larger so that it would loom over the observer. A. I was not making a monument. Q. Then why didn’t you make it smaller so that the observer could see over the top. A. I was not making an object. Tony Smith’s replies to questions about his six-foot steel cube.” Morris, *Notes on Sculpture Part II*, 229–230.

²⁴ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, 48.)

processes associated with conceptual art practice, such as Joseph Kosuth's use of philosophical enquiry, Art and Language's archival practices, Laurence Weiner and Robert Barry's artistic gestures demonstrate clearly how aesthetics lacked the critical resources to thematise artworks that functioned primarily to mediate idea.

Osborne observes how conceptualism profoundly challenged aesthetics by introducing a new engagement between philosophy and art. Kosuth's direct use of philosophy in *One and Three Chairs* (1965) complicates aesthetics by shifting the role of philosophy from the external realm to the internal domain of art, demonstrating an alternative role of philosophy from that of interpretation. Osborne describes how *One and Three Chairs* literally performs Wittgenstein's philosophical conjectures on language by presenting the relation between language, picture and referent. In "Art After Philosophy", Kosuth argues that the explication of philosophical ideas through presentation affirms the philosophical status of the artwork so much so that he claims "art is analogous to an analytic proposition."²⁵ ²⁶ Kosuth explains how conceptual artworks demonstrate the separation between aesthetics and art by arguing that "art's existence as a tautology enables art to remain 'aloof' from philosophical presumptions."²⁷

Although Adrian Piper's conceptual art practice does not adhere to Kosuth's "exclusive" or "strong" conceptual reading of art as analytical enterprise, it nevertheless demonstrates how art offers a domain for thought by raising specific philosophical ontological questions surrounding the subject.²⁸ Piper's participatory work *Funk Lesson* (1982-1984) took place as a series of social events where the artist of black extraction taught white people the moves and history of funk. *Funk Lesson* exemplifies a work as an open-process, structurally, in the way that it unfolds over time and in the way that it requires a social group for its realisation and conceptually, in the way that the participants engagement play a role by adding to the meaning of this work. Danto cites this particular artwork (and earlier works from the late 1960's namely Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* (1964) and Carl Andres Bricks, (1966) to articulate a shift in art practice that exem-

²⁵ Kosuth, 'Art After Philosophy', quoted in *Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy*, 56.)

²⁶ Kosuth, 'Art After Philosophy' quoted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 161.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, 49.

plifies a post-historical moment in art.²⁹ Although Danto's notion of post-historical can be aligned with a contemporary reading of art in that that conveys the conclusive fact that there are no longer any qualifications for art. Danto develops his reading of post-historical by reflecting on specific artworks from the late 1960s that resist categorization. (Danto's observations mirror Osborne's identification of a "transcategorical" quality that distinguishes contemporary art).³⁰ Without stylistic or philosophical constraints Danto proposes that the final moment in the meta-narrative of art is marked. However, Danto does not approach the post-historical as completely dismantling the institution of art. Instead of rejecting artworks that complicate aesthetics, (as was the case with Fried in his critique of minimalism), Danto observes their resistance to philosophical interpretation demonstrates a new capacity - the potential of the artwork to embody meaning.

Although Duchamp's first *readymade* pre-dates *Funk Lesson*, Danto references this seminal artistic gesture because it heralds a new dialogue between philosophy and art that he observes re-surfacing.³¹ In presenting objects that could not be determined by taste as good or bad, Duchamp's *readymade* set the conditions that mark the redundancy of formal aesthetics. Danto reflects on this moment in art practice as the liberation of art because it can no longer be conceived under a metaphysical judiciary of philosophy. Danto observes a double movement in Duchamp's *readymade*. By "sunder[ing] aesthetics from art" Duchamp's artistic gesture radically disassociated itself from philosophical interpretation.³² Similarly, with *Funk Lesson* it is impossible to interpret this work and establish its meaning by example, insofar as appearances were concerned. Rather than offering a discrete form that might be readily interpreted through conventional aesthetic categories *Funk Lesson* problematises the nature of art and simultaneously complicates the role of aesthetics by introducing forms of activities

²⁹ Although Danto, like others refer to Andres seminal work as "Bricks" its actual title is Equivalent VIII. Iseminger, *The Aesthetic Function of Art*, 56.

³⁰ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, 10.

³¹ As Danto states, "I owe to Duchamp the thought that from the perspective of art, aesthetics is in danger, since from the perspective of philosophy art is in danger and aesthetics the agency for dealing with it."

³² Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 131.

such as dance lessons that might be more readily associated with everyday activities.

Danto identifies a defining sense of disorder in the post-historical moment where, “anything could be a work of art.”³³ He reflects on the emancipatory capacity of “period of information disorder” to posit his theory that meaning is immanent to art, and accordingly confirm that art is a domain for thought.³⁴ Within the aesthetic entropy of the post-historical moment Danto identifies a single universal essence in the plurality of contemporary art. This is outlined in his philosophical defense of his *End of Art* thesis (1999), which explains a contradictory aspect of seeing the “possibility of a single, universal concept” only when “extreme differences” were available in art.³⁵ By reflecting on the multifarious categories of art Danto identifies a “single, universal essence of art.” Rather than seeking to entice the beholder with its “external surface on which feelings play,” Danto maintains the universal essence in post-historical is precisely its capacity to embody meaning. By conceiving art’s “liberation” from “philosophical oppression” Danto relocates meaning and accordingly the act of thinking from the external domain of philosophy to the immanent domain of art.³⁶

4. Inaesthetics — A New Engagement Between Philosophy and Art

Through inaesthetics Badiou advances thought as immanent to art by presenting this schema as a philosophical project that departs from the task of defining art.³⁷ Badiou posits inaesthetics “against speculative aesthetics” (ie. aesthetics as the philosophical interpretation of art) because he maintains aesthetics imposes a false truth on art. Badiou configures inaes-

³³ Danto, *After the End of Art, Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, 13 and

³⁴ Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 131

³⁵ Danto, ‘The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense’, 128.

³⁶ Danto, ‘The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense’, 135.

³⁷ My reading of inaesthetics is predominantly informed by Badiou’s *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (1998), a series of his papers, including *Philosophy and Desire*, presented in Sydney in 1999 and *Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art*, 2003, presented at the Drawing Centre, New York and secondary readings by Peter Hallward, Gabriel Riera, Sam Gillespie, Jean-Jacques Lecercle, Alberto Toscano and A. J. Barlett.

thetics as a new schema that disrupts this imposition. This in turn confronts the problematic relation between contemporary art and aesthetics. By stating inaesthetics “makes no claim to turn art into an object for philosophy” Badiou registers a new task for philosophy that overwrites philosophy’s interpretative role to reveal that art is “itself a form of thought”.³⁸

Inaesthetics presents a new schema to engage with the condition of thought in art by re-conceiving philosophy so that it may be conditioned by art, and not vice-versa. Badiou formulates inaesthetics in response to three previous schemata that he identifies as designating particular relationships between art and philosophy. He claims these schemata sustain “closure” because they lack the resources to reveal truths while undermining the fulfillment of new regimes of thought by imposing a false truth on art. Badiou’s three *schemata* follow Hegel’s *categories* and Schelling’s *classifications*. Like Hegel and Schelling, Badiou defines each schema by the relationship of art to philosophy, identifying the previous schemata as didactic (platonic), classical (Aristotelian) and Romantic (hermeneutic).³⁹

Badiou maintains that contemporary art cannot be approached philosophically through the previous schemata because they prohibit reciprocity between art and philosophy that is essential for the possibility of engendering of thought.⁴⁰ According to Badiou the didactic and classical schemata undermine arts primacy for thought by privileging philosophy as the site for thought. Badiou outlines how this occurs in the didactic schema that is informed by a Platonic understanding of art as a form of mimesis. Rather than reading art as an imitation of *things*, i.e. a form of representation, the Platonic understanding of art is that it is an imitation of *truth* itself. Under these conditions art is not the locus of truth but as a semblance of truth. “The charm of the semblance of truth” indicates a false truth, and as a false truth art must be placed under the control of philosophy.⁴¹

³⁸ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 3.

³⁹ It is worth noting that Badiou makes no reference to these philosophers. I venture this omission of Hegel and/or Schelling is not an oversight on Badiou’s part, but rather a strategy to distance inaesthetics from aesthetics.

⁴⁰ Badiou describes the current cultural situation as one of “saturation and closure”, referring to the proliferation of artistic forms that delineate and restrict the cultural horizon. Badiou, 2005, 2 & 8.

⁴¹ The platonic gesture of excluding art from the polis of his idealised *Republic* demon-

This suspicion of art is articulated by the explicit rejection of art from Plato's *Republic*. Plato rejected art because he maintained truth emerges from the rigorous process of reasoning founded on first principles of philosophy. Badiou outlines how the classical schema undermines art's primacy through the Aristotelian development of Platonic understanding of art as mimetic. In the classical schema Aristotle subverts Plato's suspicion of art as threatening the first principles of philosophy by advancing art as providing a cathartic function. As truth is not immanent to art, the classical emphasis on verisimilitude renders art beyond suspicion. Badiou's commentator Lecercle articulates how speculative aesthetics sustains the classical emphasis on verisimilitude by observing, "The poem is no longer a source of knowledge but has become the object of the theoretical gaze of the philosopher, on a par with natural phenomena, and no longer concerned with truth but only verisimilitude."⁴² Under the didactic and classical schemata artistic forms require interpretation from an external source because artistic truths are neither singular nor immanent. Badiou maintains that the didactic and classical schema cannot ensure the revelation of new regimes of thought because they do not recognise truth as immanent or singular to art.

Unlike didacticism and classicism, the Romantic schema corresponds with Badiou's understanding that artistic truth is immanent. The Romantic schema, defined as the age of poets or the "literary absolute" is associated with philosophical aesthetics of the late 18 century, and has remained dominant to date.⁴³ Heidegger's hermeneutic philosophical system of thought centres around a Romantic conception of the poem being the "natural site for authenticity and the disclosure of being and Truth."⁴⁴ However, as a philosopher who seeks to register *truths*, the Romantic belief that art is site of Absolute Truth is unsustainable for Badiou because it prohibits the possibility of *truths* in the alternate non-philosophical fields of mathematics, politics and love.⁴⁵ In his *Manifesto for Philosophy* (1999)

strates Plato's suspicion of art. Plato's suspicion is indicative of how he interprets art in relation to truth. Badiou, 2005, 2.

⁴² Lecercle, 'Badiou's Poetics', 210.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 12.

Badiou describes Romanticism as a moment when philosophy becomes “sutured” to only one of its conditions.⁴⁶ Badiou maintains this restricts philosophy from the free play that is required in order to “define a regime of passage, or of intellectual circulation between the truth procedures,” in the additional non-philosophical fields that condition philosophy. He further states that, “the most frequent cause of such a blockage is that instead of constructing a space of compossibility ... philosophy delegates its functions to one or another of its conditions, handing over the whole thought to one generic procedure.”⁴⁷ Badiou maintains that philosophy must be “de-sutured” from the poem to ensure its free circulation so that the emergence of truths, be they artistic, mathematical, political or amorous, can be registered by philosophy.⁴⁸

Inaesthetics offers a new schema that re-configures philosophy so that it may be conditioned by art. By maintaining a quality of compossibility, inaesthetics sustains the immanence of truth in art in the Romantic schema, while re-asserting the presence of truths in the non-philosophical fields.⁴⁹ Badiou borrows the term compossibility from the philosophical system of the mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716). For Leibniz, compossibility describes a situation that permits the existence of properties or elements without one suppressing the other. Badiou deploys the concept of compossibility to define the reciprocal engagement between philosophy and art that underpins inaesthetics. Badiou argues that because inaesthetics sustains a free circulation of meaning between art and philosophy, it furnishes the possibility of the revelation of new regimes of thought. By departing from a one-sided engagement where philosophy’s task is to interpret art, inaesthetics ensures philosophy may reveal the meaning that is implicit to art.

How does Badiou as a philosopher sustain reciprocity between the disciplines? (As noted, Badiou focuses primarily on literary artistic forms to

⁴⁶ Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 12–14.

⁴⁷ Riera, ‘Badiou’s Poetics’, 69.

⁴⁸ Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, 12.

⁴⁹ An enquiry into the revelation of mathematical, political and amorous truths are for another day. For more on the revelation of truths in these three non-philosophical fields please see Badiou, *Infinite Thought, Truth and the Return to Philosophy* (2005), London/New York: Continuum.

advance inaesthetics.) Although Badiou reflects philosophically on the poetry of Mallarmé, he maintains that he avoids interpretation through inaesthetics. Instead of imposing meaning on the artistic form Badiou seeks to reveal the thinking that Mallarmé's poetry generates. Badiou avoids the trap of interpretation by focusing on syntax that he identifies as the crucial operator in Mallarmé's practice. Badiou responds to Mallarmé's conception of the poem as "operation", conceiving Mallarmé's poetry is an artistic form that sustains an open-process. Badiou discloses how the operative dimension of *Un Coup de Dés* (The Throw of the Dice) (1897), is ensured by asserting a resistance to interpretation. When reflecting on this poem Badiou states "it is only there, in its powerlessness, that a truth is stated".⁵⁰ Although this enquiry is not focused on the exploration of truths, Badiou understands these truths as the emergence of new regimes of thought. This is because truths perform novelty by causing a rupture to existing knowledge. Badiou observes the complexity of artistic truths, and accordingly, the emergence of new regimes of thought as inherently difficult to register. Because truths perform novelty, Badiou maintains they are unnameable. However, Badiou maintains that it is the task of philosophy to register this *unnameable*. As Badiou's commentator Jean-Jacques Lecercle observes, "For language is always, at first at least, the language of the situation, in which the event cannot be named, in which the truths that follow from the event cannot be formulated. And yet the *unnameable* event *must* be named."⁵¹ The *unnameable* in the poetry of Mallarmé is its indeterminate quality.

When reflecting on art (via the poem), indeterminacy does not denote inadequacy because it is through this quality that the poem fulfils its task to activate thought. It is precisely by resisting interpretation that the poem fulfils its "operation" by necessitating more perceptive and imaginative forms of engagement. Badiou articulates how an indeterminate quality in Mallarmé necessitates engagement when he states, "Mallarmé's poem does not ask to be interpreted, nor does it possess any keys. The poem 'demands that we delve into its operation'."⁵² The "demand" that Mallarmé presents takes place in the encounter in the way that the poem

⁵⁰ Lecercle, 'Badiou's Poetics', 211.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 29.

provokes thought. Badiou observes how thought is activated by stating, “the enigma lies in this demand ... not in order to know what it means, but rather to think what happens in it.”⁵³ The necessity that each of us must configure our own thought is asserted by Badiou’s observation of the poem that: “No one is its master, but everyone can come to be inscribed within it.” For Badiou, the value of Mallarmé’s poem is precisely because it is subtracted from the “impasse of the master.”⁵⁴ By suspending authorship, the poem permits us to forgo the singularity of meaning, by replacing this with the thinking of this thought.

For Badiou, the significance of this *unnameable* quality in the poem is that it sets the conditions for the emergence of new regimes of thought by activating a form of thought that escapes the existing regime of knowledge. This form of thought that is activated by the poem because it cannot be qualified, quantified or fully determined. This is inferred by Mallarmé’s request that one must proceed with words that are “allusive and never direct.”⁵⁵ Because of its refusal to be determined Badiou names this form of thought *unthinkable*.⁵⁶ He develops this further by naming the poem *unthinkable* thought.⁵⁷ Badiou’s commentator A.J. Bartlett observes Badiou’s reading of the poem articulates a form of “thought whose intelligibility owes nothing to the regime of existing knowledge.”⁵⁸ Bartlett observes how this break with doxa performs novelty by setting the conditions for new regimes of thought. In this way the poem places a ‘demand’ on the reader by necessitating them to think, but in a manner that is resistant to reason or logic.

Inaesthetics reveals this particular form of thought as determined by, and dependant on, the artistic form. This articulated by Mallarmé’s definition of the poem as “a happening of *l’Idée* in the sensible itself.”⁵⁹ For Mallarmé, this is not the representation of the sensible. The sensible is what manifests as poetic thought. Rather than considering the poem as a sens-

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 56.

⁵⁵ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 134.

⁵⁶ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 19

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Bartlett, ‘Conditional Notes on a New Republic’, 217.

⁵⁹ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 29.

ible form of idea, affixing a specific idea through linguistic representation, the poem designates a process or an activity of thought in the way that it presents itself “via the linguistic power of a possible thought.”⁶⁰ This specific way of thinking arises through our encounter with the artistic form. Badiou develops this by describing the encounter with the poem as “the sensory perception of a regime of thought” and, accordingly, enactment of thought as “inseparable from the sensible.”⁶¹ Inaesthetics not only reveals the thinking raised by art, but also discloses the specificity of this thought as being bound with experience.

Badiou employs inaesthetics to explore how the poem embodies meaning and provokes thought. By revealing how Mallarmé’s work “operates” Badiou reiterates the contemporary notion of the artwork as an open-process that requires a subject to realise and complete the work. Through inaesthetics Badiou advances the capacity of the poem to raise thought by its refusal to entice the reader with a sensible form of idea. (A claim that aligns readily with Danto’s claim for *Funk Lesson*.) By employing inaesthetics to engage with the poem as an open-process that potentialises thought, Badiou demonstrates the capacity of inaesthetics to engage with the condition of thought. This observation supports my reading of inaesthetics as applicable for contemporary art. As noted in the first discussion, Perniola observes that new configurations of aesthetics emerged through a series of ongoing ruptures within previous aesthetic categories. By re-configuring the engagement between the domains of art and philosophy, I propose inaesthetics marks a “turn” in aesthetics that sustains a productive bind between art and aesthetics.

5. Exploring the Entwinement Between Art and Philosophy in a Contemporary Art Practice.

This discussion seeks to correlate with inaesthetics from the domain of contemporary art by reflecting on my practice through an artwork, *The*

⁶⁰ This method of registering informed by Badiou’s translator, Alberto Toscano, who states, “Badiou’s approach is committed to both declaring the autonomy of artistic procedures (poetic, literary, cinematic or theatrical) and to registering what he calls their ‘intrap philosophical effect’.” Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, x.

⁶¹ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 19.

Clear Apprehension of Ones Own Limitations. This discussion is presented to disclose how inaesthetics admits the complex relationship between art and philosophy that is sustained by my practice and how it also provides an aesthetic framework that does not interpret but reveals that art is “itself a form of thought”.⁶² This account reveals that practice activates me to think, but in a particular way that that differs from an abstracted reflection, argumentation and theory building that one would associate with the discipline of philosophical enquiry. I maintain that the thinking in my practice is also performed through the work in the way that these works *invite* thought. (I use the term *invite* to avoid making a grandiose claim that this work successfully activates thought. I use the term *invite* because this form of thought cannot be prescribed, being dependant on the one perceiving the work.) Through this discussion I demonstrate the value of inaesthetics to me as artist by disclosing how it provides an aesthetic framework to explore my practice, how my works operate and their potential to *invite* a particular way of thinking.

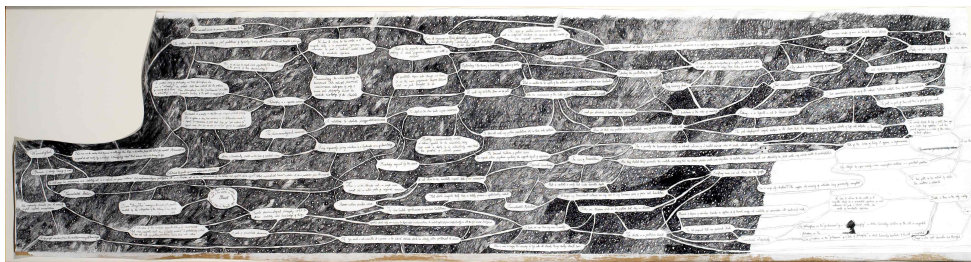


FIGURE 1. *The Clear Apprehension of One's Own Limitations* (2003). Unframed drawing (43.5 cm x 140 cm).

The Clear Apprehension... (FIGURE 1) is a long, narrow length of paper that is heavily rendered with intricate graphite marks using a .25 mm clutch pencil. This drawing comprises of over seventy-five philosophical statements on the subject of being, existence and knowledge. These statements are linked together in a web-like structure that floats on a surface of stars formed by tiny gaps of unmarked paper surrounded by erratic graphite

⁶² Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 20.

marks. The name Husserl transcribed in the bottom right corner suggests a link with phenomenology (FIGURE 2). The statement circling his name reads, “most of his projects are concerned with picturing an ideal programme rather than with its execution.” This quote appears to be lifted from some form of introduction to phenomenology. Other statements that relate to phenomenology and appear to be transcribed directly from Husserl include, “There is no original root, no single basic concept but an entire field of original experience” and “We have to return to the world as it manifests itself in a primordial experience, we must endeavour to find a ‘natural’ world, the world of immediate experience” (FIGURE 3).⁶³

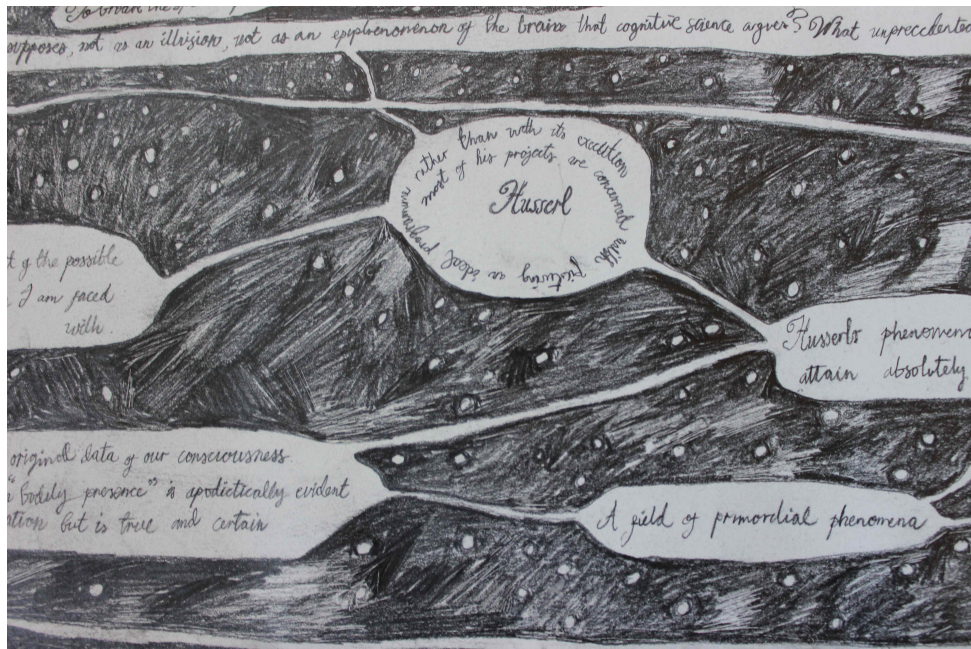
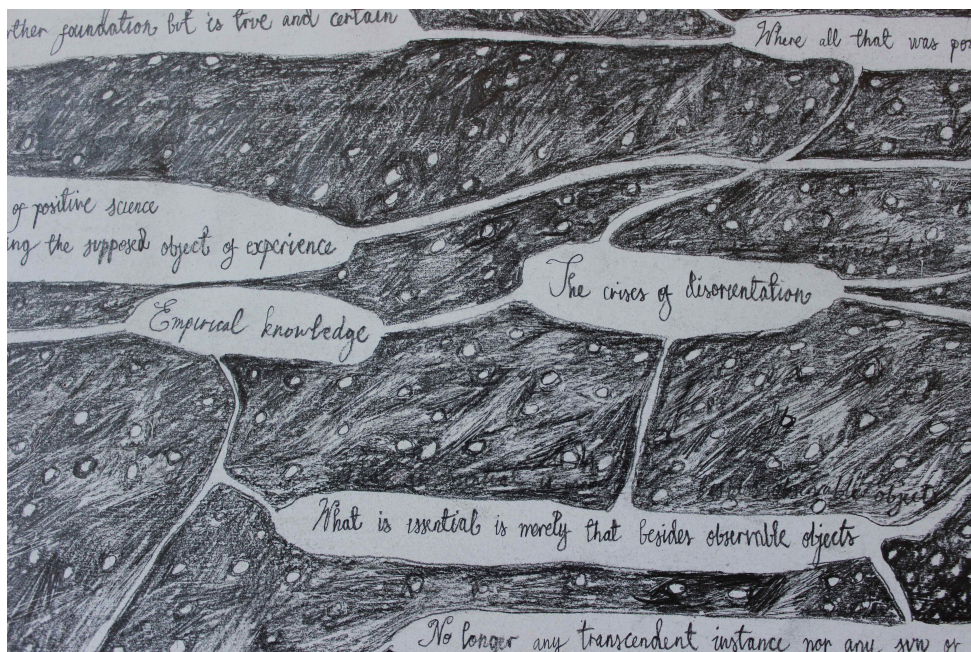
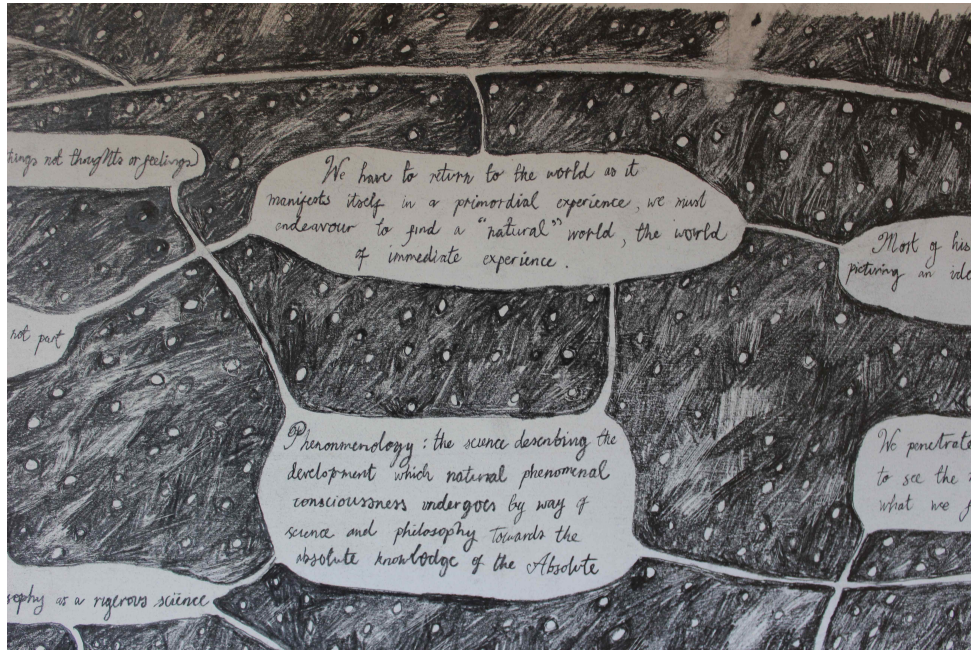


FIGURE 2. *The Clear Apprehension of One's Own Limitations*, Detail (2003).

⁶³ Because *The Clear Apprehension...* was made almost ten years ago it is difficult to source the seventy-five quotes rendered on the page. I have been unable to locate these two particular statements. However, as my direct reference would imply, I was engaged with his writings, and I venture that these are his statements, but that they have been transcribed incorrectly.



FIGURES 3 AND 4. *The Clear Apprehension of One's Own Limitations*, Details (2003).

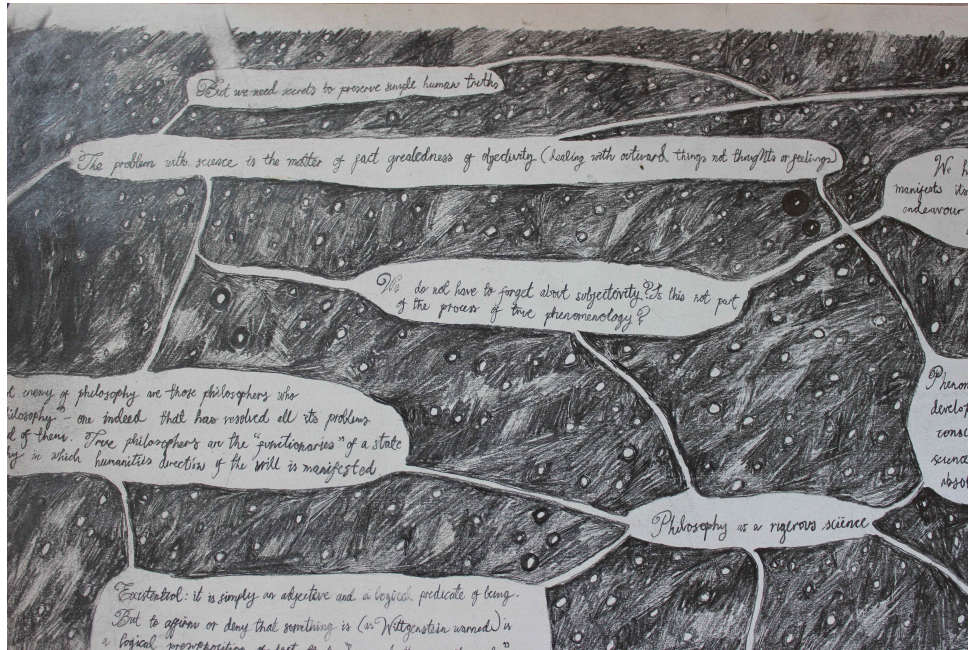


FIGURE 5. *The Clear Apprehension of One's Own Limitations*, Detail (2003).

Juxtaposed with these statements on phenomenology are others referring to truth and knowledge, existentialism, critical theory and eastern philosophy. For example, the term “Empirical knowledge” links to a statement that describes a psychological position, “The crises of disorientation.” This in turn links Baudrillard’s statement, “This is precisely the haemorrhage of reality, as internal coherence of a limited universe when its limits retreat infinitely,” taken from his essay “The Orders of Simulacra”, which then links to a retrospective anecdotal conjecture from an unknown source of the fallout of the atom bomb: “When they started doing experiments the scientists were wary that the atomic explosion would cause every atom to explode, like domino effect, and ultimately the whole world, nay universe, would be annihilated,” which in turn links to a statement associated with Buddhist philosophy: “Part of the essence of being it appears is impermanence,” leading to an existential statement that floats in an empty space in the bottom right-hand corner that reads, “Why attempt to repair meaning when meaningless existence is guaranteed?” To counter

meaning

Nothing is so dangerous as not to deceive yourself.

The great metaphysical comfort resides in the claim that the meaning of human life lies outside of life and outside of humanity.

universe when its limits retreat infinitely.

is very close to collapse, like domino effect, and ultimately the whole world, say universe would be annihilated.

they comes now and returns to the people.

Can we escape self-deception? This appears self recovery of authentic being previously corrupted.

He tries to return to the world, or to manifests itself in a primordial experience, he must endeavour to find a natural world, the world of immediate experience.

Death is there

These philosophers are the "fascinationists" of philosophy, in which humanity's direction of the will is manifested.

Four consciousness is made up of its content. Without content there is no consciousness.

The past is part of time and time is part of your mood.

The universe started its life a finite time in a single huge explosion - and the present expansion is a relic of the violence of that explosion.

But of the course of being, it appears is impermanent.

Why attempt to regain meaning when meaningful existence is a guaranteed position.

The true path is the method by the question is achieved.

alone, as if thermal energy not available for conversion into mechanical work.

whole

The Clear Apprehension... demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between art and philosophy in my practice. This work emerges out of an engagement between the two domains. This is the case with all of the works I create making it impossible to completely separate philosophy and art in my practice. As post-conceptual artist I do not use philosophy to interpret my work but engage with philosophy throughout the entire process of art making. Similarly, my works do more than simply illustrate philosophical ideas. Instead of seeing philosophy as a resource, it

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is this complex relationship between art and philosophy, a hesitancy to conflate art with philosophy and the impossibility of separating them in my practice that defines this complexity. *The Clear Apprehension* reveals how my practice performs an *entwinement* or in Badiou's metaphorical parlance, a "knot" between these disciplines. The term *entwinement* articulates how my post-conceptual practice complicates a straightforward reading of philosophy as separate or external to art.

My practice is not centred on the production of works of art but functions as a method to engage with the indeterminate nature of existence. I describe *The Clear Apprehension* ... as an artefact because it attests to this explorative pursuit. This drawing exemplifies an open-process, in the way that it *emerged* from this endeavour.⁶⁵ *The Clear Apprehension* ... reveals my practice as a multi-layered process that draws on artistic activities, such as drawing in tandem with pursuits associated with philosophy, such as engaging with philosophical texts. The tripartite process, of reading, rendering and reflecting demonstrates the *entwinement* as a symbiotic engagement where activities associated with art making and those associated with philosophical enquiry are equally weighted and necessary.

My practice presents a radically different engagement between art and philosophy that is designated by aesthetics. Philosophy is not deployed to interpret my work instead aspects of philosophical enquiry are implicated in their production. This is demonstrated explicitly by the statements in each drawing and by the titles that are borrowed from philosophical texts. It is also important to note that philosophy does not merely inform this drawing. *The Clear Apprehension* ... does not illustrate particular philosophical systems of thought. Although Husserl's name features in *The Clear Apprehension*... this work does not systematically present or illustrate Husserl's

⁶⁵ This understanding that process constitutes the artistic form is exemplified by Morris's exhibition *Continuous Project Altered* (1969). Describing this work, Morris maintains that the "process becom[es] part of the work itself." This notion of the artwork as process has been described succinctly by Morris in his reflections of *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (1969), at Leo Castelli Warehouse Gallery, New York. He states, "As ends and means are more unified, as process becomes part of the work instead of prior to it, one is enabled to engage more directly in the world of art making..." Robert Morris, "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated", quoted in Jon Bird, (1999), 'Minding the Body: Robert Morris's 1971 Tate Gallery Retrospective,' in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. J. Bird & M. Newman, London: Reaktion Books, 96.

thoughts (FIGURE 2), nor does the drawing provide a diagrammatic rendition of phenomenology. The expansive range of ideas encompassing phenomenology, existentialism, scientific thought and eastern philosophy further complicates matters. *The Clear Apprehension...* demonstrates a notable difference between the practice of making art and undertaking theoretical research, philosophical or otherwise. The sources of the seventy-five statements that feature in this work are not specified. There are other crucial aspects of work that distance it from a strictly academic or fully rational enterprise. Unlike an academic text the primary source material and secondary sources are given equal weight. For example, the statement reading, “With the consciousness of the death of God, the true world is revealed as fable” is not a direct quote of Nietzsche, but Simon Critchley’s analysis of Nietzsche’s interpretation of nihilism in *Very Little ... Almost Nothing* (2004). The inclusion of quotes from films and my own sentiments complicates a clear reading of this work.

Although covering a wide range of discourse seems an unconventional method of conducting philosophical enquiry, this approach allows me to immerse myself in a more explorative mode of enquiry. My enquiry through practice is not carried out to prove a point, argue a philosophical position or stake my claim to a theory. My practice seeks to explore and approach our place in the world and the indeterminate nature of existence. The drawings attest to and emerge out of the *entwinement* of art and philosophy, (in this case demonstrated by the tripartite process of reading, reflecting and rendering) through which I develop my thoughts around the notion of ontology, subjectivity and the indeterminate nature of existence.

The notion of indeterminacy that I explore through my practice becomes manifest in the drawing. To explain this movement it is necessary to outline how these works emerged. To develop my understanding of the indeterminate nature of existence I looked to existential philosophical thought, which in turn led me to engage with other related philosophical systems of thought, such as phenomenology. Although phenomenology and existentialism are regarded as separate discourses they are directly linked. Phenomenology seeks to avoid presuppositions by locating the source of knowledge in the subjects’ experience. Existentialism is also centred on the agency of subject and through the premise that the indi-

vidual is free establishes that there are no universal truths. During this period I was looking also to the teachings of the Buddhist scholar S.N. Goenka to develop my understanding of existence, through his interpretation of impermanence.⁶⁶ This notion of impermanence and indeterminacy at the core of Buddhist thought also underpins the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti, who famously rejected the notion of truth.⁶⁷ My practice enabled me to make links between these different systems of thought through a non-systemic approach.

I devised a method of capturing key ideas by transcribing key statements onto large sheets of paper. The process of rendering enabled me to capture these abstract thoughts - literally speaking, as they appeared on the page, but also metaphorically in the way that I could spend time reflecting on them without their disappearing, had they be confined to my memory. Giving these abstract thoughts a physical presence enabled me to reflect more deeply on the indeterminate nature of existence by aligning these statements with others. Through drawing I formed new associations that became manifest in the web-like structure. The drawing offered an alternate perspective from where I engage with the notion of indeterminacy by connecting ideas associated with phenomenology, existentialism and eastern philosophy. In this way, statements such as “Human existence precedes essence” were literally linked with the claim that “The subject on

⁶⁶ This interest in yoga and meditation stems from my sustained practice of yoga and meditation since 1998. I had also been exploring Vipassanā meditation through the non-sectarian teachings of S.N. Goenka. Vipassanā meditation is performed in order to observe at the deepest level the constantly changing nature of the mind and body. S.N. Goenka describes *anicca* (impermanence) as fundamental to existence. He references the Bubble Chamber, an instrument that demonstrates how in one second a single atomic particle arises and vanishes.

⁶⁷ The Order of the Star of the East was founded in 1911 to proclaim the coming of the World Spiritual Leader J. Krishnamurti was made head of the order. On August 2, 1929 at the inauguration of the Annual Star Camp at Ommen, Holland, Krishnamurti dissolved the order before the three thousand members who had gathered. The following quote is taken from his speech: “I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect ... Truth being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organised; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along any particular path.” For more on the life and teachings of Krishnamurti see Mary Lutyens, (1975) *Krishnamurti: the Years of Awakening*, Massachusetts: Shambhala Publications, 272.

the other hand is pure consciousness” (FIGURE 7). The drawing provided a point of entry to reflect on the indeterminate nature of existence by juxtaposing ideas associated with phenomenology, existential discourse and eastern philosophy in a more immediate and physical capacity. By reflecting on my practice through this work, I observe that my thinking is bound with up with the artistic form, through the processes used to create the form, the experience of the activity and the reflection on and perception of the form as it unfolds.

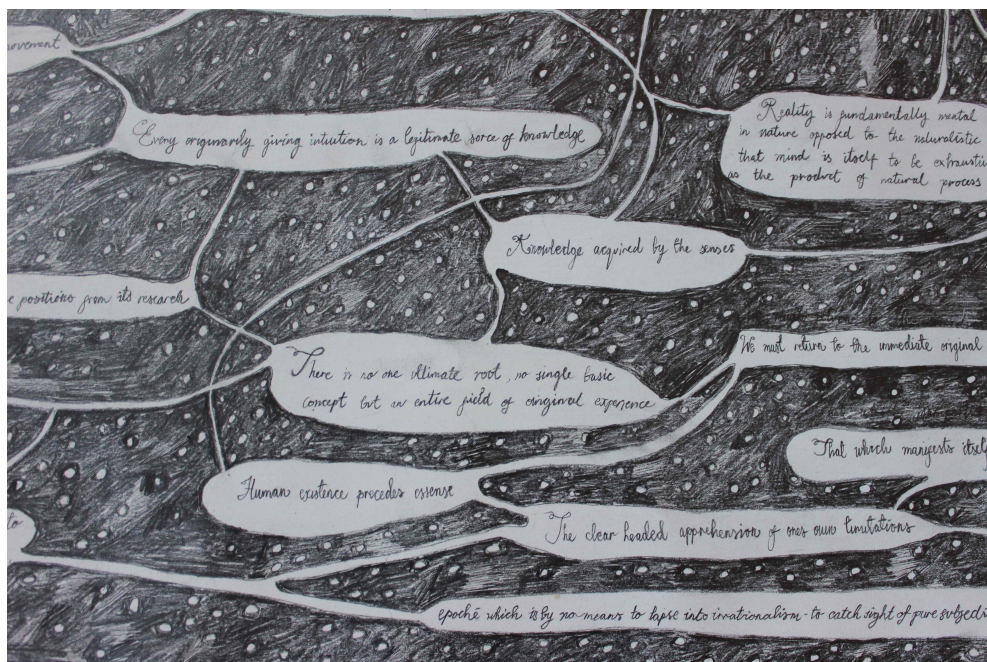


FIGURE 7. *The Clear Apprehension of One's Own Limitations*, Detail (2003).

Although the unedited and incomplete quality particular to *The Clear Apprehension* ... appears illogical, I maintain that there is an internal logic to this work. This logic occurs through the process of art making itself. In this way the meaning of the work is immanent because it presents the limitations of the self that existential philosophy seeks to articulate. The illogical web-like structure in *The Clear Apprehension* ... conveys a sense of disorder that articulates my grappling with philosophical systems of thought.

On reflection I construe the tracts of text floating in an unfinished depiction of the universe work as symbolically representing forms (both planetary and abstract ideas) beyond my reach. The fact that the drawing stops in the right-hand corner of the work gives the impression that the task has not reached fruition, that there is more work to be done and that these thoughts need further development. The logic of this work lies precisely in its unedited quality and incompleteness by revealing indeterminacy by articulating the artists struggle to fully understand existence.

Inaesthetics allows me to conceive how indeterminate quality of this work, “demands”, or in my lexicon, *invites* thought. Because *The Clear Apprehension* ... does not make clear statements it requires further teasing out on the part of the viewer. Because this form of thought is determined by and dependant on the viewers encounter with the work I propose it as bound with experience. The fragments of philosophical thought that are awkwardly transcribed on a large sheet do not relay ideas in a logical didactic way. The strange and illogical apparatus that presents these ideas require more perceptive and imaginative forms of engagement. As outlined in the previous discussion Badiou distinguishes artistic thought as “inseparable from the sensible” and “*unthinkable*”. He confirms this by arguing this form of thought is “irreducible to philosophy”, because he sees philosophy as “devoted to the invention of concepts alone.”⁶⁸ *The Clear Apprehension* ... demonstrates that thinking raised by art is not analogous to the form of thought instituted by conventional methods of philosophy. This drawing *invites* a particular way of thinking that differs from differs from an analytical enterprise because it does not follow a systematic process of theory building and is not bound with the strictures of reason. This drawing *invites* a particular way of thinking that unfolds on an experiential level. Thought is formed through the viewer’s encounter with, and their perception of this artistic form.

My reflections on the *The Clear Apprehension* ... demonstrate the value of inaesthetics for me as an artist. The entwinement of art and philosophy in my practice demonstrates the necessity for a new aesthetic framework to engage with my work - inaesthetics provide this framework while enabling more rigorous engagement with my work and how it operates. By

⁶⁸ Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 9-19.

registering that contemporary art asserts the condition of thought and concurrently bound up with the troubling of aesthetics I see it as essential to our current understanding of contemporary art and aesthetics that the ruptures that arise through contestation are acknowledged. From my perspective as an artist, a complete departure from aesthetics would obscure the complex bind that defines the current status of contemporary art and the complexity of aesthetics as a discourse, acknowledging that it continues to evolve and develop the critical resources to engage with contemporary art.

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Symbolic Misery and Aesthetics — Bernard Stiegler

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ABSTRACT. In this article I will deal with the development of a theory of aesthetics within the work of the French contemporary philosopher Bernard Stiegler with particular reference to his concept of symbolic misery. Rather than give an extensive account of Bernard Stiegler's aesthetics this article will focus on some key concepts mobilized in the definition and analysis of symbolic misery. Firstly, I will argue that Stiegler's understanding of the aesthetic comes from an expanded notion of *aesthesis*, where the political and the aesthetic are mobilized together. In this regard I will interrogate some key concepts in his work *Symbolic Misery* (2004, 2014) which sets out the diagnosis of the impoverishment of the aesthetic which Stiegler identifies with our current epoch. The impoverishment Stiegler identifies has its sources in a mechanical turn which has led to a proletarianisation of knowledge and a process of disindividuation. This analysis of regression is based on an expansion of the concept of individuation from the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon and the development of the concept of organology. Thirdly, this article will attempt to explore the remedy to symbolic misery which Stiegler seeks in the work of Joseph Beuys: participation becomes the central tenant, a participation which enables the re-engagement with the symbolic. This article argues that the choice of Beuys, as the example of this type participatory practice, is in itself problematic.

1. Introduction

The work of Bernard Stiegler has come to prominence over the last few years in contemporary philosophy and culture studies, his analysis of cinema in *Technics and Time* (1998, 2009, 2010)¹ introduced his philosophy

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¹ Stiegler, Bernard (1998) *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* Stanford: Stanford University Press. (2010) *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. (2009) *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*.

to the wider field of cultural and media studies. He has published extensively over the last few years and has become a prominent voice within contemporary French Philosophy. His recent philosophical work revisits questions of technology and epistemology and has led to the foundation of 'Digital Studies'², an international network of leading academics from Universities across the world examining the impacts of digital technologies on epistemology and aesthetics. In this paper I propose to revisit the question of aesthetics as posed by his book of 2004, *De la misère symbolique*³ the first volume of which has now just been published into English (July 2014). This book is the principal exploration to date by Bernard Stiegler of questions relating directly to aesthetics, in this book he develops a fundamental critique of contemporary aesthetics and the visual arts in particular. His analysis of three major artists, Duchamp, Warhol and Beuys, might at first glance appear to revisit an established canon within Art History, however, his reference to these artists takes place within a wider project of his critique of symbolic misery. He sets out in the first volume of *Symbolic Misery* to give an organological study of art, which is a part of his general organology which was mobilized in his analysis of technics in *Technics and Time*. The general organology extends the concept of individuation from the work of Gilbert Simondon to include a triple individuation (psychic, technical and social).⁴ The proposed organological study of art attempts to give an overview of the history of art and the philosophy of art. The history of aesthetics according to Stiegler consists of a series dis-adjustments which fall into three categories: the body and its physiological, artificial organs (technics, objects, tools, instruments, works of art) and social organization resulting from the articulation of artifacts and bodies. This organology is the starting point of the analysis of what he terms an impoverished contemporary aesthetics which has led to the symbolic misery that we find ourselves in. What I propose to do in this short paper is to attempt to revisit the diagnosis of symbolic misery and in particular to explore possible alternatives that Stiegler suggests through the work of Joseph Beuys and Beuys' project of 'Social Sculpture'. However, in order

² www.digital-studies.org.

³ (2014) *Symbolic Misery, Volume 1: The Hyper-Industrial Epoch*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴ For an overview of his approach to individuation see interview 'A Rational Theory of Miracles: On Pharmacology and Transindividuation', *Transformations*, MIT, 2013.

to do I would like first to highlight some key points of Stiegler's argument which hopefully will shed some light on the choice of Beuys.

2. A Question of *Techné*

In *De La Misère Symbolique* (2004) Stiegler expands in his original analysis of *Technics* to establish an analysis of the state of contemporary art and philosophy and concludes that they are contributing to the construction symbolic misery. Nonetheless, beyond the diagnosis of symbolic misery a redress of disenchantment, by what he has termed therapists and therapeutics, is possible. The mobilization of a therapeutics has become his central concern in more recent publications, *De La Pharamcology Positive*, *Ce qui fait que la vie vaut la peine d'être Vécue* (2010) and *Pharmacologie du Front National* (2012). The premise from which Stiegler commences his critique of contemporary art is framed by the legacy of post-structuralist thinking, arguing that this legacy requires a necessary re-arming of question of aesthetics after deconstruction, in derridean terms a deconstruction of deconstruction. His reinterpretation of Derrida is centered on *techné* as the *defaut qu'il faut* the originary default of origin. At the core of questions of aesthetics for Bernard Stiegler is, therefore, the role of *techné* and the technologies of artistic and cultural production. *Technics* understood as forms of general organology, the history of incarnated material processes which express the sensibility of the singularity of the individual. Stiegler, therefore, proposes a genealogy of the sensible. In this genealogical approach, technological development is seen as part and parcel of hominization, we are technology and technology is us. That said, however, the subtle nature of his analysis brings to the fore two key elements in relation to *Technics* and contemporary digital culture, one is the nature of temporal objects, which is a central tenant to his analysis of cinema and, secondly is the notion of epiphylogenesis, which put simply is the genealogy of technical prosthesis necessary for human existence. Epiphylogenesis is the genetic heritage of the prosthesis itself, both as a genetic memory and secondly as a cultural technical memory of the objects themselves. This prosthetic reliance Stiegler refers to as the original fault, *le défaut de l'origine*, *le défaut qu'il faut*. Epiphylogenesis is the process of production of what he has termed tertiary retention, here Stiegler is expanding on a distinction that Husserl makes

between primary retention (perception) and secondary retention (imagination). For example, in music a melody is made up of primary retention and secondary retention, the 'now' of the musical object, is the note present as a note and not just a sound, the note retains the note which precedes it. The primary retention belongs to the present of perception and the secondary retention belongs to recollection of the past melody, I rehear the melody I heard yesterday by remembering it, and it constitutes the past of my consciousness. For Husserl primary retention acts in the present of perception while secondary acts in the imagination. This distinction is problematic for Stiegler he suggests that with the advent of technologies of reproduction a third retention, tertiary retention is possible, a support for the prosthetic exteriorization of memory. For example, the invention of the phonograph enables the memory to be exteriorized and repeated, before the invention of the phonograph it was impossible to hear the same melody twice in succession, the phonography enables the exact repetition of the same melody over and over again. However, within the process of mechanical reproduction there is an inherent loss of knowledge, the ability to read and play music is no longer necessary in order to repeat the music. Stiegler has developed this analysis elsewhere, where processes of categorization and annotation are seen as essential elements in understanding the art work itself⁵. In Stiegler's analysis the proposed epiphylogenesis, *Technics*, therefore, are not to be misunderstood as skills⁶, *technics* themselves require a certain exteriorization of the haptic, physical activity itself.

Secondly, the analysis which Stiegler proposes of symbolic misery is framed by a reexamination of the nature of the object, the aesthetic object, where the object is taken as a form of mnemonic technology, a placeholder for memory. The artifactual traces of the past act as placeholders of processes of collective individuation. Stiegler expands on the notion of individuation from the work of Gilbert Simondon, Stiegler proposes a triple individuation which includes psychic, technical and social, according

⁵ See recent project <http://penserimproviser.org/wp/>

⁶ In a lecture given on Texts and Images at the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM) in Dublin on the 18th of December 2013, Bernard Stiegler elaborates on this distinction between *techné* and skill in relation to the curriculum within the Art School. See youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4zBEArbASE>

to Stiegler Simondon does not talk of technical individuation⁷. However, with the advent of the industrial revolution, the creation of specific cultural industries, and massive global digital technological platforms, these processes of individuation and collective individuation have been interrupted. The contemporary media industries exploit the structure of the temporal object so as to control unconscious and conscious time. As Stiegler points out by quoting Patrick Le Lay the managing director of one of the main French TV stations TFI:

...there are lots of ways to talk about television. But from the ‘business’ perspective, let’s be realistic, essentially the job of TFI is to help Coco-Cola, for example, sell its product {so that} a advertisement is perceived, the viewer’s brain has to be available/receptive. Our TV programmes have as a vocation to make it available, that is to say to entertain it, to relax it, to prepare between two ads. What we sell to Coco-Cola is available brain time⁸. (Translation by the author.)

The development of available brain time as the main goal of the media has lead to the ultimate impoverishment of the media itself. What is at stake is the aesthetic object itself, at a moment when the use of aesthetics, or the instrumentalisation of the aesthetic, has become commonplace within marketing whose sole role is to promote and make visible products to be consumed in late capitalist society. In addition, there is another aspect the impoverishment of the aesthetic which is the impoverishment of the political, as Stiegler states ‘*Le nous est gravement malade*’ (*De la Misère Symbolique*, p.97), the we of the collective is seriously being undermined when ‘we’ become nobodies. The singularity of the individual is denied through

⁷ ‘...the cybernetic object is capable of individuating itself. For Simondon, that is impossible. He says consistently that only the living being can individuate itself in that way’. Bernard Stiegler, interview, ‘A Rational Theory of Miracles’, New Formations, p.166.

⁸ “...il y a beaucoup de façons de parler de la télévision. Mais dans une perspective “business” soyons réaliste : a la base, le métier de TFI, c’est d’aider Coco-Cola, par exemple, a vendre son produit. [...pour qu’] un message publicitaire soit perçu, il faut que le cerveau du téléspectateur soit disponible. Nos émissions ont pour vocation de le rendre disponible, c’est-à-dire de le divertir, de le détendre pour le préparer entre deux messages. Ce que nous vendons a Coco-Cola, c’est du temps de cerveau humain disponible.” (*De la Misère Symbolique*, p.221)

the synchronization of the enormous machine of audio-visual technologies. I can watch the same event as millions of people at the same time, whether this be the canonization of popes or the world cup football finals, and when we as millions of people watch the same thing, the consciousness of the work interiorizes, adopts and lives the same temporal objects at the same moment. As Stiegler writes:

While these consciousness repeat the same audio visual consumer behaviour everyday, watch the same television programmes, at the same time like clockwork because everything is done in order for it to be so, these ‘consciousness’ end up by becoming the same person - that is to say, no-one/nobody⁹. (Translation by the author.)

The collective I and You, We, are no longer in a process of alterity and differentiation or individuation but have become one and the same. It might seem contradictory, when supposedly everyone can participate through online digital technologies that the very notion of participation itself is being undermined by these very technologies participation, where we become no-one. The notion of participation will come to the fore when we shall return later in this article to Stiegler’s analysis Joseph Beuys which he cites as an example of alternative modes of participation, ‘Social Sculpture’ is understood as an important alternative mode of participation¹⁰.

3. Politics and Aesthetics

In *De la Misère Symbolique* (2004) Stiegler proposes that the question of aesthetics be considered as a political question and that reciprocally political question be considered to be a question of Aesthetics. His mobilization of the ‘The Aesthetic’ is to be understood in the widest sense possible as

⁹ ‘Lorsque ces consciences, tous les jours, répètent le même comportement de consommation audiovisuelle, regardent les mêmes émissions de télévision, à la même heure, et ce façon parfaitement régulière, parce que tout est fait pour cela, ces “consciences” finissent par devenir de la même personne - c’est-à-dire *personne*’. (De la Misère Symbolique, p.51)

¹⁰ I would like to thank the participants in the GradCAM aesthetics seminar who have helped me in gaining a greater understanding of Stiegler’s analysis of aesthetics and the work of Joseph Beuys.

from the Greek term *aisthesis*: a sensation. For Bernard Stiegler, therefore, the question of Aesthetics is one of sensation, sensation in general. The ability to share and participate in the sharing becomes the central tenant to his understanding of aesthetics. He argues, by returning to Aristotle's analysis of participation, that the latter is key to any development of the aesthetic. The division of the soul into vegetive (plants), sensitive (animals) and noetic (human), that is to say spiritual or intellectual, by Aristotle, according to Stiegler analysis, demonstrates a movement to action (*passer à l'acte*). The participation in the divine only takes place intermittently, regression from noetic soul to the sensitive souls is inevitable and this is a loss of participation. He, therefore, contends that the question of aesthetics needs to be asked anew in relation to the question of politics, where artists are asked to take up the question of understanding their political role. This political calling of the aesthetic should not, however, be confused with a simple question of politically engaging art. It is rather, that the work of art should be originally engaged in the question of the sensibility of the other, in the sharing and participation of the other. Symbolic misery is, on the one hand, the result the growth of aestheticization of marketing and, on the other, the growth the hyperindustrial forms of the creative and cultural industries, where the 'available brain time' is bought and sold as a commodity. The aesthetic conditioning has to a large extent become an industry in itself where the principal role of the individual is as a consumer of commodities.

In order to reach these markets, industry developed an aesthetic particularly well adapted to the audiovisual media which *refunctionalised* the aesthetic dimension of the individual according to interests of industrial development, causing him to adopt the behaviours of consumerism. (*Symbolic Misery*, 2014, p.5)¹¹

The development of marketing in the 1930s by Freud's nephew Edward Barny is one of the sources for the development of symbolic misery where the vast majority's aesthetic experience is limited to the dominance of the

¹¹ 'Pour gagner ces marches de masse, l'industrie développe une esthétique faisant appel en particulier aux médias audiovisuels, qui, en refunctionalisation la dimension esthétique de l'individu selon les intérêts du développement industriel, lui font adopter des comportements de consommation.' (*De la Misère Symbolique*, p.19)

creative cultural industries and marketing. But what exactly is Symbolic Misery? Stiegler explores this in terms of libidinal misery and the loss of primordial narcissism:

The resulting symbolic misery is also a libidinal and affective misery, which leads to the *loss* of what I call *primordial narcissism*, whereby individuals are stripped of their ability to form aesthetics attachments to singularities or singular objects¹². (*Symbolic Misery*, 2014, p.5).

The loss of the symbolic is, therefore, analogous to the loss of libidinal desire, the desire can never be fulfilled. The promotion of the desire is in relation to industrial objects and not to one particular object as form of singularity itself. I become singular through the singularity of objects with which I am in relation. Later in *De La Pharmacologie Positive* (2010) Stiegler will expand on this analysis in great detail in relation to Winnicott's analysis of the transitional object, the object which contains the absence mother's presence but which can, on the one hand, help the infant attain individuality but which can also become addictive, a toxic force which hinders the infant's development. As a form of pharmakon, the libidinal desire functions in a similar way, where the drive, or in the vocabulary of Kant, the pleasant become confused with Beautiful, the drive confused with the universal nature of desire¹³. The pharmacological character of the object of desire is an extension of his analysis of the curative and the noxious, which originate in the analysis of tertiary retention in writing as mnemonic technology.¹⁴ Symbolic misery is, therefore, from a psychoanalytical perspective the loss of libidinal desire, lost to the impulses of drive. But for the purposes of this paper, there is another aspect to symbolic misery which requires further analysis, the loss of participation.

¹² "Il en résulte une misère symbolique qui est aussi une misère libidinale et affective, et qui conduit à la perte de ce que j'appelle narcissisme primordial: les individus sont privés de leur capacité d'attachement esthétique à des singularités, à des objets singuliers". (MS, p.19)

¹³ See Bernard Stiegler, Lecture on 'Text and Image', GradCAM, Dec 2013.

¹⁴ See Noel Fitzpatrick, (2013). 'Digital Reading: A Question of Plectio?'. In C. Fowley, C. English, & S. Thouësny (Eds.), *Internet Research, Theory, and Practice: Perspectives from Ireland* (pp. 1-16). Dublin: Research-publishing.net.

4. Participation

The loss of participation is counteracted through the conception of social sculpture, which Joseph Beuys developed, this is taken up by Stiegler as an example where a new therapeutics could emerge in contemporary art practice. The choice of Beuys is problematic, Beuys' work has been criticized as chamanistic obscurantism.¹⁵ Stiegler, counters this critique by framing 'social sculpture' in contrast to the loss of participation which is characteristic of the reign of symbolic misery. The following quotation gives an insight into the relationship between symbolic misery and the loss of collectivity and the loss of participation:

By symbolic misery I mean, therefore, the loss of individuation which results from the *loss of participation* in the *production of symbols*. Symbols here being as much the fruits of intellectual life (concepts, ideas, theorems, knowledge) as sensible life (arts, know-how, mores). And I believe that the present status of generalized loss of individuation can only lead to a symbolic collapse, or collapse of desire- in other words to the decomposition of the social as such : the total war. (*Symbolic Misery*, p.10)

There is an inherent connection, which Stiegler is making, between loss of individuation, which is linked to the loss of desire- the libidinal, and the loss of participation. The collapse of desire is the collapse of the symbolic which is generalized loss of individuation. The loss of individuation is a key element within the construction of symbolic misery, Stiegler quoting Nietzsche refers to the "the growing Desert", the growth of dis-individuation. According to Stiegler, the process of individuation is my ability to become singular, to differentiate, my past is less and less different to that of the other because my past is made up of more and more images and sounds that media broadcast into my consciousness, but also the in the objects and the relation between objects that these images bring me to consume, I loose my singularity, that is to say I loose myself as singularity (*Symbolic*

¹⁵ See Martin Crowley, 'Bernard Stiegler Goes Seal-Hunting with Joseph Beuys', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (2013), or abridged version in French 'Portrait de Bernard Stiegler en chasseur de phoques, par Joseph Beuys' in *Technologies, La Pharmacie de Bernard Stiegler*, (2013).

Misery, p.20). My singularity is lost with the proliferation of images and sounds instrumentalized to enable me to consume the objects of desire. The consequence for Stiegler of this loss of individuation and singularity are catastrophic and the conclusion of the previous quotation where a war is announced demonstrates the necessary violence that is needed to start the combative process of resisting the loss of singularity. The advanced technology of hyperindustrial society has developed specific forms of technics that causes regression in this process of singularity and has led to the increased loss of singularity.

Stiegler proposes that originally engaged should take place in the context of the development of the contemporary cultural industries, which according to Stiegler, have exploited the sensibility of the other, the aesthetic. Industries which have monetized the sensibility of the other through the development of specific technologies of production and reproduction. Stiegler maintains that this exploitation of the aesthetic has led to the loss of participation, the loss of processes of individuation which has led to symbolic misery. Symbolic misery is hence presented as a loss of aesthetic participation. For Stiegler the notion of the symbolic is at stake, Sym-bol in ancient Greece, the *sum-bolon*, meant to share, to participate together. The development of specific cultural technologies, and the industrial imperative to sell more and more products has led to a loss of symbolic participation, a loss of structural individuation.

The mobilization of the concept of symbolic misery and sensible catastrophe in Stiegler's analysis of creative and cultural industries differs profoundly from the analysis put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer. According to Stiegler Adorno does not take into account the role of technology in our development, the truly pharmacological nature of technologies, their ability to function as cure and poison¹⁶. For Stiegler the development of forms of symbolic misery are due, in part, to the development of specific forms of proletarianisation of knowledge but also are due to the loss of the symbolic.

The key term that it is necessary to highlight in relation to the definition given above is that of *loss of participation*, this might be slightly at

¹⁶ See interview, 'A Rational Theory of Miracles: On Pharmacology and Transindividuation', *Transformations*, MIT, 2013.

odds to say that there is a loss of participation when with the development of digital technologies have been viewed as the development of different modes of producers, prosumers, where participation is present throughout modes of cultural production today, from reality TV programs to interactive art initiatives involving participants rather than an audience. This would also seem at odds with a resurgence of participatory art within contemporary art practice, which following Clare Bishop and Grant Kester I will distinguish by emphasizing the collaborative aspect. Participation is understood as a practice where, to quote Clare Bishop, the socially engaged appropriates social forms ‘as a way to bring art closer to everyday life: intangible experiences such as discussing philosophy (Ian Wilson) or politics (Joseph Beuys), cooking, running a café (Gordon Matta-Clark), running hotel’¹⁷. Bishop points to a direct historical link between contemporary forms of participatory practice and Dadaism, according to Bishop the legacy of Dadaism and the avant-garde is seen in two traditions of participatory art, an authored tradition that ‘seeks to provoke participants, and a de-authored lineage that aims to embrace collective creativity the former disruptive and interventionist, the latter constructive and ameliorative’ (p.11). In theatre one could think of Brecht provoking critical reflection and more controversially Antonin Artaud and his *Theatre of Cruelty*. There is an important insight in Bishop’s analysis, she gives us a taxonomy of participatory practice which enables us to better examine the relationship between Beuys’ practice and Stiegler. Bishop offers three agendas for participatory art:

‘the desire to create an active subject who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation, the second cedes all authorial control and it democratizes the creation of work beyond a single artist, collaborative creativity, the third agenda is collective responsibility from a Marxist tradition’. *Participation* (2006). p.12.

The symbolic participation that she refers to finds direct echoes in Stiegler’s analysis, where the participation in is an empowering shared experience that could be seen as a remedy to the impoverishment of the symbolic. Bishop’s three categories of participatory art are, therefore, Activation, Authorship and Community. The work of Joseph Beuys would fit

¹⁷ Clare Bishop (ed.), *Participation*, MIT press, 2006. p.10.

this schema well, but there is an inherent flaw in Bishop's analysis, a tendency to dismiss all socially engaged art as failure and politically naïve, we find a similar tendency in the 'relational aesthetics' of Nicolas Bourriaud where he also dismisses all forms of socially engaged practices as failures which attempt to be 'directly critical of society fail'. Instead relational aesthetics will offer processes of artistic practice which will reorient practice away from technical expertise or object-production and move towards processes of intersubjective exchange. Grant Kester in his book *The One and the Many* (2011) gives an alternative approach to the taxonomy of participation in artistic practice. For Kester one of the tensions at issue with participatory practices comes through semantic ambiguity that he points to with the word 'Collaboration'. Collaboration has both positive and negative connotations, one is to work together and the other is to coerce, to be uncritically accepting, the collaboration can be with the hegemonic power in place rather than a collaboration which attempts to bring about new collective power structures. Grant Kester offers another perspective whereby the dismissal of Bishop and Bourriaud of socially engaged art by collapsing 'all activist art into the condition of 1930s socialist realism, fails to convey the complexity and diversity of socially engaged art practice over the last few decades' (Kester, *The One and the Many*, p.31). By exploring the wider historical context relative to traditions of the avant-garde Kester proposes that through modernism the core function of art changes dramatically and with it the privileging aesthetic autonomy of what Kester terms a textual paradigm of artistic practice.

The textual paradigm is defined by a spatial concept of agency, in which compositional and receptive modes are fixed. It thus forecloses the possibility that creative insight might be generated through less proprietary forms of compositional agency. That is, rather than viewing agency as unique property of specific individuals, seeing it instead as fluid and transpositional over the course of time. (*The One and the Many*, p.36).

Hence textual paradigm which promotes participation within fixed modes of reception and composition does not allow for alternative modes of fluidity within compositional agency. The critique of participatory socially engaged Art practice given by Bourriaud and Bishop seems to be reliant on

a privileging of the aesthetic autonomy of art practice which defines the spatial and receptive modes of the art work. The alternative paradigm of participation which, I would argue, Stiegler turns to is the example of symbolic participation and social sculpture in the work of Joseph Beuys.

In *Symbolic Misery* (2004, 2014) Stiegler takes three key examples, Duchamps, Warhol and Beuys, and it is in the work of Joseph Beuys Stiegler that sees an alternative to the symbolic misery. Joseph Beuys takes a central role in Stiegler's analysis of participation, the positioning of Beuys as central to Stiegler's analysis is somewhat surprising, given the reputation that Beuys has within art historical analysis. The analysis which Stiegler gives of Beuys's work is largely based upon what Beuys says about his work, and it is notoriously difficult to separate the work of Beuys from the discourse of Beuys about his work. Beuys proposes a new social organism, a social sculpture to overcome what he sees as the tragedy of modern art, which leaves the majority of people in solitude, the enigmas of Kandinsky. To paraphrase Beuys, man could not, in his life regulated by work, take part in these intellectual movements, the vast majority of humanity need something quite different to artists, their works and the art connoisseurs. Beuys proposes through his practice an alternative to the tragedy of the modern. One example stands out as attempt to prompt a difference participatory paradigm, the Bureau for Direct Democracy, Beuys' Documenta 5 a 100 day installation records in detail the interactions with him. The recordings are a daily journal account of interactions with people in the office, which range from passing curiosity, to in-depth debates with people about the advantages and disadvantages of direct democratic processes, to discussions about why would there be such an office at an art exhibition, to questions about what and where is the art work. The participation is participation in the discussion, the disclosure of dialogue and discourses which become the work of art. However, it is important to note that the discussion is lead, orchestrated through the construction of the very office itself, the participation is being orchestrated. So whilst Beuys' famous claim that everyone can be an artist one could add some are more artist than others which does mean that participation and collaboration are not flattened out completely. This I would suggest is the key problematic at stake here within Stiegler's analysis of Beuys, the distinction between participants. As I suggested earlier the choice of Joseph Beuys by Stiegler

seems to be slightly outdated when one thinks of contemporary forms of participatory collaborative projects, durational projects where participation and collaboration take place over long periods of time. One could think of AIDS activists, collectives working in collaboration on environmental issues, Park Fiction in Hamburg, where new forms of collectivity re-invent the process of participation in Urban Planning. The participation which seems at stake for Beuys seems very tentative in comparison, and this perhaps is where Stiegler's analysis needs to be revisited. The rise of participatory art forms over the last 20 years can be glimpsed through their representation in the various international biennales etc. At Documenta 13 there were a number of participatory projects including the presence of the occupy movement¹⁸.

5. Conclusion

The advent of participation in contemporary practice would seem at first glance to place a new emphasis on the construction of the symbolic, the sharing of symbols which has been undermined by the development of aesthetic impoverishment. However, upon closer examination, there is an inherent tension within the different paradigms of participation and it is this that requires further analysis. New modes of analysis for participatory practices which are prevalent at the moment which could be therapeutic sites where new forms participatory practices could enable the symbolic and noetic re-arming of the aesthetic.

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¹⁸ The Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media, GradCAM, maintained, for example, a presence over the 100 days with the artist Robin Kahn, the project involved the use of hospitality and cooking as the central focus. See '*Skin of the Goat*', GradCAM, 2014.

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An Ontological Turn in the Philosophy of Photography

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ABSTRACT. The contemporary philosophy of photography has yet to take the ontological turn that has occurred in philosophy of science and mind. There, an attempt has been made to move beyond a simplistic epistemological discourse of objectivism and subjectivism and engage the ontology of powers, dispositions and tendencies. Dispositional realism requires that one take into account surfaces, ambient conditions and the psychobiology of the observing subject in understanding perceptual knowledge. By accepting a powers ontology, whereby stimuli do not lawfully give rise to percepts but contingent mechanisms do, one fully embraces realism. The aesthetics of photography shows many cases of an epistemological bias or, if “causal,” an ontologically narrow idea of causality. Even Walton’s counterfactual dependence view is basically an empiricist approach. Just as in the philosophy of mind and the discussion of perception such a viewpoint remains vulnerable. A causal realist can admit that photographic images are equivocal but affirm a deeper kind of realism that takes into account the nature of the depicted, the environmental conditions, and the photographic apparatus (and its range of sensitivities). The singular view of a photo, like a phenomenal quale, does not always disclose reality but the very characteristics of the qualia, the grain and phenomenology, give us larger clues. Dispositional realism moves beyond the fixation on the individual photo (quale) and insists that to surpass a stale debate between objectivists and constructivists one must recognize that any photo (as any experience) is part of a larger context wherein dispositional properties are manipulated, giving rise to sometimes unpredictable results.

I. Introduction

Encouraged by developments in metaphysics and the philosophy of mind, our wish is to investigate an ontological turn in the philosophy of photography. Perhaps this is a good time for such a meta-exercise. Within the

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aesthetics of photography there seems to be a large consensus about the overall transparency of photographs, except for minor points that form the majority of debates. For example, Dominic Lopes has questioned whether a drawing can be transparent like a photograph. Geert Gooskens believes that digital photos are just as transparent as film photos. Perhaps the most serious challenge to the status quo is Jonathan Cohen and Aaron Meskins' argument that photographs do not contain egocentric information and therefore they do not seem to be true prosthesis, as argued by Walton.

We approach this situation from a transverse angle. After studying activities in other fields, we ask quite simply whether the aesthetics of photography is too epistemologically based. Can it respond, not to epistemic objectivity, but to ontological reality? Does its focus put too much weight on the photograph, which might be likened to experiences of the epistemic subject, without considering the larger systems at play with their own properties, that might give rise to that experience?

In this sense, our project is relatively modest. We propose to look to post-positivist metaphysics and more specifically dispositionalist approaches to mind for what can be gained in the aesthetics of photography. In particular, we will argue that the realist approach in general of someone like Christopher Norris puts us in closer contact with ethical questions and more narrowly the approach to qualia of Gary Hatfield allows us to talk more meaningfully about what sense a color might be objective. Transposed to photography, we anticipate a more direct approach to questions about reality and objectivity.

Switching to a post-positivist realist approach means giving up latent Humean ideas of regularity, which are largely epistemic, and moving the conception of causality toward one that is radically contingent, and based on multi-causal factors. We submit that the overly epistemic view of photography, wherein we have inputs and expect outputs, is uncomfortably close to old-fashioned positivism and the tendency to argue with counterfactuals – although it is not pressed too hard – can harness one to a Humean idea of regularity. If instead, realism is embraced wholesale, we become comfortable answering about whether some drawing or photographic device will yield accurate outputs, “I don’t know?” We would have to disengage explanation from prediction.

Our article will have three parts. First we want to sketch the contem-

porary situation in photographic aesthetics and the nature of debates taking place, then we will review briefly new approaches to causality and realist metaphysics, paying special debate to Gary Hatfield's dispositionalist model of qualia, and then propose some ideas for rethinking photography on different lines.

2. The Contemporary Situation

As we noted before, much of the most interesting discussion in the aesthetics of photography constitute challenges to major paradigms like that of Kendall Walton, which focus on questions of evidence and accuracy of photos or other media in relation to photography. Here we want to draw attention to a couple of points in discussions by Dominic Lopes and Geert Gooskens. They accurately represent points about their theories but we hope you can see where more discussion is called for.

In "The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency," Dominic Lopes writes that the idea that photographs are transparent should not,

be confused with a claim about their accuracy. A photograph is necessarily accurate in the sense that it carries information by means of a causal process. In another sense, a photograph is inaccurate, since it may cause or dispose one to have false beliefs about the objects photographed. A colour photograph of a red apple carries information about the apple's redness, though it may carry the information by having a colour indistinguishable from that of an orange seen in ordinary light, with the result that we are liable to believe falsely that the apple is orange in colour.¹

Similarly, Geert Gooskens dismisses composite photos as a challenge to photographic transparencies because they are not actually photos:

There is, for example, a picture of a meeting between Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman that, in reality, never took place. Two digital pictures of the actors were merged to make it appear as if they had met. This, however, is not an argument against the epistemological

¹ Dominic Lopes, "The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency," *Monist* 112 (2003): 335-48.

realism of the digital photograph either, because the picture in question is not a photograph – the one in which Cruise and Hoffman appear to meet each other – is not a photograph at all. It is a collage which uses epistemologically realistic photographic elements to produce a picture which is not itself a photograph.²

In both of these cases, there is a way in which the photograph is not impugned: in the first example the photograph is transparent but we don't know it, it produces false knowledge; in the second example, the photographs of the two actors are still transparent as for instance in the face and fist of one of Walton's example, Jerry Uelsmann's *Symbolic Mutation*. Sometimes we can see that the result is impossible, as in this case, but there are others in which we would arrive at the opposite effect as before: a picture is not transparent but we think it is. It seems that we are often led to such qualifications. We affirm transparency but protect the idea through a concession: that a photo need not be accurate. If we compare this to the epistemology of vision, we would probably be led to think about conditions of viewing or the way the eye processes information.

Lopes does make reference to "ordinary light," some information about conditions. But in vision, for example, normal seeing is determined by a variety of causal factors. There can be a defect of the physiology of the eye, or simply unusual ambient conditions (dusk and mesotopic vision), etc. Rob Hopkins, in his important "factive" theory of photography, is perhaps one of the few to recognize how such experiences are shot through with normativity and he puts norms at the center of his discussion.³

In a classic argument, Maurice Mandelbaum countered Moore's and Ryle's naive realism by switching cases where object and property often align - vision - to another sense modality like hearing, where they do not.⁴

² Geert Gooskens, "The Digital Challenge: Photographic Realism Revisited," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 3 (2011): 115-125.

³ Rob Hopkins, "Factive Pictorial Experience: What's Really Special about Photographs?"

Nous 46 (2012): 709-31. Perhaps the main difference between our view and Hopkins' is that his is a largely epistemological account, foregrounding normative elements it presumes, whereas ours is ontological, explaining via powers or dispositions where these norms come from.

⁴ Maurice Mandelbaum, *Philosophy, Science and Sense-Perception* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964).

Gary Hatfield has recently done the same thing to counter Stroud's naive realist argument by switching talk from vision - the yellow of a lemon - to felt heaviness.⁵ Where Stroud is on pretty good ground in arguing that there is no difference between saying:⁶

- (1) Jones sees yellow.
- (2) Jones sees something yellow.

The argument falls apart with weight, for it is impossible to collapse these two statements:

- (1') Smith feels heaviness.
- (2') Smith feels something heavy.

Now we are completely with a quality without existential import.

If we cannot collapse statements of quality with statements of being, then we need to challenge ourselves to come up with a better way to deal with those statements of quality. Using a similar process of variation pushes us to realize that response-dependent talk of ordinary observers and traditional photography, while understandable, leaves something unsaid. For the sake of argument, we want to push these examples on analogy to examples of response-dependence (R-D) in moral judgment, which presses the issue about realism in photographs. For example, Christopher Norris boils down R-D approaches of Crispin Wright or Mark Johnston that "any action x is pious, good, worthy of moral approbation:"

if and only if that action is such as to elicit an approving response on the part of moral agents fully apprised of the relevant facts and circumstances and possessing an adequate discriminative power to arrive at the right (ethically justified) verdict.⁷

⁵ Gary Hatfield, "The Reality of Qualia," *Erkenntnis* 66 (2007): 133-68; reprinted in *Perception and Cognition: Essays in the Philosophy of Psychology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009).

⁶ Barry Stroud, *The Quest for Reality: Subjectivism and the Metaphysics of Color* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷ Christopher Norris, "The Perceiver's Share," *Language, Logic and Epistemology: A Modal-Realist Approach* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 154.

This synthesis to settle the score between realism and relativism is pushed by Norris *ad absurdum* when he discusses examples of real moral approbation like Apartheid or cruelty to animals. The R-D theorist has an inability to acknowledge transcendent moral truths, or for that matter cases of error. It turns out to be merely quasi-realist. This leads us back to qualia and a theory of color – not as a warranted judgment – but a “psychobiological property” for inspiration about photography.

3. Post-Positivist Realism and Dispositionalism

In the 1970s, realism began to be taken seriously again with Harre and Madden's *Causal Powers* and Roy Bhaskar's *Realist Theory of Science*.⁸ These reforms were intended to address the shortcomings of the standard positivist account of science. Such early efforts have given rise to various kinds of causal realism, dispositionalism and even essentialism.⁹ In general they have moved discussion away from the logic of confirmation and the covering-law model toward a realist idea of interacting strata of reality wherein confirmation is complicated, prediction is almost ignored, and focus is on the characteristics of the strata capable of producing such conjunctions. The event view of Hume has been traded for a powers view closer to Aristotle.

Part of the Humean legacy is counterfactuals. Here is Walton's original formulation in differentiating a photograph of a dinosaur and a painting of one:

if the scene had been different - if there had been no dinosaur, for example - the pictures would have been different....Photographs are

⁸ Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Leeds: Leeds Books, 1975); Rom Harré and E. H. Madden, *Causal Powers: a Theory of Natural Necessity* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975).

⁹ For overviews, see Ruth Groff (ed.), *Revitalizing Causality: Realism About Causality in Philosophy and Social Science*, London, Routledge, 2007) and Ruth Groff and John Greco (eds.), *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy: the New Aristotelianism* (London: Routledge, 2013). See works by Nancy Cartwright, Anjan Chakravarty, Stephen Mumford, and Brian Ellis and Jonathan Jacobs. For overviews, see Ruth Groff (ed.), *Revitalizing Causality: Realism About Causality in Philosophy and Social Science*, London, Routledge, 2007) and Ruth Groff and John Greco (eds.), *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy: the New Aristotelianism* (London: Routledge, 2013). See works by Nancy Cartwright, Anjan Chakravarty, Stephen Mumford, and Brian Ellis and Jonathan Jacobs.

counterfactually dependent on the photographed scene even if the beliefs (and other intentional attitudes) of the photographer are held fixed.¹⁰

Counterfactuals express a “nomic” or lawful relationship based on a conditional connection. It is inherently directed to explanation and prediction and is fruitful in aesthetics. However, a look at the philosophy of science has shown its weakness. At its extreme in David Lewis’ theory, counterfactuals are admittedly anti-realist because they engage in alternative worlds. In contrast, a transfactual relationship would be “normic,” or norm-based and universal.¹¹ Counterfactuals turn out to be a subset of the transfactual; they are observed and confirmed regularities reflecting underlying (real) properties of the objects under discussion.

This is not a major matter for the philosophy of photography; the use of counterfactuals does not generally carry with it a full endorsement of Lewisian possible worlds.¹² The only explicit discussion of the metaphysics involved is Cohen and Meskins, who follow Dretske in his “probabilistic, counterfactual-supporting, connection between independent variables.”¹³ However, things change when we press the affirmation “a change in the object will necessitate a change in the photograph.” Will it? Walton, Lopes, Cohen and Meskins all take for granted that changes are counterfactually dependent. But there can be minor changes in objects that are

¹⁰ Kendall Walton, “Transparent Pictures: on the Nature of Photographic Realism,” *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 264. See also Lopes, “Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency,” 439: “above a threshold of acuity, any visible difference in a tomato would have made a difference in the visible properties of a photograph of the tomato and thereby in the content of the experience of seeing the photograph;” and Jonathan Cohen and Aaron Meskins, “On the Epistemic Value of Photographs,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62 (2004): 197–210: “had your ancestor been smiling rather than frowning, the photograph of her would have looked different.”

¹¹ For the distinction see “counterfactual/transfactual,” Mervyn Hartwig, ed., *Dictionary of Critical Realism* (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹² As Jonathan Jacobs writes (“A powers theory of modality: or, how I learned to stop worrying and reject possible worlds,” *Philosophical Studies*, 15 [2010]: 227–248), “Lewis is perhaps the only philosopher to believe in the existence of the totality of Lewisian worlds.” As Jacobs shows, however, even the use of possible worlds as “abstract representations” are constrained to Humean thought because it presumes that necessity must be supplied from without the properties of objects.

¹³ Cohen and Meskins, 7.

indiscernible or irrelevant. How do we account for these? Cohen and Merks' example specifically invokes *ceteris paribus* conditions already mentioned above. To believe in counterfactual dependence is to smuggle in a normative idea of the photograph. The definition of the transfactual is that its consequent may not be realized. We submit that this simple change in orientation of the problem has consequences.

The problems with counterfactual dependence can be dramatized with an example from color. Objectivists would like to say that color just is a property of surfaces (Hardin) but more importantly, as in the aesthetics of photography, is the condition that these properties are transparent to experience. We see the color and we register it objectively. However, there are many possible points when a color is not seen correctly. Color can be changed by a defective visual system - going from the retina to the cortex, unusual conditions of illumination, borders and surrounding surfaces and objects.

To take just one quick example of the relational effect of reflectance, illumination, and spatial disposition on color perception, we can look at Alan Gilchrist's classic lightness experiments, wherein he demonstrated the effect of perceptual organization on lightness (the perceived reflectance).¹⁴ It had been known that in impoverished disk/anulus displays, lightness is perceived as relative ratios of brightness. By manipulating the planarity of test patches, as seen in the image, Gilchrist led the visual system of observers to assign them to different planes under different illuminations. Hence, their perceived reflectance could change wildly, from light gray to dark gray.

We take inspiration from Gary Hatfield's recent discussion of qualia to resolve some of these problems. First of all, it is just too much to expect that we can get an idea of a phenomenal color unproblematically while experiencing it. This would be to follow Michael Tye and the later Fred Dretske in their controversial idea that qualia are intentional properties that just so happen to be transparent in disclosing the actual properties of things.¹⁵ Instead, Hatfield regards qualia like colors to be:

¹⁴ See Alan Gilchrist, "The Perception of Surface Whites and Blacks," *Scientific American* 240 (1979): 112-125.

¹⁵ Fred Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); Michael Tye, *Consciousness, Color, and Content* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

a disposition (or its basis) for producing subject-dependent experiences of certain kinds in perceivers, which experience may properly be called 'qualia.'

To anticipate our argument, if for Hatfield qualia are not that which we see but *that by which we see*, photographic signs are similar. They are the means of seeing the reality beyond them. Oftentimes we can remark on the photographic signs themselves but generally their purpose is to point beyond themselves. They are the currency of seeing photographically at all.

It is interesting to compare some of the language in the philosophy of photography and in the qualia debate. Tye and the later Dretske believe that color is a quality that is metaphysically transparent: we see through the qualia to the color of the object or the surface. Without forcing the argument, without a dispositionalist account, Walton or any other defender of a transparency thesis has the conundrum of forcing an epistemological position into a metaphysical position, which Bhaskar has called the epistemic fallacy. *Generally*, photographs like vision bring us unproblematically to their object but it is the exception, brought up in many challenges to the causal theory, that is the issue. As with the dispositionalist account of qualia, with photography we become more comfortable with experiences over being, with the look and phenomenology of a photo - what it seems to show - rather than passing directly to what it shows. Here, we hope, we have come close to the delicate balance of the artificial and causal found in a theory of photography like that of Rudolf Arnheim.¹⁶

For example, looking at Lee Friedlander's *Colorado* (1967) (FIGURE 1) we see a dilemma that is happily common to both vision and photography. We can imagine walking toward this store in real life, which our vision tracks as we approach it, and correspondingly gets larger. The part that we see transparently is the portrait of Kennedy. There is another part, however, which is more confusing, the reflection of the street, including the photographer. This creates a bit of indecision as to whether the reflected cars are just that or real cars seen through the window. So we have to sift between these two kinds of information to navigate correctly. Friedlander

¹⁶ E.g. Rudolf Arnheim, "On the Nature of Photography," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (1974): 149-161.

does something more, however, by merging these two elements and his reflected body seems to be continued by the portrait of Kennedy. So a new expressive idea emerges.



FIGURE 1. Lee Friedlander, *Colorado*, 1967.

So how do we deal with the reliability of traditional photography? According to a realist account, cameras are like the evolved representational capacities of the human visual system. Photography is not accurate absolutely, however; like the eye it has evolved as a truth-tracking mechanism. If the eye has evolved over time to maximally afford information about the environment to the human organism, so too has the photographic camera. The early use of analog photography, film and digital photography as documentary devices, and the manufacture of cameras for this purpose, ensures that it too is constructed to take advantage of causal properties that track truth.

In conclusion, let us return to Cohen and Meskins' challenge to Walton. Their argument, even in its rejection of Walton's conclusion, is we

believe begging for ontologization. By invoking the early Dretske ('70-'80), the Dretske of non-epistemic and epistemic seeing, they are precisely holding to a critical realist approach to seeing, whereby some content is epistemic and some not, some informed of belief ("doxastic") and some not.¹⁷ The key is to see the non-epistemic seeing as part of the psychobiological nature of seeing. Just as some counterexamples of Walton require a larger perspective to find their place, so too with their falsification of Walton's theory we require a larger perspective. Does photography give egocentric information? We, the viewer, have no counterfactual relation with information in the photography. If we change our position (of course, the photo will not) then we do not see a change in the photo. As we have said, this is Humean thinking, with antecedents and possible lawful causal outcomes. The framing of the question does not allow us to think about the original camera and *its* counterfactual relationship to the portrayed scene. Perhaps this is a remnant of the transparent idea of the standard viewer looking at a standard photo, made by a standard camera. But the transparency of photography is just as much about film and cameras, lighting and space, as it is about photos themselves. Keeping the door open to an ontological turn in the philosophy of photography allows us to remember this.

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The Contamination of Content and the Question of the Frame

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I make four claims. First, in departure from Husserl's phenomenology to Derrida's early reflections on phenomenal content (via Searle and Habermas) it turns out that the status of this content is systematically insecure and doubtful. Second, this systematic insecurity of phenomenal content is what aesthetic experience is basically about. Third, following Derrida this insecurity is not only what drives art but is vital also for understanding each other, i.e. the domain of ethics. Fourth and finally, I want to show that the examined relation of ethics and aesthetics can be traced back to the founding documents of the Age of Aesthetics, namely the *Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism* (1796/97). This program became, as I want to claim, lucid philosophy in the thinking of Jacques Derrida. After all, modernity and post-modernity are more intimately connected than one might expect.

1. What is the Problem of Phenomenal Content?

Husserl conceives phenomenal content in the following way: A phenomenon is given as an evident unity of itself or there is no phenomenon at all. For what is a phenomenon? Let's consider an example used by Husserl: The sound of a tone consists as a phenomenon only in its "patently given unity"¹. Now, what Husserl means is that there is a difference between the mere phenomenalistic appearance of the phenomenon on one side and the actual experience of that appearance on the other side: "The appearing of

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¹ Cf.: „Perhaps the sound lasts. We have there the patently given unity of the sound and its duration with its temporal phases, the present and the past.“ Edmund Husserl, *The idea of phenomenology*, trans. by W.P. Alston et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2010), 8.

the things does not itself appear to us, we live through it.”² The sound of a tone does therefore not just appear, but as a phenomenon someone experiences that appearance. Experience, thus, is more than appearance as it is subject-related – a difference that Husserl stresses in order to differentiate his phenomenological approach from a strictly phenomenalist position, which would be based on a third person perspective with no account of subjectivity at all. That is also why phenomenology contrasts with empiricism. But as we shall see this contrast is all but straight. To sum it up, the question, which is neither sufficiently answered nor posed by Husserl, will be: What is experience?

Let’s have a closer look on that! The difference between mere appearance and experience can but exist, if the subject, who experiences something, contributes in a somehow decisive manner to the constitution of a phenomenon. Now, consider again the example of the sound of a tone: It appears to be given *now*, in the very present of *this moment*, but if it merely appeared in the very blink of an eye, it would not be the phenomenon it actually is. It would then just be something: something you can hear of course, but that would not be enough to qualify it as a tone. This does not necessarily mean, that you must be able to identify that tone – let’s say, as a high g – but it must be sufficient, to realize what is appearing – and that is something well different from the snapshot of just anything appearing noisily, which cannot be explored in any descriptive manner. In contrast, to realize what is appearing is – at least – to correlate a phenomenal present to a phenomenal past: I experience the sound of a tone, that is to say: I experience the present of a tone *as* that tone *that* was present just an instant ago. Presence is but a relation of two parts (present and past), which are, however, given as an evident unity. This is all the more true, if it is not a tone I am experiencing but a melody. There were no melodies, if not for a subject’s capacity to correlate a phenomenal present to a phenomenal past. Melodies are – just like any other phenomenon – temporal entities. But their temporal identity is nothing they possess by themselves, but it is something that a subject performs, which is why Husserl calls such performance an *act* of experience.³

² Husserl, *Logical Investigations*. Volume 2, trans. by J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970), 538.

³ “Experiences of meaning are classifiable as ‘acts’, and the meaningful element in each

Indeed, this is as insightful as it is troublesome. Of course no one – except some hard-core empiricists – would say that there is no act character in experience, that there is no performance as contribution to experience by the subject at all: the entire philosophical domain of intentionality shares this intuition.⁴ Intentionality is – in a minimalistic sense – the capacity to experience something that appears. But epistemologically this is a contentious issue: For then there is no criterion to know whether intentionality is a neutral – i.e. at least an intersubjectively neutral – sort of thing: If different people have different intentional contents, how can they ever agree on something? If there is phenomenal content but as evidently given unity, there is no way to decide within an experience what in this experience is actually appearance and what is contribution by part of a subject. To put this paradoxically: In the intrinsically subjective act of experience, i.e. intentionality, there is no way to know the extent of that subjectivity. However, this generates further paradoxical consequences as we shall see.

One philosophical perspective that departs from here can be explored in the positions held by Jürgen Habermas or John R. Searle: Both follow an idea of Intentionality,⁵ which enables them, as I want to claim, to shortcut the difference of experience and appearance. Both are willing to pay the price for this shortcut, which is to abandon the question of truth as phenomenal truth – which, by the way, is why eventually both can be

such single act must be sought in the act-experience, and not in its objects; it must lie in that element which makes the act an ‘intentional’ experience, one ‘directed’ to objects.” Husserl, *Logical Investigations*. Vol. 2, 533.

⁴ To provide a typical example: John R. Searle, *Intentionality*. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind (Cambridge: University Press, 1983).

⁵ It would go too far, to presume to show here in depth how Searle or Habermas conceive intentionality in detail. But what their conceptions share can easily be identified. – It is what Habermas grants Searle: “Searle has now shown [...] that the literal meaning of an expression must be completed by the background of an implicit knowledge.” Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volume 1, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 336. This “background of an implicit knowledge” is for Habermas accessible “only in the prereflective form of taken-for-granted background assumptions and naively mastered skills.” *Ibid.*, 335. – Now, this is just what Searle says, namely, that our so-called background knowledge is nothing but consisting in “various skills, abilities, preintentional assumptions and presuppositions, stances, and non representational attitudes”. Cf. Searle, *Intentionality*, 151.

taken to hold idealistic positions. Of course they do not abandon truth as such – or at least: an equivalent notion of objectivity –, but in either case, truth and objectivity become social phenomena – think of: Habermas' consensus-theory of truth as well as his discourse theory of morality, politics, and law and Searle's *Making the Social World*.⁶ Now, this is all but consequent. If there is no criterion to cut through experience in order to gain the reality of appearances, then institutionalized practices of experience is all reality there is – and, of course, a discourse on these practices is then all critical thinking can demand.

Besides, my guess is that Husserl is well aware of the fact that he employs – in his conception of the phenomenon – a contrast between form and content and that one is not given without the other. To come back to the example of how to experience a tone, temporality can be considered as the form of phenomenal content. The acoustic content then is that content but through time – and time is what a subject contributes to an appearance, enabling time to be temporal in the first place: There is no time *per se* as there is no appearance *per se* but phenomenal temporality or – what amounts to the same – temporal phenomena. Only when joined, form and content perform something at all.

Now, to better understand this contrast let's take it as an ability⁷ and in those terms, which Husserl used to describe it in his study on the "consciousness of internal time".⁸ Part of the capacity of this consciousness is then the ability to differentiate between an ideal (phenomenal) object that remains the same in time – which is why it is ideal – and the constitution of that temporal ideality through temporal differences. It can then be taken as the difference between temporal duration and the ability to wonder in what way this duration takes place. – Husserl himself, though,

⁶ Again, it cannot be shown here what these positions consist in but what can be said in either case that they are theories shedding light on the social shape of our techniques to construct values. Cf. Habermas, "Wahrheitstheorien", in *Vorstudien und Ergänzungen zur Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), ch. 2. Also, Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discursive Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. by W. Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). And of course: Searle, *Making the Social World. The Structure of Human Civilization* (Oxford: University Press, 2010).

⁷ Of course, I rely here on Searlian terminology, cf. fn. 5.

⁸ Husserl, *On the phenomenology of the consciousness of internal time* (1893-1917), trans. by John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers), 1991.

would not be able to describe this difference in those terms – and no one would be able to understand him –, if there was no capacity to wonder about the ways in which duration takes place. There is a certain natural and intuitive understanding of the temporal form of phenomenal content, which alone can be a subject of investigation. Such investigation, however, is not necessary for the ability to deal with phenomena. We just deal with them. They are temporal, of course, and most probably temporality is but one of a lot of formal criteria which qualify something to be an accessible and understandable content. Among temporality, space or spatiality is another formal criterion for content as are all cultural practices of experience. The overall question that seems to be misunderstood in Searle as well as in Habermas, is – again – what is experience? Husserl seems to have traced this question, when stating: “Foreground is nothing without background.”⁹ What the background is, though, is not interesting in terms of *what* there is; that is the question of the foreground, which is the thematic content of phenomena. Instead, the question of the background is expressed in terms of *how* something is. Usually, though, the background is not thematic; that is why it is the background.

In addition, experience depends on the various forms of the difference of foreground and background, the various contrasts of form and content. Husserl tried to describe a transcendental background, i.e. a background, which is a precondition for any experience to take place – such is his assumption of transcendental time.¹⁰ Understood that way, however, no experience can ever change the way of our experience. This means to leave aside experience as a constituting factor of experience. Drawing now a further paradoxical consequence, we could say: Experience does not matter to experience – no experience could ever shed light on the contrast of form and content, although, this contrast is all what experience consists in. This is the bullet to bite, once we accept the phenomenal indifference

⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰ Cf. “We seek to bring the *a priori* of time to clarity by exploring the *consciousness of time*, by bringing its essential constitution to light, and by exhibiting the apprehension-contents and act-characters that pertain – perhaps specifically – to time and to which the *a priori* temporal laws essentially belong.” *Ibid.*, 10. Cf. also Paola Marrati’s work on this topic: Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace*. Derrida reading Husserl and Heidegger (Stanford: University Press, 2005).

of form and content as “there is no difference between the experience or conscious content and the experience itself.”¹¹

However, this leads straightly to the core of Derrida’s philosophy, namely the insight that “the condition of possibility of those effects [of experience] is simultaneously [...] the condition of their impossibility, of the impossibility of their rigorous purity.”¹² What makes phenomenal content possible – the contrast of form and content –, is what makes it impossible to ever come to terms about the purity of this content. Experience itself is therefore the name for both, the experience of a possibility and the experience of an impossibility. This insight looms large. For in phenomenology – at least in phenomenology – only experience of possibility is thought of in terms of providing content in a proper way. The debate between Searle and Derrida about whether cases of “non-standard”, “non-serious” and “abnormal” speech acts can be part of a general speech act theory simply explores this assumption in the specific context of language philosophy. But, I guess, that Derrida is right, stating that: “In classical terms, the accident is never an accident.”¹³ Derrida’s method – so called *deconstruction* – becomes then a necessary counterpart to set the accident in its rightful place, to emphasize the experience of an impossibility. Structurally, however, there is no gap between possibility and impossibility, or to put it otherwise: there is nothing else but that gap. However, that does not mean that there cannot be stated anything as right or wrong. Rather the point is that there is no purity in the judgment of anything as either right or wrong, that there is no right and no wrong in themselves. Thus, setting the accident in its rightful place is nothing but a structural impossibility since the accident is always opposed to what is non-accidental. The accident cannot be purely an accident as it is dialectically determined to play the counterpart of what is non-accidental. This structural impossibility turns then out, though, to be part of the paradoxical structurality of experience. This “structurality of structure”¹⁴ is then what enables structure to rise in the first place. To examine it, we have to focus on both, aesthetics

¹¹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*. Vol. 2, 540.

¹² Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context”, in *Limited Inc*, ed. by Gerald Graff (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1-25, 20.

¹³ Derrida, *Limited Inc a b c ...*, Glyph 2 (1977), 162-255, 200.

¹⁴ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2001), 278.

and ethics.

2. What is Aesthetic Experience?

There are phenomena, which – more than others – disable the distinction of form and content to take place. Effectively, they do not really disable the distinction but delay its arrival. If form and content were about to happen instantly – as in everyday life it is often the case –, we would not be aware of them taking place at all. Therefore, if they arrive, they are in indifference towards each other in a way such that phenomenal content can be grasped easily. If, however, the indifference of the contrast of form and content is not given instantly, the contrast itself becomes thematic. Usually, though, as highlighted by Husserl, only the foreground, the content is thematic – that is what makes the content proper content. The relation of foreground and background, then, is itself indifferent and therefore unproblematic. That is why the delay of its unfolding is phenomenologically problematic – however, as I want to claim, this is the way art works.

Aesthetic experience is what makes us draw attention to the undecidability of what is phenomenal content and what is the form of that content. It is the impossibility to accomplish an indifference of form and content, which would give way to a clear phenomenon. In art, the aesthetic phenomenon itself cannot be identified like, for instance, this table in front of me. On the other hand this table in front of me could be aesthetic, if it was impossible to come to terms *how* this table happens to appear. – To make this example plausible, we would have to invest a few more assumptions, like, the table had to be arranged in a certain disturbing or fascinating matter, maybe painted in wild colors, with grotesque figures attached on it, and what more there is done to art works.

Artistic techniques therefore aim – whether intended or not – to threaten one's capacity to experience them properly – while under proper experience I understand the capacity to associate a context to something in a way such as to determine sufficiently *how* that something has to be experienced – which means providing form in the first place. Still, as long as this *how* is not sufficiently determined, the *what* neither can be identified properly. Of course – take it for granted, that this table indeed was

an artwork –, we would still know that this is a table. But there would be something odd about it that we could not name – and naming it “table” would just feel improper. We would hesitate to do so, just as it happens to feel a distance between the title of an artwork and the artwork itself. Hesitation and delay are here not to be taken as accidents, which could have been prevented and therefore are not to be taken as proper accidents. On the contrary, they are necessary as they are, *how* they are – to shed light on what would otherwise fade out immediately into the background. Delay and hesitation are nothing else but the search for a proper background, a proper form, a proper category – what Kant called “reflective judgment”¹⁵ that is seeking universals for given particulars.

Moreover, this delay of proper experience as aesthetic experience is founded in what can be called – following a notion of Derrida – the logic of the frame.¹⁶ The frame can be considered as what is in between foreground and background, between form and content. As long as foreground and background or form and content are in a relation of indifference, framing takes place successfully and no one was ever aware of the fact that it took place. However, to frame means drawing a border, a line of separation between foreground and background in such a way that the foreground can become thematic in the first place. But to determine *possible* content is only possible, if it amounts to determine *impossible* content, too. Framing has therefore two directions: one is it to form content, the other is to form form. Besides, this is what Derrida calls “formation of form”¹⁷: the infinite play of substitution, the movement of ever new differences, which itself can never become the object of formation, because it is at the same time antecedent *and* subsequent to all practices of formation. It is what is the

¹⁵ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), First Introduction V, 20:211–13.

¹⁶ Obviously, the notion of the logic of the frame relies at least three important works on the topic: Ulrike Dinkelsbühler, *Kritik der Rahmen-Vernunft. Parergon-Versionen nach Kant und Derrida* (München: Fink, 1991). Barbara Johnson, “The Frame of Reference. Poe, Lacan, Derrida”, in *Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Shoshana Felman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 457–505. And under the rubric of „Borderline Aesthetics“: David Carroll, *Paraesthetics. Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* (New York: Methuen, 1987). Cf. there chapter six, Borderline Aesthetics

¹⁷ “Differance is therefore the formation of form.” Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 63.

problematical itself; what becomes thematic in all situations of hesitation, doubt and insecurity.

What becomes thematic in these cases is the frame itself as the act of framing is detained. That is precisely the aesthetic situation: In an artwork it is impossible to decide ultimately what is thematic foreground and what is enabling background. Every possibly nameable aspect of an artwork can be thematic itself: figures, colors, light, canvas, everything. That is why we cannot come to terms about what makes an artwork an artwork. What Derrida states of deconstruction is therefore also true for the very aesthetic undecidability:

[D]econstruction has never claimed [...] to be possible. [...] For a deconstructive operation, possibility is rather the danger, the danger of becoming an available set of rule-governed procedures, methods, accessible approaches. The interest of deconstruction, as such force and desire it may have, is a certain experience of the impossible.¹⁸

Furthermore, this “experience of the impossible” can be aesthetic but, if so, the domain of the aesthetic goes beyond itself as that is the very nature of the frame: Once confronted – aesthetically – with the problem of framing, everything can be put into question. Everything can be foreground – everything can be background. Nothing is definitely unimportant and any detail can gain importance. In music as in poetry nothing can be as significant as silence and even temporality itself can become thematic, for instance, if a movie or an opera is extremely short or long. Framing is therefore the most fundamental operation of aesthetic experience but also the most difficult to justify. As Derrida puts it in *The truth in painting*:

I do not know what is essential and what is accessory in a work. And above all I do not know what this thing is that is neither essential nor accessory, neither proper nor improper [...]. Where does the frame take place. Does it take place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its internal limit. Its external limit.¹⁹

On top of that, aesthetic experience is intimately connected to a logic of question and questionability. For aesthetic experience reveals, that experience is possible in its impossibility. What makes this impossibility

¹⁸ Derrida, *Psyche. Inventions of the Other* (Stanford: University Press, 2007), 15.

¹⁹ Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago: University Press, 1987), 63.

possible, though, is an infinite force of questioning. Still, what this force is, cannot be answered – or answered easily – as all this force is about is questioning – not answering. However, adequate responding is a way of doing justice to what cannot be answered. Contemplating an artwork is one way of responding to this force.

Again, for artists and art critics this may sound like a bizarre, if not absurd, consequence. But what “deconstruction” or the force of questioning is about is not any sort of undefinable and hence obscure irrationalism. For does not mean to abandon all criteria to judge artworks and aesthetic impressions. On the contrary, it means that there are specifically aesthetic criteria, which are irreducible and thus different as well as alternative to any other sort of critical thinking.

3. The Common Ground of Aesthetic Experience and Ethics

Generally spoken, ethics can be considered as everything that concerns one’s relation to another one. There is no good action in an ethical sense that has impacts exclusively on my own situation. Therefore, for ethics to be possible, one has to come to terms with another one. One technique to understand another one, is to understand him hermeneutically, that is to understand him on the basis of my own understandings, my own background. This technique, however, has its limits: The other, then, will appear only within the limits of my understanding of him. The other will never appear in his otherness.

Of course, complete otherness cannot be understood. I have always to assume a background of his actions, a setting, a context, to understand what he does, why he does it. If all that is true, the question of the frame is as relevant for aesthetic experience as it is for understanding each other. If aesthetic experience consists in an act of sensible complementation of what is foreground and what is background, then so is proper understanding of one another. For what is sensible complementation, if not a certain desire towards what is but indicated? There is no space of knowing easily how to take this or that in an artwork – if so, it was no artwork, but just that table in front of me. Aesthetic experience involves a notion of infinite sensibility in respect to *how* I have to take what I have to face. This

sense of sensibility can be understood, as I want to claim, in ethical terms as responsibility.

Moreover, both, art and understanding each other, demand a consideration of communicated content in terms of its being contaminated by external settings and vice versa, a consideration of that background as being contaminated by what appear to be facts and deeds. Understanding someone perfectly would only be possible, if we knew exactly what his background is and under which constraints he acts. Only then could we see which choices he made, which decisions he took. However, this is – entirely – as impossible as a painting that was never framed. The painting per se is not an image, and the image is given only because of an act of framing and so is understanding. Regarding someone's actions, background assumptions are always made, but it cannot be assumed that this assuming is ultimately correct, as that would make the other a creature of one's own assumptions. Besides, what I can see in an image is different from the mere structure of the painting. In other words: there is no mere structure but only the setting of structure ("structurality").

Furthermore, neither can I assume ultimately the background of another one, nor can I ultimately assume the correctness of my own background. For instance, it is always possible, to wonder whether a specific action would have been right also in view of another background. If, for instance, every action of mine should be coherent with the background assumption of climate change, then probably some actions should change. The possible plurality of backgrounds is something that responsibility forces us to consider. Yet, no matter how careful such consideration will be, it can always turn out to be shortcutting.²⁰

On the other hand, it seems to be easy to do the right thing like helping an old woman stand up, after she had fallen. Yet, this is not what concerns ethics. Ethics begin when norms, telling us what to do – like: Help the needy, the weak, the poor! –, begin to loose some of their rigorous force; when we have to wonder whether a particular norm indeed is a good thing (situation of conflicting norms). It is always easy and ethically effortless to rely on the structures that tell us right from wrong. But how is it guaran-

²⁰ Cf. in particular for the sake of the example of climate change, though this goes in general as well: Jeroen van der Sluijs, *Uncertainty and Dissent in Climate Risk Assessment. A Post-Normal Perspective*, in: *Nature Culture* (Vol. 7, Nr. 2), 2012, 174-195.

teed that these structures are right themselves? If you grow up in a violent state, you grow up with norms of violence – yet which state or society could actually claim to be thoroughly innocent of producing violence?

And there the question is posed of infinite responsibility. [...] There is no more responsibility when there are norms. Thus, if one wants to normalize, to norm the ethical overload, it is finished, there is no more ethics.²¹

The disbelief in an ultimate grounding neither in art nor in ethics is crucial for the existence of both phenomena. The absence of this belief (in an ultimate grounding), however, enables another one, that is: the belief of finding a common ground – which itself can be considered as an act of art or of understanding. Besides, both cannot be taken *simply* or *merely* as absence of grounding. Rather, they express the belief that something will appear, the certainty that something is about to happen – as both take into account what is indicated and what is indicated is never certain, never really present. Still, it is there as being promised. What maintains doubt and hesitation is therefore not just something negative but also a positive expectation that something is coming. An artwork just like acts of understanding promises in a way to reveal a still hidden insight. The prior absence of a fixed frame, a fixed contrast on one hand and the hope for the coming of such a frame on the other hand turn into the very presence of art and understanding.

Moreover, both share a particular form of temporalisation different from mere phenomenal experience and superficial social relations where – in either case – everything seems to be clear from the beginning to the end and where illusions always turn out surprisingly and happen most unexpectedly. In those cases past, present and future are indifferent towards each other. On the contrary, for what art and understanding share, is the idea of never possessing anything – exempt from that which “would make or give *place*; it would give rise – without ever *giving* anything – to what is

²¹ Derrida, “Performative Powerlessness – A Response to Simon Critchley”, in *The Derrida-Habermas Reader*, ed. by Lasse Thomassen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), III–II5, II3.

called the coming of the event.”²² This event, however, would be end of aesthetic experience as well as an understanding of the other in his otherness. What is therefore more important than the event is the “eventness of the event”²³: a reflection of the future that maintains the distance between presence and future: the space of the coming.

4. The Question of Modernity

Finally, I want to loose a few words on the notion of modernity. Habermas claims in his lecture on *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* in 1985 that Derrida levels the distinction of literature and philosophy.²⁴ I cannot discuss this claim here properly. But it definitely is true that Derrida at least in some parts of his works employs techniques, which provoke a suspension of the process of reading, of understanding and, even more so, the clarity of logical consequences. This employment can be taken as an attempt to apply deconstructive insights to philosophical texts. These attempts can be considered as more or less successful. However, this is not the point. The point is that to have an insight – be it a philosophical insight or an insight in general – framing is necessary. In fact, reducing framing to the mere establishing of an event, to the possession of an insight is, by the same token, to ignore the process of its genesis. Yet, it is this genesis, which produces always new events, which can be taken as life itself and which can never be reduced to itself.²⁵

Habermas claims that modernity is founded in the “idea of reason as something that is in fact build into communicative relations and that can in practice be seized upon”²⁶. The philosophical project of modernity then

²² Derrida, *Rogues*. Two essays on reason (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), xiv.

²³ Derrida, “Performative Powerlessness – A Response to Simon Critchley”, 112.

²⁴ Cf. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Twelve Lectures, ed. by Frederick Lawrence (Oxford: Blackwill, 1987).

²⁵ Indeed, this captures a central idea of Derrida’s thinking: Life itself cannot be mastered nor learned. Instead, learning to life is all life is about: „And does one ever do anything else but learn to live, alone, from oneself, by oneself?“ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), xvii.

²⁶ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 82.

is to found this idea in the very communicative relations, which – on the other hand – maintain this idea. According to Habermas, postmodern philosophers such as Derrida cease to do so. However, as I hope to have shown, Derrida rather tries to protect an idea of reason that is beyond the very finiteness of our judgments. What never takes place ultimately, can take place all the time. Being exposed to risk, is being exposed to possibility – as are the practices of everyday life. But these perspective bound practices are not to be confounded with what gives them place to be initially. If we forget that, everything is at risk of being supposed to be eternal: structures, facts, principles, characteristics and whatever more. On the contrary, this means loosing the sense of being at risk. However, as Derrida has shown, the foundation of an “idea of reason” is nothing but a promise. This is what art and ethics do: they promise the coming of reason – and in doing so, they are probably more reasonable than claiming the presence (or worse the fulfillment) of reason.

Furthermore, one of the founding documents of modernity as well as the age of aesthetics – namely the so called *Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism* (1796/97) – expresses explicitly: “I am convinced that the highest act of reason, which, in that it comprises all ideas, is an aesthetic act, and that *truth and goodness* are united like sisters *only in beauty*–.”²⁷ As far as I can see, in the discussion on what modernity consists in, this was never caught on. Still, my guess is that what the *Systemprogramm* stated became lucid philosophy in Derrida’s work. In conclusion: What can be developed aesthetically as sensibility or ethically as responsibility can be understood in either way as a form of justice towards what there is. Giving justice to someone or something is the infinite regard for the detail. But this justice can never take place. It is the mere idea of justice, the notion that people and things deserve better than they do that stimulates art and social life. This sort of stimulation is the space of the coming, the distance between present and future. Maintaining this space as the non-identity of present and future is what art and ethics are made of. Indeed, as such they are “united like sisters”. However, it would be a misunderstanding to take them as a foundation of modernity. Rather, what they tell is that there is

²⁷ Cf. *The Early Political Writings of The German Romantics*, ed. by Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 1–6.

no such foundation. All there is an infinite act of founding.

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Artists' Experiments and Our Issues with Them — Toward a Layered Definition of Art Practice

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ABSTRACT. It may seem that much contemporary art can be characterised as shock art – art whose sole aim is to shock the audience. The public indignation about such works is defensible yet misconceived. Yet predominant philosophical definitions of art do not correct this situation. Dickie's institutional conception and Gaut's cluster account are too lenient – too nominal – to allow us to sort out the issue at hand, and Levinson's historical definition is backward-looking and apparently incapable to deal with the new and shocking.

The layered definition proposed here starts from a distinction between art (the practice), art forms (such as painting, and music), and singular art works. It proposes that something can only be art if it conforms to the phenomenological characteristics of an art form which can be understood as procedures that allow instances, works, some of which have great artistic merit, masterworks. New artistic experiments may not yet be art because no shared procedure is identified, or, if a procedure was identified, the procedure's artisticity has not yet been established for lack of masterworks corresponding with the procedure.

1. “Shock Art” and the Definition of Art

People can be horrified by contemporary art. It may seem to them that artists only want to shock us. Shock Art is how they sometimes call contemporary art deprecatingly. Let me give you a few examples to justify this response and to introduce the issue at hand.

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1. A friend of mine, then curator of contemporary art at the Central Museum in Utrecht, told me in 2000 that every Tuesday at 10 AM a man would visit his office. They would shake hands and without ever talking take a 600 meter walk; they would sit on a bench for ten minutes and walk back, shake hands and part ways. To be repeated next Tuesday. My friend was impressed about this new direction art was taking, but I had no clue as to how the event should be appreciated: what was the work, who was its maker, where was the audience, how should someone stumbling upon this work look at it most fruitfully?¹
2. The second example: one morning in the late 1990s, during rush hour, a woman rings a London police station announcing that she placed four bombs in three subway stations at the corners of London City, London's financial heart. She did not volunteer any further information and ended the call. The reader may grasp the immensity of what the police should do: the subway stations as well as major buildings and streets in the whole of London City were evacuated. Imagine the costs. At 10.30 AM the woman entered the police station in person and professed that it had been a work of art. My intuitions point in another direction.²
3. April 2008, Gregor Schneider, wishing to exhibit death in an art gallery, solicited dying people with ads on the internet, requesting them to die in a gallery.³ Might this turn dying into art – ever? What would

¹ ...other than as two men taking a walk? I think I understand that the artist meant to make point of saying that everything ordinary can also, under certain circumstances, be viewed as art. My issue with this is, though: how do we do that – view a walk as art?

² A colleague proposed this way out: When these events, the walk and the bomb incident are treated as fit within the normal practice of everyday life they would have perfectly clear meanings. So the question seems to be: what changes would treating them in a different practice, art, induce in their meaning? Are they not sufficiently fruitfully interpreted in real-life?

³ We may decide we are shocked by this; and that seems intuitively plausible, as well. But the real problem is what philosophical response we have. Schneider is right of course: death is important for all of us and we should not try to hide it – obviously we can not hide it, too. And an artist could make art about it – it has been done many times over the ages. But contemporary artists, such as the ones in these examples, seem to feel the approach

it mean to take dying as an art?

4. In 2004, Jonas Staal placed several roadside memorials for Geert Wilders. Imagine passing them by on your way to work. They would make you ponder how Wilders apparently recently died in a traffic accident. Passers-by could never have guessed that this were a work of art.
5. Rirkrit Tiravanija has, on several occasions, cooked meals for people, claiming to be making “art with people”. It does not seem his aim to turn gastronomy into an art form, but then what *is* the work: the cooking, the meal, the eating, the savouring of the food? Or the dirty cutlery Tiravanija exposes afterwards? For each positive answer to these questions, the next question would be: and how ought one to appreciate these (the cooking, the meal, and so on)?
6. Also in 2004, Tinkebell strangled her own cat and turned its hide into a handbag, “My dearest cat Pinkeltje”.

These six examples have little in common with works that we readily recognise as art: paintings, music, films, and the only thing they seem to have in common amongst themselves is their provoking or shocking us. If these experiments are to be examples of *art* we should be able to tell how they can be appreciated *as art*. We know how to do that with paintings (or music, and so on). With the art of painting, we recognise masterworks, bad works, and paintings that are barely art, like the ones I might be making in my spare time. But when asked whether we can make such distinctions in these six cases, we hesitate. What are the works; what is their ontology? Which of their aspects should an art audience appreciate, and how must it appreciate them? The woman's phone call, or the evacuation of London City? People taking a stroll in the park? How people die? It is no wonder that people reading about experiments like these, are shocked by them, and call them shock art.

should be more direct, not via a representation, but via a presentation. But first: is this not immoral? And, secondly, why would the result be art? What is the ontology of the work? Is it a theatre play? Nor is it performance-art, as it is not the artist who does the performance.

Who carry the burden of proof? No singular contested artist can be expected to explain her work in a way that might placate the audience – I do not think that artists should.⁴ Art critics may certainly be able to help, but only within an adequate conceptual framework – or they might find themselves repeating the shocking gestures of the works.⁵ I think that philosophers of art must help out. Philosophers however, remain silent. The dominant, institutional definition of art is merely classificatory and it says that whatever some representative of the art world – preferably artists – presents as a candidate for artistic appreciation is art. It refuses to specify the nature of artistic appreciation, or its norms of success.⁶ For it, all of the six samples just mentioned ought to count as art.⁷ If we must necessarily be so lenient as to accept all of these experiments and others like it without reservation, then perhaps, the masses *are* right, and art *has* turned into something we would best rid ourselves of. In this paper, I argue that a better definition of art can show how the public indignation, however plausible it is, is not a response to the direction art is taking, but to flawed experiments from artists who are groping in the dark, experiments that are barely art, if that. The layered definition that I propose below explains why we may temporarily be incapable of deciding exactly what is happening in certain experiments by artists as long as we haven't

⁴ The explanation, if it were forthcoming, could not be seen to paraphrase the work to begin with. Nor would we expect a truthful answer from those who are engaged in art financially.

⁵ Critics may show the way for an aesthetic appreciation of the works they evaluate, but they will probably not convince the shocked audience why they should care, to begin with.

⁶ In a sense I follow suit. According to my view it is not the philosopher's task to specify the nature of artistic criteria, but the art critic's. Yet it is the philosopher's task, I think, to explicate the practical framework within which critics develop criteria and prompt audiences to their suitable application, as well the place and role of the other aspects which make up the whole of the practice. In all cases, what gets presented as criteria will have to be recognised by participants in the practice as suitable. It is that suitability, or perceptual fit, that I think forms the normative core of the practice.

⁷ Perhaps, philosophy does not need to provide an answer to a crisis like this, if that is what it is. If art is dying, push it – Nietzsche might have said. But if philosophical thought is therapeutic, as Wittgenstein thinks it is, then it has a responsibility to being committed to what it deems worthwhile. Do not philosophers of art think that art is worth our while?

followed through a few important steps. And once these steps are taken successfully, we can distinguish meritorious from bad works, and art from what is barely art, or not art at all. (More in § 3.)

Now it is clear that art is not a natural kind. “Art”, philosophers repeat after Weitz, is an open concept, and art is open to the future. To say that art is open because artists are creative and original already involves an understanding of how their experiments should be appreciated. Yet, the fact that artists are in the business of experimenting leaves open the issue whether what they do necessarily counts as art. Many contemporary artists grope in the dark; and, for sure, not everything they do will be artistically meritorious. Some things that artists will do – because they feel they are onto something important – are not well understood, neither by them nor by us. Unfortunately, people who lack an adequate definition allow their thoughts on certain unfavourable experiments to determine their view on art as a whole. But some of these experiments may simply be bad art; some may be barely art. To make such evaluative distinctions, though, we must assume a definition. Also, but this is really the same point: without a definition, we can not conceive of art's expansion with revolutionarily new art forms.⁸

2. The Debate

Since the 1950s, analytical aesthetics has been the stage for a lively debate on the definition of art.⁹ Some philosophers hold this debate responsible for the poverty of analytical aesthetics. They argue that *art* itself, not its definition, should be our prime interest. Even a Neo-Wittgensteinian, Morris Weitz (1956), who ignited the debate, defied the possibility of a definition of art – he relegated the question to a family resemblance – and concluded: “To understand the role of aesthetic theory is not to conceive it as definition, logically doomed to failure, but to read it as summaries of

⁸ For my layered definition I take my clue, among others, from Stanley Cavell who remarked about the birth of cinema as an art: “The first successful movies [were] the creation of a medium by their giving significance to specific possibilities” (Cavell, 1979). A new art form arises from a medium due to the emergence of meritorious works.

⁹ Cf., e.g., Davies, 1991.

seriously made recommendations to attend in certain ways to certain features of art.” (p. 35). Indeed, the reasons we have for judging some work meritorious need not hold across the board. I appreciate this insight, but argue below that these “recommendations to attend in certain ways to certain features of art”, said honorific definitions, do license a definition – just not one that fixes eternally art's necessary and sufficient properties. Now, the debate that followed Weitz's criticism of traditional definitions was motivated, also, by an effort to include works that were excluded by honorific definitions, such as Duchamp's *Fountain*.¹⁰ And what went overboard in subsequent classificatory definitions, more often than not, is the thought that there is a meaningful connection between being art and being good art.

The fact that art can not be defined as a fixed idea by specifying its allegedly eternally necessary and sufficient properties leaves untouched the need for a stable realist characterisation for use in our traffickings with art, and our aesthetic conversations. When confronted with an example that does not match one's account, one must have the courage to ask whether it is a counter-example demanding a change in, or withdrawal from one's account, or an exception to it. As said, some examples are bad works of art, but some are barely art.¹¹ The argument that guides this paper is that understanding art as a practice in a certain (multi-step) manner restores our best intuitions about art – most notably the one that art be good at something – as well as circumscribing the objections ventilated by Weitz, Dickie, Danto, and recently, Gaut, against other realist definitions of art.

(i) Gaut's Cluster Account

Berys Gaut (2000) thinks that Weitz's suggestion of family resemblance got its bad press from a mistaken interpretation. He identifies two interpretations: a “resemblance-to-paradigm construal”, and a “cluster account construal”. The former interpretation consists in the thought that the notion of family resemblance requires something to prevent the resemblance from getting adrift and this, the interpretation suggests, are paradigm cases. He refers to honorific types of accounts like Tolstoy's and

¹⁰ See Benjamin Tilghman, 1984 for criticism of the inclusionary move.

¹¹ *Fountain* is not a work of art.

formalism, which are devised on the basis of one or a few favourite works of art, such as a book expressing an emotion its author has gone through and which he infects his readers with by manipulating words, or, respectively, abstract paintings. Tolstoy and formalists used such favoured works as a model not just for works in the same art form and genre but for art per se. Gaut thinks that this view fails because it involves an impossible comparing of many works to a few.¹²

Instead, he proposes a theory of art, that specifies a cluster of criteria “whose instantiation by an object counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward its falling under the concept.”¹³ And these criteria have much to recommend them:

1. “possessing positive aesthetic properties (...); 2. being expressive of emotion; 3. being intellectually challenging (...); 4. being formally complex and coherent; 5. having a capacity to convey complex meanings; 6. exhibiting an individual point of view; 7. being an exercise of creative imagination; 8. (...) the product of a high degree of skill; 9. belonging to an established artistic form (music, painting, film, etc.); 10. being the product of an intention to make a work of art.” (p. 28).

The cluster disjunctively incorporates the many criteria that led to honorific definitions and so the account boils down to saying that none of these definitions covers all art, but that together they do; and more such criteria might be added to the cluster. Like this, Gaut fills in some of the normativity that is missing in the institutional conception, but he remains unresolved as to how the normativity will be organised in art practice. Each of the criteria in the cluster involves some measure of normativity, but what this suggests to me is that they need to be *applied* to help round off the account; which criteria should one choose? The application of these criteria requires aesthetic appreciation, or art criticism. And how these criteria are taught to audiences is by suitable prompting – in the presence of the

¹² And because it requires a characterisation of these paradigm examples in terms of their originality which the view can not deliver.

¹³ Gaut, p. 26. Though I am not sure what this “conceptual necessity” consists in nor what it means to “count towards falling under a concept”, I proceed as though these mechanisms are clear.

works and their appreciators, in the midst of art practice.¹⁴ To cluster the criteria is only half the story that has to be told; the other half, it seems, is not told by philosophy, but within the practice. Just how this is done is, I think, neatly explicated in Levinson's historical definition that I shall turn to shortly. But how it is done with regard to experiments such as the ones that form my starting point here, is rather unclear from the perspectives of either the cluster account or Levinson's historical definition.

Gaut adds one more necessary condition to the list – that works of art be the product of human agency – and he argues that this condition is not due to artisticity but to the fact that art consists of works. But the criterion is not a mere add-on – it is focal. And once it is accepted, the view stops being a cluster account and has the prospect of becoming a realist definition – that treats it as a core property of art appreciation that members of a suitable audience view a work as the result and manifestation of the achievement in another human's activity.¹⁵

It may seem that Gaut's proposal opens up to empirical research and statistics based on exit polls, but at the same time, it hampers the discussion on aesthetic normativity.¹⁶ Any one of the criteria in the cluster might function as a recommendation, but the democratic leniency in grouping them together makes none of them normatively decisive. The biggest problem is, however: How can the cluster, or the notion of a family resemblance it is based on, deal with artistic experiments and our issues with these? To be clear: we do not identify a family by rounding up any noticed resemblances between people.

(ii) Proceduralists

¹⁴ I first came across the notion of suitable prompting in Wollheim, 2001.

¹⁵ Animals do not make art.

¹⁶ According to Gaut, certain criteria are insufficiently projectable: if we were to find objects on a distant planet that resemble our art works, historical definitions would have to protest their inclusion in our art, because we cannot assume that the creatures on the distant planet are aware of phenomenological mechanisms such as the ones which prevail in our art practice. Gaut thinks that this shows that the historical definition is unprojectable, whereas the cluster account can incorporate these objects easily (Gaut, 2000, p. 36). But doesn't this make the cluster account unduly inclusive? Surely, something isn't art if it happens to resemble our works of art in one or a few aspects? Below, I present a different view.

More must be said about the proceduralist “institutional conception of art” with which George Dickie (1973) responded to Weitz' challenge. Dickie introduced the status attributions of representatives of Artworld institutions as art's definiens. I do not believe that the presenting of an object or event by an artist in a certain institutional context is what decides that it is art. Instead, something is art because it turns out to fit in – and to fit in for the right types of reasons.¹⁷ An artist may be the first to recognise this, but it is the fitting-in that ought to be our concern. What Dickie's definition requires, in my view, is a specification of what keeps the artist, the work, the public and the art world reciprocally adjusted to one another. Hence, my proposal to define art realistically as a practice, which I understand as a whole of certain human activities and the products and objects of these, where the entities, actions and experiences are mutually adjusted. And I argue that it is the phenomenology of artistic appreciation – in the audience, in the artist, and in critics – that regulates the reciprocal adjustment, within this practice, of all of its facets. What keeps art together are the norms that regulate the appropriateness of whatever happens in it or in its name.

Being open to everything and anything that is or may be included in art practice by representatives of artworld institutions, as the institutional theory prioritises; and closed off from anything that isn't so included in art practice in said manner, is unsatisfactory.¹⁸

Richard Wollheim formulated four intuitions about an adequate definition of art.¹⁹ The first of these is that a definition of art should show that there is “an interesting connection between being an artwork and being a good artwork”. Now, the goodness of utensils such as vacuum cleaners is, I think, established externally, but that of works of art is established ac-

¹⁷ I mean token reasons referring to the nature of the work and the appreciative experience best had, not type reasons.

¹⁸ Even though this combination of openness and definiteness may be wise empirically. By the way, if it is the representatives of the institutions who decide whether something is art, without volunteering any further justification, then surely they can also decide that something is no longer art? But can they? If one answers by stating that there will always be some artist defending the art form under attack and that this shall keep it in, then this shows the emptiness of the institutional definition.

¹⁹ Wollheim, 1980, pp. 157-166. They are neatly summed up in Levinson, 1990b, p. 56.

cording to art-internal norms.²⁰ Below, I argue that works of art instantiate procedures whose *artisticity* is established on the basis of masterpieces. Such masterpieces, whilst sharing those same procedures, function as regulatively ideal for the application of the relevant appreciative concerns – they clarify the relevant aesthetic normativity. Wollheim's second intuition is that Duchampian art should be treated as exceptional rather than central cases of art.²¹ Clearly, the institutional conception fails here. The approach suggested here will, I think, also provide a framework for treating works that are barely art as exceptional.

(iii) The Historical Definition

Jerrold Levinson's historical definition shows the relevance of the appreciative experience without entailing the prioritisation of a subset of favoured works. Here is Levinson's definition:

“Initial step: Objects of the ur-arts are artworks at t_0 (and thereafter).

Recursive step: If X is an artwork prior to t, then Y is an artwork at t if it is true at t that some person or persons, having the appropriate proprietary right over Y, nonpassingly intends (or intended), Y for regard in any way (or ways) in which X is or was correctly regarded.”

Levinson, 1990a, p. 19

But Levinson creates a new problem, I think. When art is defined in terms of its “regard in any way (or ways) in which [prior art] is or was correctly regarded”, then some thing or event that is revolutionarily new can not be accounted for, because its appreciation does not in any experienceable

²⁰ Or so the modern system of the fine arts is conceived, see Kristeller, 1978a and Kristeller, 1978b

²¹ Wollheim's fourth intuition states a knock-down dilemma for the Institutional Theory: either artworld representatives have good reasons to decide whether or not to attribute art status to some work, or they don't. If they have them, then these good reasons should be in the definition; if they are not, then it is unclear why we should abide by the attributions of artworld representatives. Dickie (1998) responds to what he thinks is a gross misconception of his views by Wollheim, but I do not see how a proceduralist could solve Wollheim's dilemma without watering down the merely classificatory nature of their approach.

way resemble ways in which previously acknowledged forms of art were correctly appreciated?²²

The introduction of revolutionarily new art is usually taken as the inclusion of one or the other “hard case”. But hard cases are not included by some momentary decision. Their inclusion into art involves a set of intricately related steps. For exhibiting a *painting* in a museum there is no need for the institution to actually attribute art status (and so on for the other acknowledged art forms). The similarity – qua regard – to previous paintings, is evident. Hence, exhibitors can concentrate on a work's artistic merit. The need to establish an object or event's art status arises only in cases of non-art experiments trying to get recognised as art. Of these it is exactly unclear how to assess their artistic achievement. Only when critics – and audiences – understand how they should go about appreciating certain works aesthetically, can the art form in question acquire art status, and are its specimens accepted as works, to be appreciated art critically.²³

The serious intention – that forms the core of Levinson's definition – of the person or persons who have the appropriate proprietary right over the object or event, clearly aims at some appropriate appreciative experience, one adjusted to the art form in question.²⁴ I suggest that this be read pragmatically: the appreciative experience intended is as important as the intention that aims for it; and the appropriate proprietary rights, too, are regulated pragmatically. They do not exclusively depend on what the maker wants with her work nor on her legal rights, but also on the practice she appeals to.

Levinson's historical definition promises clear progress over Dickie's classificatory conception, for making art appreciation central to the development of art, but Levinson seems too liberal at either end of art's history. He allows art to start with the cave paintings, which, although it may seem

²² Levinson, 1990a, p. 19.

²³ A work is best appreciated in a certain manner, where that manner resembles how other works have been correctly appreciated – where “correctly” includes a proper subsumption under categories of representation, genre, art forms, and the variables and counter-instances thereof. See Walton, 1970.

²⁴ Levinson (1990b, p. 44) introduces the “seriousness”, but with that generates further issues, like: when is the intention serious, when is it not?

defendable if you are ready to treat art as depiction, also bashes an important distinction between pictures generally and artistic ones. The reference to “appropriate proprietary right” might have prevented this leniency.

Regarding the beginning of art, I think it is not up to mere stipulation to point out some Ur-art. The history of art has to start somewhere and before that point things were not art as they are after that point, but to pick the first pictures that we know of, the cave paintings, as the Ur-arts, seems to beg the question. If we start from present-day art and reason backwards, transcendently, we find that before a certain period pictures, texts, and music, and so on were embedded in a fundamentally different practice. To think that that practice simply evolved into our art practice calls for a stretch of imagination. Paul Oskar Kristeller argues that in 18th century our conception of art changed decisively.²⁵ Before that, things that superficially resemble our arts were viewed in functional terms; since, they are viewed in aesthetic terms. The modern system of the fine arts seems to me to be still in place centrally in what I call art practice. Levinson's historical definition says that later arts call for a type of regard that is similar to the suitable types of regard that were in place with regard to prior art. Kristeller's argument is that before the 18th century the suitable response to things falling under some category that one might want to call art, was not to look for the aesthetic appeal of the work, but to treat it as a transparent window to the depicted holy figure, or use it for some other function.

If one would want to insist that pictures all share the same suitable manner of regard such as we know from our arts, then one seems guilty of projecting retrospectively our concept of art. One would have to include not just the cave paintings, but also all pictures and representations of other kinds that we are surrounded by. Advertisements, propaganda, pornography, journalism would all be art. If the term's scope is broadened in this manner, “art” becomes synonymous with “representation”. That would bash the very distinction between the two.²⁶ It seems that the concept Levinson is defining historically is the concept that was baptised in the 18th century, the modern system of the fine arts, so that is where

²⁵ Kristeller, 1978a and 1978.

²⁶ We do not just need a representational attitude to adequately appreciate works of art, but an artistic attitude. See Gerwen, 2004.

to should be pinned.²⁷

Levinson introduces the idea that people with the intention to make a work of art must have the appropriate proprietary right over the object. This idea seems effective against western museum directors wanting to exhibit objects from an incomparably different culture, such as African masks. But what if some African person wants such masks exhibited in a western art museum? He seems to have the appropriate proprietary right to do so but nevertheless wonder whether his wish can be suitably accommodated within art practice?²⁸ The appropriateness of rights has two directions-of-fit: these rights must fit the owner as well as the practice. The pragmatist interprets Levinson's idea as pointing to potential incompatibilities of practices. The proper regard of African masks is embedded in rituals and religious considerations and as such misplaced in a western art museum where the focal response is artistic appreciation. The religious-ritual regard is incommensurable to the artistic regard.

The argument from an incommensurability with art practice applies to western religious art from pre-18th century, and further back to cave paintings, and what it says is that to appreciate works of these sorts in suitable manner is done most fruitfully from within the practice they belong to.²⁹

The issue of art's beginning has no effect on the issue of the revolutionarily new, I think, because this surfaces at a moment when our art practice is in place and fully circumscribed, and the new simply seems not to fit it. The revolutionarily new is something whose appreciation does not resemble in relevant manner anything preceding it but which still claims to belong to the same category.

We seem to assume that art will develop all by itself. Meekly, we anti-

²⁷ So let early art falling under that concept be our Ur-art (we would need extra arguments to claim otherwise). If this is not recognised as a legitimate criticism of Levinson's position, let it then count as an alternative for it, at least for the sake of my argument.

²⁸ To be clear, I am interested only in the relevant philosophical argument, not in empirical contingencies – of course, it may so happen that sometime somewhere African masks are exhibited in a western art museum, but this contingency does not remove the issue.

²⁹ This seems to me to explicate a remark Wittgenstein makes in his lectures on aesthetics: "It is not only difficult to describe what appreciation consists in, but impossible. To describe what it consists in we would have to describe the whole environment" (Wittgenstein, 1938–1946, 7:20).

cipate that something new will arrive always, but this is a fallacy: an argumentum ad futuram: the future will tell us how it is with us now; which, of course, it can not. We may want to add that we have seen it before: how the revolutionaries at the time were honed and are now treated as our Avant-Garde heroes. I agree that we must not be shortsighted and must be open to new possibilities, but nor should we allow anything to be art, for the sake of showing our liberal attitudes. Yet which conception of art shows the principle that may guide artistic revolutions? Dickie's certainly does not, as he will accept anything an artist presents as art. Nor does Gaut's cluster account. Levinson's definition, as it stands, comes nearest, but necessarily fails with the revolutionarily new for being retrospective – and how could a definition of art be prospective? The new is new in a manner which betrays nothing about the way its proper appreciation resembles that of acknowledged art forms.

3. A Layered Definition of Art

I think we would do well by distinguishing art from its art forms as a genus from its species: and an art form from the works in it, as a species from its specimens.³⁰ We must say different things about the genus, the species, and the specimens. The challenge is to explicate how these categories are connected, how their subsumption works, and how this is pertinent to the practice of art appreciation, and artistic experiment.

Categorical levels are characterised by distinct scopes and different uses. “Art” is a genus term, subsuming, as its species, several arts, or less ambiguously: art forms, such as painting, music, theatre, performance art, poetry, photography, film, and so on. Art and art forms are not real things or events open to perception; instead, they are used to classify things and events on account of certain *regularities*. Art is the practice as a whole, distinguished from non-art by the fact that it requires an appropriate audience to take up an artistic attitude.³¹ Its species are distinguished by their typical phenomenological specifications. The rules, and norms of correctness, become more restrictive and precise the more we descend in this

³⁰ Here I am following Aristotle's logic of categories, not Walton's. Cf. Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* (Peri Hermeneias) and *Categories*. More on Walton, 1970, below.

³¹ See Gerwen, 2004.

semantic and ontological hierarchy from genus, to species, to specimens. Artists make works of art. No artist can make an art form, though with their works they can add considerably to the phenomenology of one.

If someone tells you of something that it is art, what they are saying is that it belongs to a particular practice, and that it merits an artistic appreciation – which presupposes that you take up an artistic attitude. But nothing much is said yet about the exact nature of the most fruitful type of aesthetic appreciation. You might take it that what is meant is that you ought to assess the work for its beauty, where in fact that particular aesthetic value may happen not to be relevant at all (perhaps it is contemporary art). Such specifications are provided when you are told what art form the work is in. To hear that something is not a painting but, rather a painted sculpture informs you of the phenomenology of the proper type of aesthetic appreciation. Yet neither does specifying the relevant art form prompt you in detail to the relevant aesthetic properties of the work. For that what is required is specific appreciation of who made it, when, why, and how.

But when is specifying that some experiment is art doing this job? My curator friend said that his walks were art, the London woman that her bombs were – but in neither case did that make good sense. The artisticity of a Rembrandt painting, a Beethoven string quartet, or a Robert Bresson film are understood by proceduralists to consist in the fact that an artist presented them to an art audience, or that a certain theory says they are art.³² That is a sophism that I find difficult to accept. One wants to claim that it makes perfect sense to say that these works show *of themselves* that they are art, because, even without designation or theory, they guide their respective audiences to a rich and rewarding appreciative experience.

It is a Rembrandt or Cézanne that shows the way for the appreciation

³² These form the core of Dickie's and Danto's views of art, respectively. It is remarkable that Danto developed his notion when he was confronted with Andy Warhol's Brillo Box, which is indistinguishable from its counterpart at the back of the mall. I argue here that Warhol's Box may be indistinguishable for the innocent eye from its mall counterpart, but these boxes have totally different affordances in store if we look at their difference as one between two practices. The practices suggest norms of correctness for their perceptual appreciation. By the way, an indistinguishable counterpart of, say, a Rembrandt painting would be a forgery and vastly different philosophical questions follow from this difference from the ones Danto discusses.

of paintings; a Beethoven string quartet, or a Thelonious Monk piece likewise for music, and so on for all art forms.³³ This is not the resemblance to paradigm works of art approach of the honorific definitions, that Gaut (2000) objected to. The masterworks are regulative ideals only for the art form they instantiate, not for art generally. Masterworks show their audience how they are most fruitfully appreciated aesthetically – of themselves, on account of their fitting a type of appreciation focal to art practice. It is this subjective recognition that audiences can subsequently use as regulative for appreciating works instantiating the same procedure that these masterworks are in.³⁴ I do not think that it makes sense to ask of a *painting* that it be meritorious in the manner of a particular *film* or piece of *music*. A clear distinction between art forms or procedures, and their instantiations should help us make the “connection between being an artwork and being a good artwork”.

My proposal for defining art is internalist, it proceeds in terms of artistic normativity internal to art practice. A particular flat canvas with paint on it is a work of art for instantiating the procedure of the art form of painting, irrespective of whether this canvas has artistic merit.³⁵ We will know how to aesthetically appreciate this particular work because we can refer to masterpiece paintings. An art form, whether old or new, is an artistic procedure, and that is two things: first, it is a procedure, a standard way of making works of that kind, and, secondly, it is the set of these works which will contain bad and meritorious examples, and everything between. We may recognise the artisticity of the procedure only from the

³³ The present-day fashion of intermediality is not the explanation of art, but, possibly, an experiment leading to new art forms. Think of music videos as not just music nor just video but something comprised of both, interacting.

³⁴ Appreciating works in suitable manner opens up to a sharing of art's subjective properties.

³⁵ The objective boundaries can be stretched. For instance, paint on another type of flat surface, such as a wall, will count as a painting, and when things are attached to the surface, or material other than paint is added, such as the cubists did, or Anselm Kiefer we might still want to call it painting. But the painted cutlery of Julian Schnabel somehow is hybrid between painting and sculpture, and when the boundaries between art forms are crossed like this, questions arise as to which aspects of the works should be appreciated aesthetically, against which criteria. So, although there is lee way, the main categories tend to stay in place because of their efficacy in regulating art appreciation.

meritorious specimens because they are more coherent than bad specimens are, and they are expressive in the right manner – not prematurely (as when all that we see is the failing effort of an artist trying to make art).³⁶ Bad works will distract us with all sorts of loose ends.

This suggests a layered definition that emends the historical definition to provide us with a criterion for dealing with the new. We do not have to be capable to say of any single thing or event in itself whether or not it is art, as long as we successfully identify a procedure it shares with other particulars. Once a procedure is identified, we ponder whether that procedure is artistic – whether it is a form of art or merely something that is applicable multiple times. How should one appreciate instantiations of the procedure aesthetically? The answer to this question is principally unclear with the revolutionarily new because the procedure is unprecedented.

So, in regard to objects and events with a claim to art status that we seem unable to appreciate, I suggest we assemble the samples, to establish whether or not they share some or other procedure or procedures. Without new regularities or rules shared among the examples, the examples are merely exceptions of which it should at first remain undecided whether or not they are art, for lack of clarity for audiences about how they should appreciate them. The layered definition of art that I propose does not define individual art works but the relation between the three levels of categories in the conceptual framework of art: art, the practice; art forms; and the works that instantiate art forms. Since we are interested in understanding, and defining our present art practice we stipulate, transcendently, the inauguration of the modern system of the fine arts, in the eighteenth century, as the beginning.

1. Arguing transcendently, art started with the conceptual installation of the modern system of the fine arts.
2. The three categorial levels: Art is the practical whole that assembles the works that instantiate art forms, that regulate how these works

³⁶ Masterpieces can be understood in two ways: as the best an art form has had in store for us until now, or as the works an art form has in store that show the way to a suitable appreciation of works in that art form.

are best appreciated, through specific phenomenological specifications.

3. X is a work of art if and only if, properly and intentionally, it instantiates an established artistic procedure and is appreciated accordingly.
4. An ordered set of phenomenological specifications concerning the manipulation of sensuous material is a procedure if and only if it involves more than one proper instantiation.
5. Such a procedure is artistic if and only if it has allowed for one or more instantiations with acclaimed high artistic value.

This layered definition of art says that art consists of art forms that resemble internally in their – subjective – phenomenology qua procedure as well as in the suitable responses to their regulative ideal, the masterworks that are adjusted to the procedure.

As soon as any new art is understood in these terms, the issue of defining a work partaking in it as art becomes redundant. That is why we may say in certain contexts that we know that something is art when we see it. That claim assumes a tacit understanding of the phenomenology of the relevant art form. We then know how to aesthetically appreciate instances of this art form and are let in on criteria (in said regulative masterworks), i.e. on the appreciation of their artistic merit. That is the connection between being art and being good art. The question whether some experiment is art is then decided phenomenologically (through art criticism). New masterworks provide the insight in the nature of the appreciation suited for the new procedure they instantiate – all by themselves, on account of how they deliver a rewarding experience within the confines of the art practice.

Art works necessarily instantiate an art form – it is unintelligible to claim that something is art though not an instance of an art form.³⁷ Phenomenological adherence to a form of art is a necessary and sufficient condition for something to be art. To establish such adherence assumes a phenomenological, i.e. art-critical assessment. A thin variety of such an assessment appears to be the basis of Gaut's cluster-account; it heeds no special

³⁷ At the time, Duchamp's *Fountain* was not a work of art, and I am unsure whether it is now, as it does not seem to instantiate an artistic procedure, not even new ones such as installation art or, even, conceptual art.

consideration of an artist's contribution to the work which a thick variety puts centre-stage. The thin variety is unduly broad in that it allows inclusion of anything resembling works of art and thus replaces aesthetic (art-critical) judgements with cognitive subsumption. Thin approaches inhibit the recognition or discussion of artistic, art critical, or art-philosophical issues. For the thick approach, the central criterion is the perceivability of the artist's manipulations in the work, through a phenomenological, or aesthetic appreciation befitting the art form in question.³⁸

The many definitions of art proposed since Weitz ventilated his scepticism about the prospect of ever arriving at one, are devised in view of the capacity to be open to exceptional specimens – even when it is unclear which species, or art form, they should belong to.³⁹ In my view, though, if something fails to fit the phenomenology of an established art form, then we should put it on hold for art practice to deal with it – the way to deal with it though is through art criticism, not mere definition. Art practice, though a historical phenomenon that is not fixed for eternity, is clear about the route to inclusion. At least, this is what the layered definition suggests.

4. Objections

Some might object that an account such as this is circular, I think it is not. It does not just say that something is art if and only if it is an object in art practice – obviously that would use the same word, art, in the definiens and the definiendum. So how is my layered account not circular? The account starts from a practice that is somehow in place in western culture, art practice, and then tries to understand how this practice is sustained, and how it works, and, lastly, how it expands into the future. It is not circular, I think, because something is a work of art not just because it figures in art practice, but because it fits there, and this means that the good

³⁸ Art forms where the artist is less visible because he did not change the material with his own hands, such as installation art or land art, parasitise, in a manner to be elaborated sometime, on the phenomenology of other art forms where the artist is visible, such as painting or music.

³⁹ That is typical of a certain philosophical approach, I think, which will always treat exceptions as arguments, counterfactuals, that they *must* deal with.

types of intention precede or inhere the creation or finishing of the work; it has acquired the intended types of subjective, aesthetic properties, so whether some appreciator attributes these properties to the work allows for a notion of correctness; art appreciators look at the work for reasons pertinent to art practice, and while watching or hearing a work they look for the intentions realised in the work, and there is a sense in which they can be correct about what they see – or hear – there. Art critics embark in perceiving these properties, and in prompting audiences to them, and there too we have norm of correctness; art institutes and their curators are out to facilitate the artistic appreciation to take place, and so on. These aspects are all mutually adjusted. To assume any one of them creates a theoretical obligation to say something about the others, and to try and apply the norms of correctness in judgements of taste. So, what my definition is claiming is that finding out whether or not a particular object or event counts as a work of art implies taking into account the assessment of all these aspects, and this means delving into the phenomenology of the proper artistic appreciation: how does it work, does the phenomenology fit the art form in question, does the art form in question show – phenomenologically – how a work of this type can most profitably be appreciated, and so on?

So the question whether something is a work of art, is answered in steps. The first complicated step involves asking whether it is appreciated within a practical system of values; how these values are interrelated; how the maker and the appreciators relate to one another and lastly, whether particular rules or norms are involved. In short, the question is whether the object or event can be said to be most fruitfully appreciated within a certain practice. When the answer to that step-wise and complicated question is affirmative, then the next question would be whether that practice is a sub-practice within art practice, an art form. When it is not, then the question might be whether it should be, assuming that it can be so included.

Does not my approach lead to the conclusion that gastronomy and jewellery are art forms too? Of course, this need not be an objection for someone who thinks that these are arts too, but I am not among those. So how does my definition ward off untoward candidate art forms? For instance, the view that gastronomy or jewellery can be considered art could

be offered as follows. In both cases, there are makers of particular objects aiming at particular experiences: chefs make meals to be enjoyed, jewellers make jewellery to be worn and admired. There are institutional settings: restaurants and jewellery shops – posh night life? Perhaps there are national genres in gastronomy: Italian, Chinese, Thai, and so on. I am unsure what would be the genres in jewellery, but remain neutral about the possibility that some can be identified by those in the know. We can further identify particular aesthetic values: subtle tastes in food, the way meals look; beautiful jewels embedded, or not, in precious metals. And these considerations seem applicable to all artefacts, so what is going to keep all artefacts from being art once gastronomy and jewellery are accepted as such? But that would bash the very distinction between artefacts generally and artistic ones.

Would there, also, be a way for gastronomy or jewellery art, in which a suitable audience might best perceive traces of the maker's achievement – the chef's, or, respectively, the jeweller's – in the work; and be primarily interested in such traces? And can the maker convey subtle expressive or representational meanings; and, again, would suitable audiences in these contexts be interested in such meanings? The objection helped me clarify that the aspect of work-to-maker transparency is a necessary condition in art practice, but not in these other practices – assuming they all count as practices, to begin with. Work-to-maker transparency is my answer to the question of what makes art a worthwhile practice – the answer to Wollheim's third intuition.

5. Conclusion

Viewing art as a practice – internally defined along norms of correctness applicable in art appreciation – accommodates the historical nature of art, as well as solving the societal unrest about so-called shock art. The layered definition suggested here allows contemporary artist lee-way in their experimental groping in the dark without implying it is already art whatever they come up with. Some experiments show forth an intuitive grasp of what is yet to come but prove to be bad, or worse, barely art. We can critically make these distinctions only after we have identified the procedure these experiments partake in and have found ways to appreciate them

artistically, for which, I argued, we need one or a few masterpieces. The French thinker Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) seeks, and thinks to have found such a new procedure, relationality. But he forgets to ask the question of the procedure's artisticity: the question of how we must appreciate the relational works he refers to. Perhaps the walk my friend the curator had every Tuesday morning at 10 may fit, as well as Tiravanija's cooking, but we are still awaiting works that show us how to appreciate works in the relational procedure. Before we find the masterpieces, I advice we be reticent. Elsewhere, I discuss masterworks of another new procedure, which I call implication art. These masterworks, by Marco Evaristti and Santiago Sierra, enable us to say that the London bombing example was not art, and Staal's Geert Wilders roadside memorials were barely art although both events/objects shared the promising intuition of something revolutionarily new to become art. But, as said, a mere promise does not make art.

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Immersion

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I discuss the concept of immersion. Immersion is a mental state that occurs when you have an experience of being present in a represented environment. I will argue against two existing accounts of immersion. First, against an account that claims the immersive experience is a kind of illusion. Second against an account that claims the immersive experience is kind of imagination. As an alternative to these two positions, I will defend the view that immersion is a special variety of pictorial experience.

In this paper, I discuss the concept of immersion. Immersion is a mental state that occurs when you have an experience of being present, not in a real, but in a represented environment. Think, for example, of playing a video game that involves a spaceship. When asked to describe your location, you could say something like “I’m in a spaceship”. By this utterance, you express a sensation of being present in the environment projected on your computer screen.

The description of immersion as “the feeling of being present in a represented environment” is quite vague. Luckily, some philosophers and communication theorist have attempted to provide a more detailed description of immersion. In the following, I will critically review two such attempts. More specifically, I will discuss an account that claims immersion is a kind of illusion and an account that claims it is a kind of imagination. After having rejected these two accounts, I will defend the view that immersion is a special kind of pictorial experience.

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1. Immersion as Illusion

One of the first detailed descriptions of immersion has not been provided by philosophers, but by two communication theorists: Lombard and Ditton.¹ In this section, I will briefly summarize and criticize their view on immersion.

Lombard and Ditton claim that if a person experiences immersion, she undergoes ‘a perceptual illusion of non-mediation’. They give the following description of this mental state:

... an illusion of non-mediation occurs when a person fails to perceive or acknowledge the existence of a medium in her communication environment and responds as she would if the medium were not there.²

This quote contains two important claims. First, that immersion depends on the *transparency* of the medium. Immersion would only occur if the subject remains unaware of the mediating technology (computer, screen, mouse). Second, the quote implies that immersion somehow involves *false beliefs*. If the medium is transparent, the user would respond as if the medium were not there, even though, in reality, it is of course there. In the case of the video game with the spaceship, the player’s response to the sensory information on her screen could be fear. Unaware of the mediated character of her experience, she would really take herself to be in a spaceship and be frightened.

Contrary to Lombard and Ditton, I do not think that immersion requires a viewer to ‘fail to perceive or acknowledge the existence of a medium’ in her actual environment. Consider the case of playing the video game *Grand Theft Auto 4* on a mobile device like the *Playstation Vita*.³ This, I think, constitutes a case of immersion that doesn’t involve a failure to acknowledge the mediated nature of the experience. Immersion occurs in this case, as the player typically feels present in the space on the screen of

¹ Lombard, Matthew & Ditton, Theresa (1997), ‘At the Heart of it All: The Concept of Presence’, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 3 (2), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1083-6101.1997.tb00072.x/abstract>

² Ibid.

³ Example here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BIFA4tsk3o>

the *Vita*. When asked to specify her location, she can refer to a reference point in the space on her screen. She might, for example, say “I am in the southern part of Liberty City” (the fictional city the game takes place in) when asked to specify her location. She would thereby linguistically articulate her experience of ‘being there’. At the same time, however, it is virtually impossible for the player *not* to acknowledge the mediated character of her experience. The *Vita* is a device with a small screen, surrounded by a big black box and buttons that are clearly visible. It is difficult to remain oblivious to the fact that this device is the cause of the immersive experience. This example shows that there are cases of immersion that do not involve a perceptual illusion of mediation depending on the complete transparency of the mediating technology. A perception of the mediating technology is not an obstacle for immersion.

The general problem underlying Lombard and Ditton’s account, it that their construal of the class of immersive media is too narrow. They only seem to take into account full-fledged simulation systems with headsets that fill up one’s entire field of vision with depictions and forget that many immersive media do not entirely block out our awareness of physical reality. Furthermore, I think Lombard and Ditton’s account even runs into problems when describing the experience caused by these full-fledged simulation systems. Even if a user wears virtual reality glasses that completely block out physical reality, this does not guarantee she thinks she actually is in the represented space. Even if the sensory information is life-like, the belief that she is really there is blocked by her memory of, for example, having put on the headset a few moments earlier. Hence, it is doubtful if a user of such a system experiences an illusion of non-mediation as described by Lombard and Ditton.

The idea that the immersive experience somehow involves the user having the false belief that she is actually in the represented space, is mistaken. As the illusion account always involves such a connection between immersion and false belief, it should be rejected.

2. Immersion as Imagination

An alternative account, offered by Grant Tavinor, suggests that the immersive experience is imaginary in nature.⁴ In this section, I will briefly summarize this view and criticize it.

According to Tavinor, engaging with fictional worlds, depends on the cognitive attitude of make-believe. This also includes the experience of feeling present in fictional spaces: the sensation of being there would be a matter of the imagination. If the player of a video game claims to be ‘in a spaceship’ she makes this claim because she imagines she is there. Her utterance is comparable to a child that says ‘I am holding a sword’ whilst actually holding a tree branch.

This view has one clear advantage over the illusion account: imagination is consistent with disbelief. You can imagine *p* without any inclination to believe *p*. A child can imagine a branch to be a sword, without believing it is. The imagination account of immersion, for this reason, can account for more cases of immersion than the illusion account. Whilst the latter requires perfect transparency of the mediating technology, the former does not. In the case of *Grand Theft Auto 4* played on the *Vita*, for example, the player’s utterance “I am in Liberty City” is no indication of false belief. It is rather a sign of the player engaging in a game of make-believe. Like the child that claims she is holding a sword (without actually believing that she does), the player of the video game claims she is in the space represented on her screen (without actually believing she is there).

The imagination account of immersion is better than the illusion account, but still flawed. My argument against the imagination account runs as follows: What is represented does not need to be imagined in order to be experienced (*premise 1*). Immersive media represent the user as being present in the represented space (*premise 2*). Hence, immersion does not depend on a user imagining she is in the represented space (*conclusion*). In the following, I will clarify the premises of my argument against the ima-

⁴ Grant Tavinor (2009), *The Art of Video Games*. Especially the chapters ‘Video Games and Fiction’ and ‘Stepping into fictional worlds.’ have relevance. According to Tavinor, video games are fictions. Like all fictions, they “invite their appreciators to psychologically engage with a world existing only in the imagination.” Immersion “depends on the cognitive attitude of make-believe...”, that is, it depends on the imagination (p. 59).

gination account.

Let's start with the first premise: what is represented does not need to be imagined to be experienced. In support of this claim, consider the following case. Suppose someone asks you to imagine that your father has purple hair. In order to do this, your imagination will have to do some work and construe a 'mental image' of your father with purple hair. Now consider walking into a room where there is a portrait of your father having purple hair. In this case, your imagination will not have to construe a 'mental image' for you to experience your father as having purple hair. The portrait leaves little to the imagination as it already represents him as having purple hair. If an object *O* is represented as having a feature *x*, no imagination is necessary to experience *O* as being *x*. Representation makes imagination obsolete.

Now let's turn to the second premise: immersive media represent viewers as being in the represented space. Immersive media contain a mechanism for representing the viewer as present in the represented space. What is this mechanism? There are two crucial components: (1) the representation of a body and (2) a certain amount of control viewers have over that represented body. I briefly discuss how (1) and (2) are necessary and sufficient conditions for immersion.

What is a represented body? It is important not to construe this first condition for the representation of viewer presence too narrow. Bodies can be represented from at least two perspectives. First, there is the third-person perspective, where the viewer sees a body from the outside. This modus of representation was chosen by the developers of *Grand Theft Auto 4*.⁵ Secondly, bodies can be represented from a first-person perspective, where the viewer sees the represented space through the eyes of the represented body.⁶ It is difficult to delineate what counts as a represented body, but I think one should be generous here: a car seen from the outside can count as a third-person perspective representation of a body and a the point of view of a robot smaller than an average human could count as a first person-perspective representation of a body.

⁵ <http://www.gameranx.com/updates/id/18116/article/grand-theft-auto-iv-multiplayer-mod-s-public-alpha-launches-today/>

⁶ <https://mattbrett.com/blog/videogames/2013/battlefield-4/>

The representation of a body as such is insufficient for immersion. Many representations contain representations of bodies, without being immersive. Titian's *The Death of Actaeon* represents numerous human and animal bodies from a third-person perspective, yet viewers of this pictures do not typically refer to the represented scene when asked to specify their location. Even the presence of a first-person view does not necessarily lead to immersion. In the movie *Being John Malkovich*, there are numerous point-of-view shots where viewers see the world of the movie through Malkovich' eyes. Yet they would not claim they are in the space seen on screen. Malkovich is there, and viewers see what he sees there, but they do not have an experience of being in the spaces where Malkovich is.

This brings me to the second ingredient necessary for immersion: for immersion to occur, viewers need *control* over the represented body. Having control over the body implies there is co-variation between viewer actions in the real world and movements of the body in the virtual world.⁷ Through this relation of co-variation between viewer actions and what is seen on screen, the represented body is represented as the viewer's body. There is a resemblance between her physical body and her represented body, as the position of this body can be changed and this, in its turn, leads to changes in sensory input. If the viewer pulls the joystick to the left, she receives new visual information in very much the same way as would happen when she would change the position of her head. This resemblance between the working of an actual body and the depicted body represents the latter as being the viewer's. When the viewer takes the represented body to be *her body* then, by implication, she takes the surroundings of that body to be *her surroundings* and immersion occurs.

In conclusion, immersion does not require a viewer to imagine she is somewhere she's not. Such a need would only arise if viewer presence was not represented by the medium. However, immersive media, the most important of which are video games, contain a mechanism to represent viewer presence in the fictional environment. Therefore, experiencing immersion in a represented space does not entail that a viewer imagines to be there.

⁷ I take it that an action can both be a mental or a physical action. In the future, it might be possible to control games directly with our brains, using a BCI (brain-computer interface) instead of a physical controller.

3. Immersion as Pictorial Experience

In this section, I will argue that immersion is a special variety of pictorial experience. First, I will explain what pictorial experience is. Next, I will discuss what a variety of pictorial experience is. Thirdly, I will argue that immersion is special variety of pictorial experience.

What is pictorial experience? I will stick to the classic Wollheimian analysis of this concept.⁸ The typical experience associated with pictures is seeing-in. When looking at a Van Gogh, for example, viewers see a sunflower in the marks of paint on the pictorial surface. The defining trait of seeing-in is twofoldness. Whilst seeing the sunflower in the paint blots on a flat surface, viewers are simultaneously aware of both the depicted object (sunflower) and the marked surface (blots of yellow paint). Besides being twofold, pictorial experience is also governed by a standard-of-correctness. This means viewers can be right or wrong about what they see in the pictorial surface, in a way that they cannot be right or wrong about what they see in, for example, a cloud or a coffee stain.

A variety of pictorial experience is a subclass of pictorial experience. More specifically, it is a subclass that has the two main traits of pictorial experience, twofoldness and standard of correctness, but also some additional traits that set them apart from other pictorial experiences. An example of this is *factive pictorial experience*, i.e. the variety of pictorial experience solicited by photographs.⁹ The experience of these pictures is twofold (viewers see *p* in a flat surface) and governed by a standard of correctness (if viewers think they see *q* instead of *p* they are wrong). However, there is something special about the experiences evoked by photographs: looking at a *p*-photograph implies believing that *p* is the case. This sets pictorial experiences of photographs apart from those of paintings, which do not involve the belief that the represented content mirrors reality.

Immersion, like factive pictorial experience, is a subclass of pictorial experience in general. It has the two general traits of pictorial experience and an additional trait that sets immersive experiences apart from other types of pictorial experiences. In the following, I will first focus on how

⁸ This analysis can be found in Wollheim's book *Painting as an Art* from 1987.

⁹ Hopkins, Robert (2012), 'Factive Pictorial Experience: What's Special about Photographs,' *Nous*, vol. 46 (4), pp. 709-731.

immersion exhibits the two general traits of pictorial experience. Next, I will explain what sets immersion apart from other varieties of pictorial experience.

Immersion is a twofold experience. It involves seeing things in a flat, marked surface.¹⁰ In the case of the video game with the spaceship, the depicted object is a location in the spaceship and the flat surface is the computer screen with its constantly changing pixels. The experience is also governed by a standard-of-correctness, since you cannot only be wrong about what you see on your screen but also about your location in the represented space. When you claim to be in the control room whilst actually being in the engine room, you are mistaken.

What sets immersion apart from other pictorial experiences? To answer this question, I will focus on the immersive pictures that evoke immersion. Immersive pictures differ from non-immersive ones as they do not merely represent possible or actual objects of perception. They represent more, namely a spatial relation between the viewer and those actual or possible objects of perception. To avoid the impression that my view is a restatement of the problem (immersion = immersive pictorial experience = pictorial experience involving viewer presence) rather than a proper analysis of the concept of immersion, I must be more specific about immersion as a pictorial experience.

Immersive pictures, like photographs, evoke a special kind of twofold experience. In the case of non-immersive pictures, the viewer's is passive with regard to the pictorial surface. She has no control over what, for example, a painting or a movie displays. Of course, one can move around the room in an art gallery, which will show you the picture from a different perspective, but this does not bring about any change in the flat surface's properties. Immersive pictures, on the other, allow the user to influence the flat surface and hence what is seen in the surface. I have already described how this influence on the flat surface works: via a represented body, we can perform actions in physical reality which bring about a

¹⁰ One might object that, in the future, there might be videogames containing holograms. Would immersion in the spaces represented by these games still be a pictorial experience? I think it would, because holograms still count as pictorial representations. Holograms are not actually 3D objects, but 2D projects that give an impression of having three dimensions.

change in the properties displayed on the screen. Immersion is therefore a special variety of pictorial experience. We can influence the picture's flat surface, and because we do this via a represented body, this influencing brings about a sense of being spatially related to the depicted objects and therefore of being in the same space as these objects.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that immersion – the feeling of being present in a represented space – is not an illusory or imaginary experience. Instead, I have argued it to be a special kind of pictorial experience. Immersion exhibits the main traits of this experience: twofoldness and a standard-of-correctness. It is, however, a special kind of pictorial experience: viewers feel present in the pictorial space because they have a represented body which allows them to spatially relate to depicted objects and brings about the feeling of being in the represented space these objects are in.

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The ‘Uncanny Valley’ and Spectating Animated Objects

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ABSTRACT. The thing that strikes most thinkers about puppets and other animated objects in theatre is that they can seem genuinely ‘uncanny’. So, instead of thinking first about how spectators grasp what is going on in any performance and fitting the exceptional experience of the uncanny within that larger story, most theorists I know about have begun first with an account of the uncanny nature of puppets—or of something that would readily explain it—and only then worked out a general theory of spectating puppets and animated objects based on their preferred account of the exception. Although it might seem natural to begin with what is most striking, given the ubiquity and prominence of that uncanny feeling, in my view that approach is exactly backwards. In this paper I show why that is so and suggest some lines of research that might help to redress the situation.

1. Introduction

When, if ever, do animated objects trigger the ‘uncanny valley’ effect? This effect is thought to be a combination, perhaps a blending, of repulsion and attraction, an ‘unsettling delight’ (Gross, 2011: 2) felt in the presence of figures whose visually apparent features are very close to, but not exactly like, those of a healthy human being. When robotics engineer and designer Masahiro Mori first described this effect (hereinafter the ‘UV effect’), he initially conceived of it as a challenge in robotics design (Mori, 1970/2012). Since then, and very quickly, the notion took hold in the field of visual animation as an explanation for the success and failure of various animated feature films and the appeal or repulsion of figures in video games. And the UV effect is now a standard accepted element in the design vocabulary of animation and robotics.

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One might expect this concept also to play a role in describing some aesthetic properties of puppets and other animated objects. For one thing, it is already a commonplace among those who write on puppets to describe them as 'uncanny objects' (Gross, 2011; Simms, 1996; Zamir, 2010). Many of the deeply interesting aesthetic properties of animated objects—such as those arising from their very materiality and those affecting spectator responses even when the objects are not involved in a performance—seem to have something to do with their sheer appearance and spectator reactions to it. So, a *reasonable hope* is that many of those deeply interesting aesthetic properties of puppets and other animated objects will receive an explanation as a kind of 'spin-off' from the explanations that can be given of the UV effect in the presence of animated objects.

In the first section of the paper, I describe the UV effect in greater detail. I also present a rough account of the state of play, so to speak, in the robotics and animation literature on what may be a range of phenomena.

In the second section of this paper, I examine a class of views that are promising candidates for making good on the *reasonable hope* expressed above. These views (represented here by Zamir, 2010) rest on a familiar metaphysical distinction between objecthood and subjectivity, holding that puppets just *are known to be* objects but that they *seem to be* subjects. The resulting epistemic disparity, between our knowledge of the object status of puppets and our experience of them as subjects, gives rise, on these views, to the recognition of some uncomfortable facts about our interactions, attempts to control, and desires towards (even the desire to *be*) matter. Moreover, the views are able simultaneously to connect with the relevant aesthetic issues and to offer an account of the UV effect. But, as I show at the end of the section, this class of theories claims too much, in one sense, and in another too little, insofar as it simply fails to be generalizable beyond puppets to other animated objects.

In the third section I argue that theories belonging to this class also obscure both the distinction and the epistemic relations between data and inferences spectators make on the basis of data. And I assemble some empirical evidence that shows these are clearly distinct from one another in important ways. However, I also argue that we do learn from considering these views because they are able to show us why any alternative explanation should begin by giving a general account of spectating pup-

petry, should connect with important aesthetic issues, should meet the plausible requirement of generalizability, and should make plain the distinction and the relations between data and inference. These form a set of *desiderata* for any alternative theory. Moreover, as I argue in this section, any alternative proposal should be consistent with a broad set of results at the intersection of empirical cognitive science and formal learning theory; and this is a final *desideratum*.

In the final section of the paper, I sketch the outlines of an alternative approach that would meet all the *desiderata*. I argue that the strategy lying behind the view must allow us to re-describe the UV effect as a specific class of cognitive effects having fairly immediate affective consequences and a specific kind of etiology.

But first, one short note on terminology. Following Cariad Astles (2009) and others (see Furse, 2008), I will write about puppets, generally, as instances of 'animated objects'. Ever since Frank Proschan's groundbreaking article (1983), some people customarily refer to these as '*performing* objects' (for example Bell, 1997; and Cohen, 2007). The referential scope of the term 'performing objects' may be broader than that of 'animated objects'. For it can be used to refer to elements in the *mise en scene* that are not even animated but are nevertheless important to the experience of spectators and, so, figure importantly in their cognitive and affective uptake of a performance. I have no reason, other than perspicuity regarding the issues discussed herein, for choosing to use the term 'animated objects' in its stead. So, if you prefer the other term, feel free to substitute it in. Nothing I argue for in this paper hangs on whatever other differences might follow from classifying these objects under those different category terms. For the most part, I will use the term 'animated objects', primarily because the issues I address about puppets and other *animated* performing objects are made somewhat clearer when described using it.

2. *The UV Effect*

Let us begin with one popular way to describe the Uncanny Valley effect.

[...] Freud popularized the idea of the uncanny, the blend of attraction and repulsion we feel for something we can't quite categorize. A Japanese engineer adapted the notion in the 1970s for work in robotics, and the idea was later extended to animation. In short, it says that if artists created characters that were only vaguely human, like cars with faces or anthropomorphic ducks, viewers found them endearing. Similarly, if artists drew realistic characters of almost photographic quality, viewers also adored them. Something funny happened between the two extremes, though. If a drawing or robot looked mostly human but not quite, it actually repelled people. Computer-generated characters in movies often tumble into this uncanny valley, not to mention zombies, clowns and celebrities with bad face-lifts. It seems that when something is, say, 50 percent human, our brains focus on the similarities and we embrace it. When it's 95 percent human, we focus on the differences, and the unresolved conflict we feel — is that human or not-human? — creeps us out. (Sam Kean, 2014)

The Japanese engineer referred to in this quotation was Masahiro Mori who is a major figure in robotics design. It was precisely because of this very reaction, the 'creepiness' Mori felt when working with some robots, that he counseled robotics designers to avoid creating robots that would fall into the uncanny valley. Mori believed robotics engineers, who strive to make robots with which human beings can effectively interact, could achieve their goals without trying to make robots look like human beings. And, although this recommendation does have its doubters (Hanson, *et al.*, 2005), this strategy of avoiding the uncanny valley still dominates in both robotics design and animation, including the design of animated video games.

One important aspect of the Mori's account of the UV effect that gets obscured by Kean is that, as Mori had more clearly emphasized, the UV effect is something observers experience on the basis not only of physical appearance but also on the basis of *movement*. That is, Mori held, the UV effect is actually heightened, made more intense, if the object perceived

as uncanny also moves. This is evident in the graph developed to translate the one first presented by Mori.

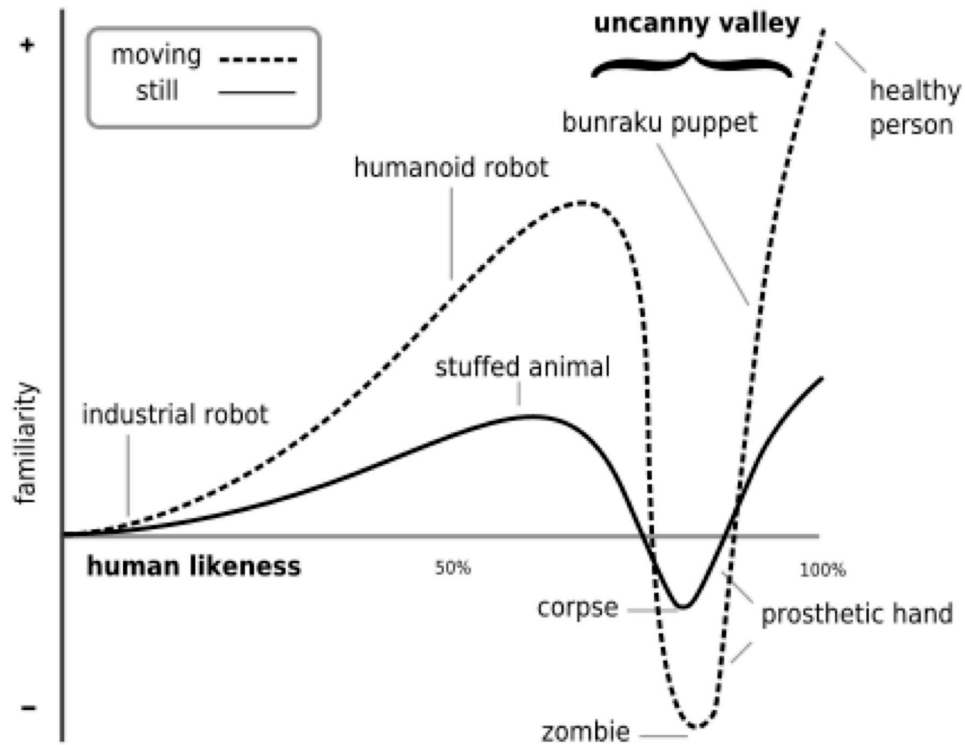


FIGURE 1. Source: M. Mori, 2012.

On Mori's hypothesis [FIGURE 1], as the appearance of an object approaches that of a healthy person (the 'human likeness' indicated on the horizontal axis), the familiarity an observer experiences is increasingly positive (vertical axis), that is, until a sudden drop off in familiarity is reached when the experience becomes strikingly negative (hence the term 'valley'). The dotted line represents movement. And the contrast between the dotted and solid lines shows that the experience of familiarity that an observer has is enhanced by perception of motion, both positively and negatively.

But this nice, popular, and deeply intuitive hypothesis is in serious trouble.

Mori rested the hypothesis only on anecdotal evidence and never tested it further. In fact, it was not empirically tested until some twenty years later. And when it was, a number of questions emerged. Not least was the question whether there is a genuine phenomenon here at all (Hanson, *et al.*, 2005). Other questions soon followed: Is it a *single* phenomenon? Is it triggered *only* by animated objects, human-like robots, and/or video animations? Is it triggered *only* at the 95-98% part of the curve? And none of these interesting questions has yet, so far as I know, received a convincing answer (Guizzo, 2010).

However, rather than pursue these skeptical questions here, what I want to do is assume the original story is roughly correct and then look for potential causes of the phenomenon. In the end, I believe, this strategy pays off by showing us what needs to be done first in accounting for the relevant reactions we have to puppets and other animated objects.

3. *A Promising Class of Theories*

In this brief section of this paper, I outline and discuss a class of theories that have seemed to be promising candidates for what we need. This class is represented here by Tzachi Zamir's essay, simply entitled 'Puppets'. As a class they rest on a familiar metaphysical distinction between objecthood and subjectivity, namely that puppets are objects that seem to be subjects. The resulting epistemic disparity gives rise to or engages a tension that results in the common ascription of uncanniness to puppets. A reasonable hope lying behind the class of views is that many interesting aesthetic properties of puppets might receive an explanation as a kind of 'spin-off' from the explanations that can be given of the UC effect and the experiences it subsequently engenders.

What are those experiences? Zamir encapsulates them this way: the phenomenon—the epistemic disparity between our knowledge of the object status of puppets and our experience of them as subjects—forces us to recognize a set of uncomfortable facts: about the 'uncontrolled and uncontrollable nature of matter'; about subjectivity as 'life *qua* momentarily resuscitated matter'; of 'the illusiveness of freedom and the disturbing autonomy possessed by [our] creations'; and of the fact that *we* sometimes

want to become objects, *and that we like it* (Zamir, 2010: 389, 392, 392, and 394-395). So, then, here is how this goes: as a direct result of recognizing these facts, this class of views is able to connect with and appears to provide answers to some important aesthetic questions.

By 'aesthetic questions' I mean questions of two kinds. First, aesthetic questions concern how to characterize factors that generate what can and typically do figure into descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations of uncontroversially recognizable aesthetic experiences or the objects that cause them. Second, aesthetic questions concern how, precisely, these factors *do* figure into such descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations. Such experiences are frequently, but not necessarily, generated by features of works of art. But they are frequently generated by features of naturally occurring objects and events as well. Moreover, nothing in this idea presupposes that the experiences themselves are to be regarded positively. One can, for example, experience horror and like it; and one can just as easily experience feelings of warmth and security but dislike it.

Among the aesthetic questions generated by the experience of puppets are questions about how to characterize and explain the following factors: (a) that makers, users, and spectators are fascinated with the *materiality* of animated objects; (b) that many spectators experience strong emotional reactions to animated objects when they are *not* part of a performance (fiction-making or otherwise); and (c) that puppets seem to have a life of their own, both *before*, on-stage, *and afterwards* when they appear (as they sometimes do) in dressing rooms, museums and galleries.

To reiterate, it would seem that a view of our experience of puppets that is grounded in the tension we might feel—a result of the epistemic disparity already described—would be able to deliver a plausible set of answers to each of these aesthetic questions. Thus, that must be taken seriously as a real advantage of that approach to these aesthetic questions.

Unfortunately, it appears the approach, the entire class of such theories, is too strong and fails to be generalizable. First, while it seems able to deliver a story about the UC effect and puppets and, based upon that story, also appears able to tell how certain kinds of experience are caused as well as what those kinds of experiences are likely to predict by way of answers to some important aesthetic questions, the price paid by the approach is too high. For the story it has to tell about puppets is simply that

they just *are* uncanny objects, *all of them are*, and *all the time*. But that is not consistent with the facts. Not all puppets are regarded as uncanny, nor are they so regarded all of the time. We will come back to this point.

Secondly, this class of theories fails to be generalizable beyond puppets to other animated objects where animacy, but *not* subjectivity, is what is expressed or experienced. Precisely because it rests on the metaphysical distinction between objects and subjects it cannot tell us much about those items—increasingly used in theatre—that are not subjects but only animated. Walls that breathe need not be subjects, nor experienced as such in order to produce interesting, compelling, and yes even ‘uncanny’ theatrical experiences in spectators. Nor is it clear what that they have to be understood as *expressing* anything so much as they are taken to be generating *moods*. And moods form a class of feelings that are much more diffuse than ordinary emotions, which of course *can be* expressed. Moreover, not all acts of creation or conveyance—as in, ‘the company created and conveyed a mood of melancholia’—are also acts of expression, *per se*.

4. A General Plan to Recover

Crucially, I now argue, theories in the class we have been considering also obscure both the distinction and the epistemic relations between data and inferences spectators make on the basis of data. Moreover, as I will also argue later in this section, any alternative class of theories or hypotheses that explains the UV effect should be consistent with a broad set of results at the intersection of empirical cognitive science and formal learning theory.

To see what I have in mind by the first contention, consider some empirically derivable distinctions. Consider first the distinction between detecting causation and detecting animacy. This was first studied systematically by Heider and Simmel in 1944. This was followed up by more detailed work by Albert Michotte in 1946. Michotte’s tests were simple. Michotte devised a way to manipulate the movement of two objects on a projection screen. Both could move left and right at various speeds and with various delays. In the ‘launching experiments’, for example, a ball on the left moved from left to right about 20 cm, then stopped for about 3

seconds; and then the ball on the right moved about 10 cm from left to right and stopped. In 'rest to motion' experiments, a single ball would be seen at rest and then move for a certain distance.

Although the tests themselves were simple, the results of the tests were extremely powerful and sophisticated. One measure of this was that very small changes in either the distance travelled or the timing of pauses reliably produced substantial variations in the descriptions of what subjects saw. In particular, whereas the launching, entraining, and expulsion examples prompted most subjects to see some object(s) causing other objects to move, the tests involving subjects responses to rest to motion, apparent goal-directedness, and apparent collision avoidance strongly suggest most subjects see some objects moving in some patterns as self-movers, as (at least) *animated*. The now classic treatment of these issues and the tests that are now most often cited is given in Castelli, Happé, Frith, and Frith (2000). And what, in the present context, is most remarkable about that treatment is that all the tests involve animated objects in the form of the mere representation of abstract objects such as variously colored triangles, squares, rectangles, and circles, reproduced on video screens (Scholl and Tremoulet, 2000).

A second empirically derived distinction is between perception of causation and causal inferences. The terms used for these in the relevant research literature are 'perceptual causality' and 'reasoning to underlying mechanisms'. The rough idea is that while even very young infants detect causation among events perceptually, it takes the development of reasoning skills before a child is able to reliably predict, for example, when a pair of events that look like they involve causation do not in fact do so (Schlottman and Shanks, 1992); Schlottman and Surian, 1999; Schlottman, 1999: and Castelli, Happé, Frith, and Frith, 2000).

A third empirically derivable distinction is that among attributions of causation, attributions of animacy, and attributions of beliefs. The latter is often referred to now as the attribution of a 'Theory of Mind'; and it is arguably the case that only when a 'ToM', or something very like it, is attributable that we have genuine—even if only minimal—'subjectivity'. The research on this began in the early 1980s, and is now part of the standard canon of empirical social science (Wimmer & Perner, 1983; Baron-Cohen, Leslie, & Frith, 1985; Johnson, Slaughter, & Carey, 2002; Lohman,

Carpenter, & Call, 2005; and Hedger & Fabricius, 2011). Two features of the experiments purporting to support the existence of ToM in children beyond infancy are especially worth noting in the present context. The first is that the initial tests to determine when children will reliably predict the behavior of others by attributing beliefs to them—the ‘false belief’ test—were conducted using puppets (famously called ‘Sally’ and ‘Ann’). The second is the important finding, in the work of Baron-Cohen and his colleagues, that failure to pass the false-belief tests is characteristic of children with autism. Indeed, much of the subsequent work on the subtleties of ToM has been conducted with this very practical orientation in mind.

These studies from the current psychological literature show us three things. First, only certain patterns of movement are responsible for engendering the perceptions of causation, of animacy, and of subjectivity, respectively. This entails there are important and describable differences among them. Second, the patterns of movement responsible for engendering those different responses, both in perception and in reasoning, can be produced using clearly *inanimate* objects that can be made to behave as though animated or as though subjects. And, finally, these references also should convince us that, while some of the time the recognition of causation and of animacy is perceptual, the recognition of subjectivity is *never* purely perceptual and always involves taking very seriously the relevance of *both* the kinds of data a person is presented *and* the person’s capacity to draw inferences from that data.

What, then, have we seen so far? Some of the promise of the class of theories we considered in the previous section consisted in its ability to connect with important aesthetic issues. Some of it consisted in its apparent ability to give a simple and direct account of the UV effect. But it failed to deliver a general account of spectating puppetry because it claimed too much and failed a plausible requirement of generalizability. In this section we have seen is what it obscures, namely, both the distinction and the epistemic relations between data and inference. So, in the end, it appears to wrap a puzzle in a mystery and call *that* an explanation.

However, studying that class of theories also reveals something positive. In particular, what we learn about explaining the UV effect is, I believe, that explaining the UV effect itself should probably not be our starting point but, rather, one of the elements to be explained by a more

general theory of the nature of spectating animated objects. That is, we learn from examining that class of theories that any alternative explanation should first give a general account of spectating puppetry, should connect with important aesthetic issues, should meet the plausible requirement of generalizability, and should make plain the distinction and the relations between data and inference.

Moreover, I now argue, any proposal alternative to the metaphysically grounded class of theories presented and discussed in the previous section should *be consistent with* a broad set of results at the intersection of empirical cognitive science and formal learning theory.

Why is that? The intuition here rests on the simple idea that explanations track causes. There are several accounts of what makes a body of statements *explanatory* of some phenomena. Most people who think about explanations, *per se*, agree that—for physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, anthropology, and so on—there has to be some causation or at least something like causal relevance involved in order to have an explanation. From that basis of agreement, there is significant divergence (Halpern and Pearl, 2005a and 2005b, and Christopher Hitchcock, 2007).

Some philosophers of science think that, ultimately, the structure of an explanation should be deductive, where the laws, theorems, and so on, function as premises in the argument, some general observed facts also figure as premises, and the conclusion is the phenomenon to be explained. The phenomenon in question may have occurred and stand in need of explanation. Or it may not have occurred yet, in which case it is a prediction based upon that explanation. Indeed, this idea suggests a method of testing an explanation, namely, that one should first see what the explanation, taken together with known facts, allows one to predict and then second run experiments to see if the predicted phenomena actually occur. These philosophers allow that some explanations are of sufficiently particular phenomena that the deductive model does not work for them; in such cases they think we use inductive arguments that take laws (and the like) as premises and offer something like statistical syllogisms to arrive at the phenomenon to be explained.

Others philosophers of science have noted the historical fact that scientific explanations have almost always been inductive. They involve induction over sets of data (samples of phenomena that exist and can be

given clear descriptions) that leads to something like generalizations about the whole set of phenomena (a whole population). The question is how to capture certain features of a situation in terms of the notion of statistical relevance or conditional dependence relationships. For an explanation, remember, cannot simply be a correlation among data sets, it must involve causal relations or at least causal relevance among the features.

Still other philosophers of science, and sociologists of science in particular, take the issue to be one that is fundamentally social in nature. What an explanation is, on one of these influential views, is a unified account of a range of different phenomena that yields a sense of understanding among the explaining community. This is clearly an intuitively appealing idea, since it trades on the idea that a good theory offers accounts of phenomena we have not have anticipated belonging to the theory. As such, it offers to unify phenomena in unanticipated ways. Historically, again, this fact about theories has played an important part in the development of scientific theories. It is unclear how well it applies to theories outside of the sciences, however.

Perhaps, of course, there are different kinds of explanations, suitable for different ranges of phenomena. This would imply, of course, that there are different kinds of theories as well. And determining how to specify those is one of the unsolved problems in philosophy. But, to reiterate the main point, whatever else goes into the explanatory nature of a theory, the theory had best track causes or it won't pass muster at all.

This is why it seems to me that the resources we really need for understanding how spectators appreciate animated objects, and how we are to explain the UV effect as well, are best found not in a metaphysical distinction, however intuitively persuasive it otherwise might be, but in empirical psychological research and formal learning theory about how we learn to track causes.

5. *An Alternative Strategy*

In this final section of the paper, I quickly present and partially explain an alternative strategy for developing a view that meets the foregoing *desiderata*. And I argue that any such strategy should allow us to re-describe

the UV effect as a specific class of cognitive effects having fairly immediate affective consequences and one or more specific kinds of etiology.

a. Some of the Relevant Empirical Research

As a first step we think of the general term 'experience' more precisely as a kind of perceptual input. But, for various reasons, most to do with the bewildering variety of perceptual inputs an individual experiences at any given time—not to mention the difficulty in moving from such pure 'raw' data to anything comprehensible—we specify the kind of perceptual input as that which is the result of 'perceptual input analyzers' (Carey, 2009).

What does this mean? As Carey conceives them, perceptual input analyzers are modules that perform simple transformations of raw perceptual input, make raw perceptual input suitable for conceptual cognition, and make latent abstract concepts more salient and more learnable. A final point, perceptual input analyzers may themselves be learned (Saxe and Carey, 2006).

Crucial to this approach is the fact that perceptual input analyzers place one kind of constraint on the sheer size of hypothesis spaces an agent must be thought of as considering when confronted with the world.

Because it has this effect and because of the way it does this, one might well be reminded of a similar strategy using the concept of 'affordances'—a concept owing its initial provenance to Jerome Gibson (1979) and since developed by Shaun Gallagher, Daniel Hutto and others. Of course, some dissident views have focused especially on two claims Gallagher and Hutto have made: that the approach represents a 'second generation of cognitive science'; and that the approach demonstrates the inadequacy of ToM (Lawrence Shapiro, 2007; Shannon Spaulding, 2010 and 2011). But for the present purposes, it does not matter which side one takes on those finer-grained issues, so long as we conceive of perception as, in some sense but at a very basic level, 'ready for conceptualization' that place constraints on the sheer size of hypothesis spaces an agent must entertain.

b. The Shape of the Relevant Formal Learning Theory

On the approach I recommend, spectators experience 'pre-analyzed' data and infer causal theories to explain them and/or to discover categories

within which the data fall. The metaphysical approach considered in §2 focuses only on the latter kinds of inference, but as we have seen, does not actually treat that as an *inference* at all. This is part of why it obscures the relationship between data and inferences.

But it altogether ignores the inference to the fact that agents attempt to discern which causes (and which kinds of causal theories) could explain the data stream. In contrast, on the approach I recommend, we do assume a distinction between inferences to particular causes (the inference of causal theories) and inference to causal or category structures. Both are in the form of considerations concerning hypotheses one might entertain in order to explain one's experience. But they are different kinds of hypotheses. This is beneficial because most agents are adept at quickly inferring particular causal theories/categories from data streams.

What is now and only recently realized, at least in formal modeling theory, is that causal and categorial *structures* are inferred from the same data as particular causes are and at nearly the same time. Moreover, these facts are connected (Tenenbaum, *Et al.*, 2011 and Goodman, *et al.*, 2011).

c. The Alternative Strategy

So, what should an alternative strategy aim at doing? First, it would re-describe the UV effect as a cognitive effect that is one thing that can happen when a spectator is trying to understand a performance, whether by human actors, puppets, or other animated objects. The kind of thing that can happen will occur as a problem with inferring the causes that generate the stream of our experiences or as a problem with inferring the category of objects to which we take an animated object to belong. Although much of the time, a spectator will draw defensible and plausible inferences about what is happening and what kinds of things she is confronted by, this comparatively 'normal' process can be interrupted and disturbed. If so, problems arise in the inferences to appropriate hypotheses. The UV effect, if it ever occurs, would originate for some particular spectators as a problem of this kind.

Second, we would expect an investigation that takes this approach to seek to determine which further affective consequences might attend to or be generated by these problems in hypothesis formation. We already

know, from the experiences of puppet-makers, puppeteers and those who make and use other kinds of animated objects in theatre performances that the relevant affective consequences are probably fairly immediate and we now know they must express a spectator's confusion about the *kinds* of causes/categories that might make sense of our experiences.

Thirdly, we might expect, and should certainly investigate, whether there is a specific etiology that yields this kind of confusion. That is, as many have suggested, the ultimate causes must be understood as stemming directly from the experience of encountering animated objects or from encountering human beings in unexpected situations or possessing certain unexpected features. They are not, or not primarily, due to our having some sort of psychological set, bias, or propensity to draw mistaken inferences before we encounter an animated object. Nor are all animated objects going to produce the effect, at least not all the time. They are rather caused by our encounter with those precise objects, or better, with precisely specifiable features of those objects. In the approach I recommend, that would be theorized as caused by a lack of clear presentation of unexpected features, of certain specific sort(s), in the data stream itself.

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Learning by Viewing — Towards a Phenomenological Understanding of the Practical Value of Aesthetic Experience

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I will shed light on the question of whether or not aesthetic experience can constitute practical knowledge and, if so, how it achieves this. I will compare the approaches of Nelson Goodman and Edmund Husserl. Both authors treat the question of which benefits aesthetic experience can bring to certain basic skills. While one could argue alongside Goodman that repeated aesthetic experience allows for a trained and discriminating approach to artworks, according to Husserl, by viewing aesthetic objects we can learn to perceive in a more undiluted fashion and to qualify our own perception against the backdrop of the conceptual framework that shapes our everyday experience. As a consequence, aesthetic experience is not to be regarded as something that only contributes to a normatively loaded involvement in the distinct field of the 'aesthetic'. I will argue that a phenomenological account is also of interest for understanding the practical value of aesthetic experience beyond the confined field of the arts.

There has been a great deal of discussion lately concerning the epistemic value of aesthetic experience in the field of philosophical aesthetics. Numerous books and papers have addressed the question of whether the experience of artworks or of the aesthetic taken in a more general sense can contribute to knowledge acquisition.¹ If it can, what is the distinct kind

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¹ One could, roughly, distinguish two complementary accounts focusing on this question: While cognitivist approaches are positive about the contribution of aesthetic experience to knowledge acquisition, anti-cognitivist approaches deny any distinct epistemic qualities of aesthetic experience. For a general overview of the epistemic qualities of aesthetic experience and the cognitivism-anti-cognitivism debate see Berys Gaut, "Art and Knowledge," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford

of knowledge constituted in the course of aesthetic experience? Is it different from knowledge constituted in the course of ordinary experience? Is it different from knowledge constituted in the course of scientific experience?

In my paper I will draw on the relation of aesthetic experience and knowledge addressed by these discussions with one slight, but critical shift: I will not ask whether aesthetic experiences contribute to knowledge acquisition of a theoretical kind; rather, I will investigate if and to what extent aesthetic experience contributes to knowledge acquisition of a practical kind. By knowledge of a practical kind or “practical knowledge” I do not mean moral knowledge in the sense of practical reasoning.² Rather, I mean knowledge concerning praxis, i.e. knowledge about how to do something.³ In this sense aesthetic experience would not enable

University Press, 2003): 436–50; Rosalind Hursthouse, “Truth and Representation,” in *Philosophical Aesthetics*, ed. Oswald Hanfling (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 239–96; Eileen John, “Art and Knowledge,” in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes (London: Routledge, 2005), 417–29; Peter Lamarque and Haugom Olsen Stein, “Truth,” in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. Vol. 4, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 406–15; David Novitz, “Epistemology and Aesthetics,” in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. Vol. 2, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 120–23. For cognitivist approaches see David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1985); John Gibson, “Cognitivism and the Arts,” in *Philosophy Compass* 3.4 (2008): 573–89, for anti-cognitivist approaches see Peter Lamarque, “Cognitive Values in the Arts: Marking the Boundaries,” in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran, (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 127–42; Jerome Stolnitz, “On the Cognitive Triviality of Art,” in: *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (July 1992): 191–200.

² In contemporary debates, there is a vivid discussion of the interrelation of aesthetic experience and practical, or moral, reasoning. Cf. Matthew Kieran, “Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals,” in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 337–51; Mette Hjort and Sue Laver (eds.), *Emotion and the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Noël Carroll, “The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge,” in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60.1 (Winter 2002): 3–26. For an overview see Sarah E. Worth, “Art and Epistemology,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2003), accessed September 12, 2014, doi: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/art-ep>.

³ In *The Concept of Mind* (1949) Gilbert Ryle introduces the epistemic distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how.” He considers the inarticulate, implicit, bodily mode of “knowing how” as more grounding than the explicit, propositional, rational mode of “knowing that.” Cf. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 28–32.

one to state *what* something is, how it could be used or how it should be judged. Rather, it would result in some kind of inarticulate, implicit, operative and embodied knowledge. For instance, visual aesthetic experiences could lead one to develop an informed and critical way of looking. In the case of auditory aesthetic experiences, one could develop a nuanced and differentiated sense of hearing.

In order to shed light on the question of whether or not aesthetic experience can constitute such practical knowledge at all and, if so, how it achieves this, I will discuss two approaches: the cognitivist-constructivist account of Nelson Goodman and the phenomenological account of Edmund Husserl. In comparing their very different theories, some intriguing arguments about the practical value of aesthetic experience can be found. Both – albeit implicitly – treat the question of which benefits aesthetic experience, taken as a distinct praxis, can bring to certain basic skills. While one could argue alongside Goodman that repeated aesthetic experience allows for a trained and discriminating approach to artworks, provided that it responds to some sort of normative claim, Husserl's late account of representation (*Darstellung*) brings about two arguments that dispute Goodman's claim. According to Husserl, by viewing aesthetic objects we can, firstly and more generally, learn to perceive in a more undiluted fashion and we can, secondly and more specifically, learn to qualify our own perception against the backdrop of the conceptual framework that shapes our everyday experience. As a consequence, aesthetic experience is not to be regarded as something that only contributes to a normatively loaded involvement in the distinct field of the "aesthetic" or that is only aimed at training an expert who deals with an historically specific conceptual framework, but should rather be considered as brightening our perceptual skills on a more general level. Therefore, a phenomenological account is also of interest for critical approaches beyond the confined field of the arts.

In the concluding part of my paper I will draw on some remarks by Husserl to sketch a phenomenological account of aesthetic experience that can explore to what extent aesthetic experience constitutes practical knowledge and which, therefore, contributes to a better and more comprehensive understanding of the epistemic value of aesthetic experience, broadly understood. Such an approach is of utmost interest especially in light of a recent shift of focus from theoretical to practical and embod-

ied knowledge.⁴ In order to avoid any misconceptions, I will show that the phenomenological account I introduce does not bracket all the concerns of a cognitivist-constructivist account, which are of importance for a differentiated approach in philosophical aesthetics. I will argue that the phenomenological approach rather facilitates a critique of the historically concrete conceptual framework that, according to Goodman, underlies every experience, including aesthetic experience. In this sense, the phenomenological point of view serves as a kind of critical method for addressing the relativity and, thus, the constructed historical nature of every experiential system and its objects.

1. Theoretical vs. Practical Knowledge

In order to comprehensively discuss the issue of aesthetic experiences' epistemic value, it is not only necessary to have a clear concept of the aesthetic and to understand the distinct way we experience it, it is also indispensable to shed light on the notion of knowledge. In contemporary epistemology, the field of the epistemic is often treated as comprising different kinds of knowledge. In the history of philosophy, however, knowledge has often been restricted to articulate forms of "justified true belief." Knowledge, in this understanding, amounts to sentences of the form "I know that p" expressed by a knowing subject who is well aware that her belief "p" is not only well justified (through rational reasoning, experience or the testimony of a trustful second person, for instance), but that it also is true. Knowledge of this kind is directed towards true pro-

⁴ It is mainly within recent empirically informed Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Sciences that embodied knowledge, mostly grasped as "embodied cognition," has become of interest. See for instance: Evan Thompson and Francisco Varela, "Radical Embodiment: Neural Dynamics and Consciousness," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 5 (2001), 418–425; Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004); Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Anthony Chemero, *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009); Robert D. Rupert, *Cognitive Systems and the Extended Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Lawrence Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Joerg Fingerhut, Rebekka Hufendiek, and Markus Wild (eds.), *Philosophie der Verkörperung: Grundlagentexte zu einer aktuellen Debatte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013).

positions or facts.⁵ I can know that p, if and only if I believe that p, if my belief is justified, and if p is a fact, which implies that p is true.

The traditional notion of knowledge limits the epistemic field to (inwardly or outwardly uttered) sentences of the form “I know that p.” This *knowing that* confines knowledge to holding true propositions in the mind and expressing them. In contrast, a non-reductionist epistemological account also sheds light on other forms of knowledge. A practical kind of knowledge in this context refers to competences, operations and abilities of a capable subject, which are, by the way, in most cases indispensable to finding out truths and, thus, allow for the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. Such *knowing how* cannot be fully grasped when regarded as a mere application of theoretical knowledge.

Consider the following example: When somebody informs me of the correct combination of movements that one must perform in order to ride a bike, the knowledge conveyed to me is of a theoretical kind and will, very likely, not enable me to ride a bike the minute I try to apply this knowledge (e.g. that I have to hold the handlebars, start to pedal, balance my weight, etc.). Riding a bike just like other forms of practical knowledge, such as knowing how to ski, knowing how to sing, knowing how to dance, knowing how to draw etc., cannot be reduced to a set of theoretical rules or standards underlying an action. Rather, they consist in a complex intertwining of the awareness of such rules or standards (whether they be explicitly at hand or only implicitly, that is, on an operative level, but not on a conscious or reflective one) and the (bodily) ability to apply them in action. Accordingly, in order to acquire practical knowledge, it is indispensable to perform and to evaluate specific premises (if there are such premises, in the form of either explicit or operative rules or standards) in the very process of repeated performance. As Ryle puts it, a person comes to ‘know how’ by applying “criteria [or standards] in performing critically, that is, in trying to get things right”.⁶

⁵ Ryle holds that this understanding of knowledge, and the conception of mental conduct linked to it, amount to an “intellectualist doctrine.” See Ryle, *Concept*, 27.

⁶ Ryle, *Concept*, 29. Interestingly, Ryle introduces a comparative setting in which he parallelizes the “canon of aesthetic taste” and the scientific “inventive technique” as paradigmatic examples of practical knowledge. Namely they both entail performing a ‘knowing how’ without being able to articulate the proper theoretical criteria which

Once we take theoretical and practical forms of knowledge into account, the issue of fully understanding the epistemic value of aesthetic experience becomes even more complex. Talking merely about theoretical knowledge, it is possible to focus on the content conveyed in the course of aesthetic experience and to ask whether it contributes to constituting any specific knowing-that. But when the discussion begins to also involve practical forms of knowledge, it becomes necessary to consider not only the content – what it is about – but also the praxis of aesthetic experience, i.e. how it is performed. If it is possible to acquire practical knowledge in the course of aesthetic experience, it is of interest to find out what distinguishes aesthetic experience as a praxis that not only aims at conveying contents – in terms of different themes or subjects – but that is directed towards a practical involvement of the aesthetic beholder.⁷

2. Goodman on the Epistemological Validity of Art

Nelson Goodman is an author who is very well aware of the impact that aesthetic experience has upon knowledge acquisition. Regarding the issue of the epistemic character of artworks and aesthetic objects more generally, he can be considered as one of the chief pioneers of a 20 century philosophical movement that sheds light on the relationship of aesthetic experience and knowledge. Basically, Goodman is positive about the contribution of aesthetic experience to knowledge acquisition. In his understanding, aesthetic experience can be compared to scientific experience in terms of being inventive, eliciting “novel objects and connections.”⁸ “[T]he

would ground the execution or the performance in some thorough consideration.

⁷ In order to avoid further complication of the discussion, I will only focus on the view of the beholder in this paper; however, the issue could be discussed also by focusing on the perspective of the artist and his aesthetic experience in the course of aesthetic production. Authors like Merleau-Ponty contend that the aesthetic experience of the artist is conveyed to the beholder through the aesthetic object, that is, in his terms, the image. Such an approach would allow to take both the perspective of the producer and the beholder into account all at once. I leave the reflection upon which advantages and problems that this account offer for another occasion.

⁸ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 33.

picture,” he states, “– like a crucial experiment – makes a genuine contribution to knowledge.”⁹ Accordingly, for him “the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding, and thus [...] the philosophy of art should be conceived as an integral part of metaphysics and epistemology.”¹⁰

What Goodman asserts is that aesthetic objects such as pictures are not only means to convey existing knowledge; to use the language of epistemology, they do not simply impart contents and bear a testimonial character. Rather, they actually *are productive of* knowledge in creating a novel approach to the world. They are regarded as means of invention, discovery, creation – as means of enlarging and advancing already existing knowledge. The novelties they elicit concern both the discovery of unknown objects and the disclosure of unacquainted connections. Thus, in his constructivist notion, Goodman regards the field of the aesthetic as one “way of worldmaking,” since it participates in the construction of a contextual framework which constitutes the sense of an historically distinct lifeworld. Every such lifeworld is characterized as a specific system of symbols or classification, comprising the proper syntactic and semantic means in order to ground its genuine sense. Here, Goodman’s account comes out in opposition to the general acknowledgement of the (quantitative and qualitative) difference between the knowledge produced within the field of aesthetics and the knowledge produced within ordinary life and, even, the sciences.

What we come to know through aesthetic experience, then, according to Goodman, is a novel aspect of the world, and we somehow participate in constructing it precisely by forming this new knowledge. The discovery of unknown objects and the disclosure of unacquainted connections are to be regarded as elements within theoretical knowledge: We discover something new and come to understand how it is structured, how it is connected with other objects. And we can (re-)obtain it as an expressible and repeatable knowing-that: I can articulate it as my knowledge that an object exists, that it has certain qualities, that it bears a certain relationship

⁹ Goodman, *Languages*, 33.

¹⁰ Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), 102.

with other objects, that it has a certain symbolic sense and shows a specific systemic embedding. In this, however, such knowing-that does not directly hold any practical value. It is not classified as a knowing-how that enables us to act in a specific way, it does not constitute any new skills, but consists in conveying information about the factual states of specific objects and their relationships.

Besides emphasizing the epistemic impact that aesthetic experience has on the theoretical level, Goodman also provides a clue for answering the question of whether and to what extent aesthetic experiences can contribute to the constitution of practical knowledge. The practical dimension Goodman focuses on is quite strictly confined, though, and concerns the trained eye, ear or hand of the expert. In the context of understanding how to train an organ of perception to be sensitive enough to realize those indispensable differences for expressing the distinct artistic qualities of an artwork, it is important to face processes of repeated aesthetic experience, tending towards a “training [of] my perception to discriminate”¹¹. This is because, according to Goodman, “what one can distinguish at any given moment by merely looking depends not only upon native visual activity but upon practice and training”¹². Aesthetic experience as a praxis, then, is not only an immediate way of responding to aesthetic objects. Rather, it is linked to the formation of a certain form of practical knowledge, a knowing-how to look at a picture, a knowing-how to listen to music, a knowing-how to approach a sculpture etc. This does not mean that aesthetic experience could not be constituted without this specific kind of knowing-how. Rather, Goodman suggests that the more our organs of perception are trained within the boundaries of a historically and culturally concrete conceptual framework, the better they can detect those differences, qualities, and details. Further, these features qualify as a distinct system of classification within that very same framework and an untrained beholder would possibly not even become aware of them. On this very general level, it seems that Goodman holds a strong and convincing argument in defense of the practical value of aesthetic experience, stating that aesthetic experience constitutes a kind of knowing-how to practically en-

¹¹ Goodman, *Languages*, 104.

¹² Goodman, *Languages*, 103.

gage with objects in an aesthetically informed way.

A problem, however, arises with his approach. Goodman not only contends that through practice and training one becomes perceptually acquainted with a specific conceptual framework, learning to detect its characteristic traits. He further argues that this specialized way of perceiving, learned through practice and training, also carries with it a normative motif. We not only learn to approach an aesthetic object differently, we learn how we actually *should* approach it. But how do we know how we should perceive this artwork, how we should look at it, how we should listen to it etc.? If aesthetic experience enables us to become the “better lookers” or the “better listeners” – in terms of those lookers or listeners we actually should be – where does the normative inclination arise from such that what we can learn in the course of aesthetic experience is a better way of perceiving and not, say, a worse or just different way? This question strongly challenges the practical value of aesthetic experience. Goodman holds two central arguments that hint at the normativity operative in aesthetic experience and, at the same time, restrict, if not cut off the practical value of aesthetic experience (after it has already been stated).

First, what we can learn in terms of a “better” seeing (and not just more detailed or trained one) does not primarily depend upon our actual “aesthetic activities”¹³, but to a great extent depends on a normative set of rules that dictate how one should look at something. This assertion put forward by Goodman seriously qualifies the general statement concerning the knowing-how constituted through aesthetic experience. Training and practice alone do not give one the knowing-how of an expert; it is thanks to some sort of claim about how one should look at the picture that one learns to act in favor of a given norm. According to Goodman, this normative claim is not only effective as a rule to be applied, as some sort of regulative instance in the very act of looking, rather, the hypothesis is that the normative claim directly affects how somebody actually perceives an aesthetic object. As a consequence, it is not through repeatedly engaging in the praxis of aesthetic experience that we become the “better lookers”. Goodman states that it is the normative claim that changes the way an aesthetic object is experienced. In this sense, there are “differences in or

¹³ Goodman, *Languages*, III.

arising from how they [the pictures] are to be looked at”¹⁴. The practical value of aesthetic experience, then, is radically curtailed. Thus whether or not I become a better looker does not depend on the actual aesthetic experience, on my “visual activities”, as Goodman contends. Rather, in order to achieve the ability to look at a picture like an expert, I must have knowledge about the way I should look at it. Without such previous theoretical knowledge expressed in the form of a normative claim,¹⁵ there is no practical knowledge to be acquired. Before I can look at a picture in a normatively qualified way, somebody has to tell me that I am to look at it differently. As a consequence, without being acquainted with the normative claim pertaining to another way of looking at a picture in order to make out an aesthetic difference, I would not even be able to enter the practical process of “train[ing] my perception to discriminate”.¹⁶

Goodman’s second argument has to do with the fact that the kind of “practice and training” he refers to does not serve as a general qualification of perception. Quite to the contrary, it merely serves as a means for adapting the norms or schemata of a historically or culturally concrete conceptual framework. This seems only natural as for Goodman every perception is formed by the norms and schemata of such a framework. “That we know what we see is no truer than we see what we know. Perception depends heavily on conceptual schemata.”¹⁷ Since, according to Goodman, it is our (explicit and implicit) knowledge about the world that guides the way we perceive it, every construction, that is, every invention or discovery is founded upon the premises of existing cognitive concepts. Consequently, what we actually experience does not matter as much as what we already know about what we experience. How we experience matters little; what matters more is what we already know about how to experience (or come to know about it through a normative claim). A question that might arise in this context is how any of the inventive aspects of

¹⁴ Goodman, *Languages*, 104 ref.

¹⁵ However it is not clear at all what exactly we are being told when someone informs us about the way one should look at a picture.

¹⁶ The “knowledge of the origin of a work [...] informs the way the work is to be looked at or listened to or read, providing a basis for the discovery of nonobvious ways the work differs from and resembles other works.” Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 38.

¹⁷ Nelson Goodman, “Art and Understanding: The Need for a Less Simple-Minded Approach,” in *Music Educators Journal* 58 (1972), 142.

aesthetic experience Goodman argues in favor of can enter this vicious circle of pre-constructed conceptual schemata guiding our perceptions.

To summarize, although Goodman hints at the practical value of aesthetic experience, his cognitivist constructivism seems to be highly ambivalent regarding the epistemic nature of the aesthetic in the end. According to him, there is not only theoretical, but also practical knowledge constituted in the course of aesthetic experience. Practical knowledge consists in the formation of the eye of the expert, which is more skilled to look at pictures and evaluate their artistic distinctiveness than the eye of the layman. But at the same time the formation of the eye of the expert depends on the historical, contextual, that is, theoretical knowledge about the artistic object introduced by way of a normative claim. And although Goodman states that the nature of aesthetic experience is inventive, it is not clear how the novelties elicited through artworks can exceed the existing conceptual schemata, provided that the very possibility of their production and even their reception, builds upon exactly the same conceptual schemata which are supposed to be surpassed.

As argued, there are several difficulties that arise in the Goodmanian account, if one is to understand the practical value of aesthetic experience. They mainly concern the normative and conceptual pre-conditions of aesthetic experience. Both the normative and the conceptual pre-conditions are bound up with Goodman's overemphasis on theoretical knowledge. Though Goodman contends that the praxis of aesthetic experience is indispensable in order to attain a differentiating and discriminating perception of artistic objects, he draws on the normative claim in order to explain a sophisticated change in aesthetic perception. Moreover, since what and how we perceive depends upon our (implicit or explicit) understanding of the schemata of our lifeworld, aesthetic experience ultimately results from the concepts we already have concerning the appearances, meanings and values of aesthetic objects. With this emphasis on the normative and conceptual conditions of aesthetic experience, it hardly seems possible to convincingly account for how aesthetic praxis might have an impact upon perception or how practical knowledge can be constituted in the course of aesthetic experience.

3. Husserl on the Practical Value of Aesthetic Experience

With the outlined difficulties in mind, I wish to introduce a second approach, the phenomenological approach of Edmund Husserl, in order to discuss the practical value of aesthetic experience. My choice might be surprising, as, unlike Goodman, Husserl's works do not primarily treat aesthetic issues. Although there are some interesting remarks on questions concerning aesthetic experience and also regarding the ontology of representational or fictional objects, Husserl did not develop a proper aesthetic theory or a philosophy of art. Indeed, it is not the artwork that is of interest for the phenomenologist; rather, he focuses on the object of aesthetic experience, for which he often employs the terms representation (*Darstellung*) and image (*Bild*). As a consequence it is not surprising that Husserl's account hardly – if at all – forms part of the discussions of 20 and 21st century philosophical aesthetics. However, I am convinced that the phenomenological approach Husserl developed and revised repeatedly over a period of nearly five decades is very useful for discussing aesthetic issues and problems. The phenomenological perspective turns out to be fruitful especially when it comes to the task of grasping if and to what extent aesthetic experience can contribute to the constitution of practical knowledge.

Phenomenologically, the focus of speaking about aesthetic issues is on the act of aesthetic experience – how it is characterized, how it differs from other acts – and on the nature of the aesthetic object, which is regarded as an intentional object of the aesthetically perceiving consciousness. One advantage that the phenomenological viewpoint offers for coping with aesthetic issues is that it allows for a clear and ready definition of the aesthetic that is not developed against the backdrop of the institutional framework of the arts. The aesthetic is taken as a phenomenal qualification of objects that correlates to a distinct way of experiencing. An object is aesthetic if it is perceived aesthetically and aesthetic perception or aesthetic experience is characterized by purity, purposelessness, freedom, and pleasure.¹⁸

¹⁸ In his reflections on aesthetic issues, Husserl is strongly influenced by Kant's Third Critique. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory (1898–1925)*. *Collected Works Volume XI*, trans. John B. Brough, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 168, ref.; Edmund Husserl, *Phantasie, Bildbewußtsein, Erinnerung. Husserliana XXIII*, ed. Eduard

Accordingly, for an object to be aesthetic it has to be experienced in this peculiar way.

On the surface, the Husserlian approach to aesthetic experience might appear as similar to the Tingle-Immersion-theory Goodman refers to in *Languages of Art*. This theory is said to raise the claim that aesthetic experience is properly understood as a pure, free, joyful, and pre-conceptual mode of encountering an artwork. Accordingly, “the proper behavior on encountering a work of art is to strip ourselves of all the vestments of knowledge and experience (since they might blunt the immediacy of our enjoyment), then submerge ourselves completely and gauge the aesthetic potency of the work by the intensity and duration of the resulting tingle.”¹⁹ It is certainly not surprising at all that Goodman regards the Tingle-Immersion-theory not only as “absurd on the face of it,” but also as “useless for dealing with any of the important problems of aesthetics.”²⁰

By taking a closer look on his writings, Husserl’s emphasis on the purity and purposelessness of the aesthetic admittedly does not disappear. The phenomenological approach is somehow idealistic in this respect. However, in opposition to Goodman’s reading of the Tingle-Immersion-theory, the Husserlian notion of aesthetic experience operates with a concept of practical knowledge that is illuminating for the discussion of the epistemic value of art. And it is this concept of practical knowledge that serves to demonstrate that the purity and purposelessness of aesthetic experience is not the consequence of a loss of “all the vestments of knowledge and experience” but rather is quite the opposite. It is a practically enacted, critical attitude towards “all the vestments of knowledge and experience,” that is, towards our actual beliefs, our “natural attitude,” as Husserl puts it.²¹ The critical potency of aesthetic experience is thanks to its non-commonness, to its difference from ordinary experience. And the very same critical po-

Marbach, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1980), 145, ref.

¹⁹ Goodman, *Languages*, 112.

²⁰ Goodman, *Languages*, 112.

²¹ In his phenomenological methodology Husserl states that it is necessary to bracket the natural attitude, in order to be able to directly approach phenomena, that is, in order to experience how something is given to the experiencing consciousness. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie. Husserliana III/1*, ed. Karl Schuhmann (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 56.

tendency makes aesthetic experience an epistemic praxis, which, for Husserl, can in some respect even be compared to philosophy, at least with respect to its epistemic value. Aesthetic experience enables one to generate new insights by changing point of view, by – practically – enacting a different way of perceiving.

With this, Husserl contends, like Goodman, that aesthetic experiences strongly contribute to knowledge acquisition, even if he is not interested in understanding the theoretical knowledge that might be conveyed through aesthetic experience. Both Goodman and Husserl hint at the epistemic impact of aesthetic and scientific experience and at the parallels between aesthetic and scientific practice.²² One core difference in this context – besides their diverse methodological approaches, of course – is that Husserl compares aesthetic experience to philosophical experience in parallelizing the aesthetic attitude with the philosophical attitude. According to Husserl, to approach an object in an aesthetic manner means to open up one's mind to a general striving to understand, thus becoming open to fundamentally *theoretical* concerns. Aesthetic experience is *theoria* "in the original sense. Delight in seeing that understands; correlatively, the *theoretical* interest, delight in seeing-in, in the understanding of the concrete type that belongs to a time as a characteristic part. [*Theoria* im eigentümlichen Sinn. Freude am verstehenden Schauen, korrelativ das *theoretische* Interesse, am Hineinsehen, Verstehen des konkreten Typus, der zu einer Zeit als charakteristisches Stück gehört.]"²³ The *theoria* Husserl that refers to must not be confused with theoretical knowledge. *Theoria* must be regarded as an activity, as praxis, as a knowing how.²⁴ And aesthetic experience opens up the possibility to engage in this praxis.

For Husserl, there are some intriguing parallels between the way we approach the world aesthetically and the way we approach it philosophically. In a letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal he contends that the attitude operative in aesthetic experiences is connect to the phenomenological at-

²² Goodman, *Languages*, 255.

²³ Husserl, *Phantasy, Image Consciousness, and Memory*, 643; Husserl, *Phantasie, Bildbewußtsein, Erinnerung*, 541.

²⁴ This thought can already be found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. *Theoria*, here, is regarded as specifically human activity. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), X, vi, 8.

titude he favors for philosophical investigations.²⁵ What makes them akin to one another is their relation to ordinary experience and commonsense. While ordinary experience is characterized as our everyday dealing with common objects based upon our natural attitude and beliefs, aesthetic experience as well as scientific – or philosophical – experience is classified as non-ordinary and thus “unnatural.” For Husserl, ordinary experience is accompanied by an attitude that is indispensable for our everyday business; without relying on our naturally formed beliefs, it would be impossible to fulfill the simplest tasks. In this sense, Husserl does not generally devalue the natural attitude operative in ordinary experience, when he contends that we have to put it in brackets in order to gain truly phenomenological insight. He only differentiates between the “normalizing” value of the natural attitude, enabling us to live our lives and perform our duties on the one hand, and the epistemic value of the phenomenological attitude that allows one to break the circle of common beliefs and customs on the other hand. Taking on a phenomenological attitude does not mean leaving all of our ordinary knowledge behind; rather, it means adopting another perspective on it. As phenomenologists executing the reduction, we do not perform our common beliefs and customs. Rather, in bracketing them we suspend them, we do something else, that is, we engage in a different form of praxis which induces a different kind of perception. Doing something else does not mean, though, that we can (or even should) leave our natural attitude or our everyday knowledge behind. It rather means that we view it from another angle, from a critical distance. Suspending our natural attitude, then, also means we obtain a glimpse of it, viewing it from a critical perspective.

The different praxis in which the phenomenologist engages is defined via a restriction or limitation – Husserl speaks of “Reduktion” or “Epoché.”²⁶ Restricting her view, the phenomenologist tries to solely concentrate on what is actually given in an experience. This means that in taking on the phenomenological attitude I try to focus on nothing else than on what and how I actually perceive, what and how I actually imagine, what and how I actually recall etc. In reducing the field of experience to its

²⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel. Band VII: Wissenschaftlerkorrespondenz*, ed. Karl Schuhmann (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 133–34.

²⁶ Husserl, *Ideen I*, 122–33.

content (what is actually given) and mode (how it is given), the phenomenological experience is a restrictive way of experiencing that, nevertheless, allows one to perceive aspects of the given that are normally out of sight.²⁷

Comparing the Husserlian understanding of the epistemic value of aesthetic experience to Goodman's notion of the epistemic nature of the arts, one core difference becomes evident: While Goodman subordinates the practical dimension of aesthetic experience to a preceding theoretical insight, uttered in the form of a normative claim, Husserl indicates that a true theoretical insight can only be made if the praxis is altered, if, in other words, the approach to the experienced object changes. Both philosophers introduce aesthetic experience as one important experiential field allowing for the alteration of practices. Accordingly, Goodman and Husserl point towards the interconnection of practical and theoretical knowledge in aesthetic experience. Nevertheless, they display different emphases. For Goodman, theoretical knowledge is indispensable in order to promote the advancement of practical knowledge. Husserl, on the contrary, holds it is necessary to engage in a different praxis in order to provide the right basis for gaining new theoretical insights.

4. Aesthetic Experience and Practical Knowledge – a Phenomenological Perspective

With this difference in mind, Husserl's parallelization of phenomenological and aesthetic experience proves to be appropriate for developing a comprehensive approach to understanding the practical value of aesthetic experience. If one can only adopt the phenomenological attitude by practicing a specific form of engagement with objects, and if the phenomenological attitude and the aesthetic attitude are connected in this respect, then the aesthetic attitude too must correspond to some specific praxis. The praxis peculiar to aesthetic experience is then – in some way – a restrictive way of experiencing as well; it limits the view to the aesthetic

²⁷ The main difference between the phenomenological and the aesthetic attitude, however, comes down to a difference between a knowledge producing and a knowledge enacting praxis. Unlike the phenomenological attitude, the aesthetic attitude does not aim at having specific insights; rather, it solely aims at enacting a different style of experience.

and its proper way of being given. Experiencing aesthetically, thus, suspends processing or discerning useful or useless aspects of the perceived. However, it is not merely trained to detect historically specific traits of the perceived. If it were, aesthetic experience would always be pre-determined either by a normative claim or a given conceptual outline concerning what should be regarded aesthetically and how to experience it aesthetically. Rather, aesthetic experience – as a free, pure, pleasure-oriented and purposeless praxis – is immediately directed towards the given, regardless of whether it serves any needs. In adopting an aesthetic attitude, therefore, one can and, probably, must learn a different way of perceiving as well as a different way of dealing with the perceived.

Approaching the issue of aesthetic experience's practical value phenomenologically, we could claim that performing an aesthetic attitude entails the bracketing of the received view. This is because in experiencing aesthetically one strives towards an actual looking (or listening, touching etc.) and thus can overcome what s/he already knows or believes to see (or hear, touch etc.). In this respect, the phenomenological approach reaches beyond the cognitivist-constructivist account of Goodman without negating the givenness of underlying conceptual schemata that constitute the actual experiential system. From the phenomenological point of view, every experience is conceptually founded, since it entails that something is always perceived *as x*. That something is perceived *as x* means that there are a number of natural beliefs²⁸ involved in the constitution of an object as an intentional object, that is, as an object intended by an experiencing subject. These natural beliefs consist of personal and collective, implicit and explicit knowledge and convictions concerning the perceived object, its context, its history, its purpose etc. Still, in aesthetic experience – just as in phenomenological experience – experiential objects do not unfold the same way they normally do in natural experience. This does not mean, however, that all concepts or beliefs are simply cut off from experience. It does not mean, in other words, that something is plainly and purely being perceived, without being regarded *as x*. Rather, in the realm of the

²⁸ According to Husserl's genetic phenomenology, perception is doxastic, meaning that it is bound to historically and culturally grown beliefs. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1985).

aesthetic, one perceives something *as if* it were x (or y or z).²⁹ The experiential mode “as if” is characteristic of aesthetic experiences, since only the free and purposeless space they constitute allows the perceiver not to immediately assign the perceived object a certain sense, use or benefit. The aesthetic space, therefore, facilitates a perceptual praxis that suspends immediate attributions (regarding something *as* x) exactly because it is free to consider alternative ones (regarding something *as if* it were x or y or z).

It is this freedom that also marks the core difference between phenomenological and aesthetic experience. While the phenomenological attitude means to evoke philosophical insights and ultimately aims at the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, the aesthetic attitude is free not to do so – but still it is somehow inclined towards this. Looking at an object aesthetically, one is free to look just for the sake of it. To just be looking is not something ‘natural’, as we normally do not engage in such ‘just for the sake of it’-practices. Therefore, it is also something we are not used to doing and, consequently, something we do not know how to do. The space of aesthetic experience – being sensual and pleasure-oriented – invites us to perform such alien practices and become in a way familiar with it.

The epistemic feature of aesthetic experience is not exhausted by this apprenticeship in ‘looking just for the sake of it’. The change of view bound up with the performance of ‘just for the sake of it’-practices comes along with a different way of experiencing. Experiencing something in a different way, further, is the very basis for gaining new insights and, therefore, for extending not only one’s practical, but also one’s theoretical knowledge. Expertise in the very process of aesthetic experience, then, qualifies as a foundation also for the diversification of one’s actual knowing-that.

So what is it that we actually learn through aesthetic experience in a practical respect?

As aesthetic experience can be regarded as a free space that allows for suspending operative natural beliefs and that simultaneously motivates a different way of encountering an object, it deepens our knowing-how to perceive in a twofold sense. First, by drawing the attention to the actual

²⁹ This is especially true for representational modes of the aesthetic, such as images or narrations. Whether or not this is also applicable for non-representational modes of the aesthetic, such as music, must be left for a separate investigation.

object and the way it is given, it enables us to perceive in an undiluted fashion. Second, by implementing a critical distance between the way something is normally perceived and the way something can be perceived aesthetically, it allows one to qualify one's own experience against an historically concrete conceptual framework. In this, aesthetic experience – taken phenomenologically – turns out not only to embody the very process of enhancing practical knowledge but allows one to reflect upon it. If a person gains some 'know-how' by applying "criteria [or standards] in performing critically, that is, in trying to get things right,"³⁰ aesthetic experience not only motivates the knowing-how to perceive in a way that is somehow alternative to our natural perception (as it opens up an alternative angle of perception), it also marks the critical potential of this learning curve. Accordingly, what we can learn in the course of aesthetic experience in a practical respect, is to extend our perceptual abilities by perceiving differently *and* to critically reflect upon this difference in the very act of perception. When we are "trying to get things right" in the realm of the aesthetic, there is always more than one possibility to do so, since aesthetic experience is not limited to the one and only synthesis of grasping something *as* x. Aesthetic experience opens up a free space for playfully examining the possibilities of regarding something *as if* it were x or y or z. Examining the possibilities this way proves to have consequences not only for the development of our practical knowing-how to perceive, but also for a reflection upon the very status of this knowing-how.

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³⁰ Ryle, *Concept*, 29.

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Blagues Immorales

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I.

Lorsqu'on aborde la question délicate des relations qu'entretiennent entre elles la blague et la morale, il faudrait, semble-t-il, prendre clairement en compte deux propositions :

- (A) Certaines blagues, notamment sexistes et racistes, sont moralement choquantes (répréhensibles, insultantes, répugnantes)
- (B) Le fait d'être moralement choquant (répréhensibles, insultantes, répugnantes) n'est pas incompatible avec le fait pour une blague d'être drôle, et par conséquent ne l'empêche pas d'être drôle.

On peut essayer de nier (B) en soutenant que seuls l'amusement ou les rires *moralement indiscutables* témoignent de la drôlerie d'une blague ou permettent de la mesurer. Mais c'est là à coup sûr une position intenable car il peut exister des blagues drôles bien que moralement insultantes. Non seulement elles sont possibles, mais il en existe même beaucoup ! Il n'est pas contradictoire de parler de blagues moralement incorrectes – ou socialement, ou politiquement incorrectes – et néanmoins drôles. Allons plus loin : comme Noel Carroll, Berys Gaut et d'autres l'ont souligné, la dimension malveillante et moralement embarrassante de telles blagues n'est pas sans lien avec leur drôlerie et elle ne pourrait pas être entièrement éliminée sans que cela ait des conséquences réductrices sur cette drôlerie.

La tactique la plus courante consiste à essayer de nier (A), en soulignant le *contexte* particulier de l'énonciation d'une blague et/ou l'état d'esprit spécial que suppose leur appréciation, desquels il résulterait que ce qui paraît

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être une blague moralement choquante ne l'est pas en réalité quand on regarde les choses de plus près, du moins lorsqu'elle est dite et reçue d'une certaine manière. Mais cette position n'est pas plus tenable, car elle nie tout simplement le fait, souligné à juste titre par Ted Cohen, qu'avec un certain nombre de ces blagues – et même dans les cas où les auditeurs ou les lecteurs sont connus pour n'être ni sexistes ni racistes – nous sommes gênés par notre réaction d'amusement et par la complicité que celle-ci trahit, en même temps que nous sommes tentés de nier cet embarras.

C'est pourquoi, dans cet article, mon projet est de soutenir à la fois (A) et (B) et d'offrir une explication neuve de la source du caractère moralement répréhensible de certaines blagues drôles quoiqu'immorales. Quelques clarifications préliminaires sont nécessaires avant de poursuivre. Premièrement, quand je parlerai de blagues, j'entendrai généralement des *énoncés*, des *récits*, ou des *occasions* singuliers, c'est-à-dire des *instances* plutôt que des *types* de blagues. Deuxièmement, même si la compréhension et l'appréciation de ces instances de blagues est ce qui prime, il est toujours possible, et souvent assez utile, de parler du caractère moral de certains types de blague, c'est-à-dire de la blague entendue comme un texte oral répétable, en faisant appel à l'*énonciateur implicite* de cette blague, c'est-à-dire au type d'énonciateur que ce type de blague semble naturellement appeler en l'absence de toute information sur les véritables énonciateur ou le contexte réel d'énonciation.¹

2.

Afin d'avancer, il nous faut une paraphrase opératoire de l'adjectif "drôle", entendu comme une propriété objective des blagues, que nous attribuons à certaines d'entre elles et nions à d'autres. Disons pour faire simple qu'une blague est drôle (ou humoristique) si et seulement si elle provoque ou suscite dans le public visé la réponse cognitive et affective particulière connue sous le nom d'*amusement*, qui se manifeste souvent par des *rires* de la part du public visé par celui qui la raconte. Une caractérisation moins grossière nécessiterait de mentionner certaines dispositions à produire ce type de

¹ Cf. B. Gaut, "Just Joking : The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humor", *Philosophy and Literature*, 22, 1998

réactions, les degrés de drôlerie et les contextes appropriés de production et de réception, mais de telles distinctions ne sont pas cruciales pour les conclusions auxquelles je veux ici parvenir².

Nous devons cependant nous attarder un moment sur l'une de ces distinctions, qui concerne le public visé. Car les affirmations de la forme "X est drôle" sont peut-être *implicitement indexicales*, de telle sorte que ces affirmations peuvent être comprises comme signifiant en fait "X est drôle pour les membres du groupe G", G représentant une certaine catégorie sociale ou culturelle reconnue, par exemple celle des enfants, des noirs, des adolescents, ou des américains.³ Bien sûr—et voici un fait heureux—G inclut parfois toutes ces catégories.

Notons aussi qu'il y a une différence entre *comprendre* une blague, qui est un résultat cognitif, et *apprécier* une blague, qui est un résultat affectif autant que cognitif. Vous pouvez comprendre une blague, et même une bonne blague, sans pour autant être amusé, parce que vous n'êtes pas dans la disposition affective nécessaire à l'appréciation de la blague et que vous manquez d'une certaine dose de sympathie ou d'antipathie à l'égard de son contenu. Par exemple, une blague qui fustige discrètement ou flatte subtilement les membres de quelque groupe ethnique peut ne pas être trouvée drôle par un auditeur qui n'a, d'une manière ou d'une autre, aucun sentiment à l'égard des membres de ce groupe. Ou peut-être que, comme l'a fameusement suggéré Bergson, l'appréciation de certaines blagues, et particulièrement de celles dont la victime est clairement déterminée, requiert-elle d'être dans cette attitude affective particulière qu'il a décrit comme "une anesthésie momentanée du cœur".

Afin d'avancer sur la question de la moralité ou de l'immoralité des blagues, il faut préciser les relations qu'une instance de blague ou la blague entendue comme récit peut entretenir avec l'attitude immorale évoquée par la blague entendue comme texte. Pour faire simple, concentrons-nous exclusivement sur les blagues racistes, et par là j'entends les blagues dont

² Cf. J. Levinson, "The Concept of Humor", in *Contemplating Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006

³ Faudrait-il aller jusqu'à soutenir que la référence implicite à une audience visée fait *partie* de l'affirmation "X est drôle"? Je n'en suis pas sûr. Peut-être cette référence implicite n'est-elle qu'un facteur à prendre en compte lorsque nous évaluons la vérité de cette affirmation, sans pour autant faire véritablement partie de ce qu'elles *affirment*.

le contenu est manifestement raciste. La question est de savoir si le fait de raconter une telle blague est – c’est l’hypothèse faible – un *signe* (ou un indice) de racisme, ou – c’est une hypothèse plus forte – une *manifestation* (ou une expression) de racisme, ou bien encore – c’est l’hypothèse la plus forte – une *adhésion* (ou un consentement) au racisme. Ou bien, au contraire, s’il s’agit simplement d’un *constat*, ou encore d’une *simulation*, de racisme en vue de quelque objectif plus lointain. Cela fait une importante différence quand il s’agit déterminer si le fait de raconter une blague raciste, au sens que nous avons expliqué, est ou non moralement discutable, et si le fait d’apprécier cette blague a des implications morales. Reconnaître le rôle joué par l’attitude apparemment prise vis-à-vis du contenu d’une blague par celui qui la raconte soulève la question de savoir si *toutes* ces façons de la raconter constituent de véritables *instances* de cette blague, une question sur laquelle je reviendrai à la fin de cet article.

3.

Pour revenir aux deux propositions que j’énonçais au début, et auxquelles nous devons nous tenir fermement, la difficulté réside précisément dans l’articulation de ces deux énoncés vrais. C’est la question de savoir si le fait qu’une blague soit moralement choquante diminue sa drôlerie ou lui nuit.

Je soutiens que la réponse est, en général, *oui*. Mais la raison sur laquelle je fonde ce jugement diffère quelque peu de celles qui ont été proposées par Ted Cohen et par Berys Gaut⁴. Très brièvement, rappelons que Cohen affirme que dans ces cas la blague est moins bonne en tant que blague, et ainsi sans doute moins drôle – bien que Cohen ne soit pas tout à fait clair sur ce point – parce qu’elle sert à *perpétuer des stéréotypes* qui sont socialement nocifs, alors que Gaut affirme que la blague est moins bonne et que sa drôlerie est altérée parce que les attitudes choquantes implicites dans la blague font que la blague *mérite moins d’amuser* qu’elle ne le mériterait sans cela.

J’affirme au contraire que si ces blagues sont moins drôles et moins bonnes, c’est au fond parce que les attitudes et les stéréotypes qu’elles in-

⁴ Cf. T. Cohen, *Jokes*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999 et B. Gaut, “Just Joking : The Ethics and Aesthetics of Humor”, *op. cit.*

voquent et qu'il est nécessaire de considérer, adopter, et vivre temporairement de l'intérieur pour les apprécier sont ceux que la plupart des auditeurs *reconnaissent* comme immoraux ou comme moralement répugnantes, et que cette reconnaissance ou cette conscience agit *directement* en diminuant ou en minant la réaction d'amusement, et non parce que la blague ne mériterait pas notre amusement, ou parce que nous serions conscients de perpétuer de telles attitudes nocives. Bien plutôt, nous percevons la drôlerie fondamentale de telles blagues, qui réside le plus souvent dans quelque absurdité habilement construite, mais sans laisser libre cours à la réaction d'amusement, du fait des scrupules moraux qui portent sur le matériau que ces blagues exploitent. Autrement dit, nous ne voulons pas vraiment être de ceux qui peuvent sans scrupule s'amuser d'un tel matériau, parce que cela supposerait que nous tolèrerions implicitement les attitudes moralement choquantes plus ou moins discrètement présentes dans le récit et la réception de ces blagues.

Toutefois, selon un point de vue assez répandu, apprécier des blagues moralement choquantes comme celles dont je parle ici ne signifie pas nécessairement assumer ou adopter l'attitude pernicieuse ou le préjugé qui est au cœur de la blague, même en imagination ou momentanément ; d'où il suivrait que notre amusement ou notre rire ne présuppose pas que nous partagions cette attitude ou ce préjugé, ou que nous sympathisions avec eux, et par conséquent, qu'il n'y a rien de moralement problématique dans une telle appréciation⁵.

Cependant, même s'il est vrai que de telles attitudes ne sont pas nécessairement adoptées ou assumées, ou qu'elles ne sont pas de celles avec lesquelles on sympathise ordinairement, on peut soutenir que le simple fait d'actualiser de telles attitudes et de les raviver, est une *reconnaissance implicite*, quoique ténue, sinon de leur validité, du moins de leur *acceptabilité* à titre de supposition. C'est pourquoi leur énonciation, leur transmission et leur réception ne sont pas sans coût moral. En d'autres termes, certaines idées, comme celle que les noirs sont tous des animaux, que les femmes sont toutes sans exception des salopes, que tous les Polonais sont irrémédiablement stupides, ou que tous les Juifs sont réellement de la vermine,

⁵ Par exemple, cela semble être, dans l'ensemble, la position de N. Carroll, dans "Humor", in *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, J. Levinson dir., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

sont par nature pernicieuses, et par conséquent le seul fait de les mettre en circulation, de les répéter et de consentir à leur expression dans un cadre social est un brin immoral. Le simple fait de les entretenir, pour s'en amuser ou pour en amuser les autres, et ce même dans le contexte d'une fiction ou d'une histoire, peut ainsi faire douter de notre moralité, du moins dans une certaine mesure.

Je remarque que Noel Carroll conclut son essai le plus récent sur notre sujet en soutenant une position pas loin de ce que je viens d'esquisser. Il écrit

qu'il est vraisemblable de supposer que l'immoralité peut parfois compromettre l'humour d'une blague. Car une blague peut être si ouvertement et si effroyablement immorale, que pratiquement personne ne sera disposé à faire les efforts nécessaires pour apprécier ses incongruités.⁶

Mais ce que je j'affirme va plus loin que cela. J'affirme que même si certains publics se montrent disposés à faire l'effort d'entrer dans certaines blagues immorales et se trouvent ainsi capable d'en apprécier les quelques "incongruités logiques", ils peuvent en éprouver une gêne et que, si la blague exploite une sorte de pensées qu'il est préférable de ne pas avoir ou, du moins, dont le rappel n'est pas justifiable par le seul but de se divertir, cela peut entraîner une diminution de l'amusement qu'ils éprouvent.

Je ne voudrais pas qu'on croie, cependant qu'en disant cela je soutiens que nous devons nous abstenir radicalement de tout humour immoral. En tout cas, en ce qui me concerne, je ne suis pas prêt à le faire. C'est néanmoins, selon moi, de la mauvaise foi de ne pas reconnaître qu'un tel humour est immoral, même si ce n'est généralement qu'à un faible degré. En d'autres termes, au lieu de nous perdre en contorsions intellectuelles dans le seul but de blanchir cette activité trop humaine, nous devrions reconnaître que lorsque nous participons à une démonstration d'humour raciste ou sexiste – et sans doute aussi à d'autres formes d' "humour noir" – nous tombons incontestablement dans la catégorie des *plaisirs coupables*, pour lesquels il y a un prix moral à payer quand bien même on puisse considérer que les bénéfices d'une telle participation (exercer et développer son

⁶ *Id.*, p. 363

esprit, créer des connivences, affirmer son identité ou se libérer psychiquement par le rire) l'emportent parfois ou même souvent sur ce coût moral, surtout lorsque celui-ci est faible.

4.

Envisageons maintenant une manière un peu différente de montrer le caractère douteux des blagues qui nous occupent ici. Certaines blagues ne peuvent être appréciées qu'à condition que l'auditeur partage une attitude ou un sentiment avec celui qui dit la blague ou avec son énonciateur implicite. Ce sont les blagues que Ted Cohen nomme *blagues affectives*⁷. Mais beaucoup de blagues, bien que non strictement affectives en ce sens parce qu'elles ne requièrent pas de l'auditeur qu'il *partage* effectivement l'attitude en question, pourraient néanmoins être qualifiées de *quasi-affectives*, en ce que leur succès suppose ce qu'on peut nommer une *sensibilité* à certaines attitudes, même si ces dernières ne sont pas réellement celles de l'auditeur. Il s'agira alors d'attitudes qui ne sont pas vu comme *impensables* par l'auditeur – c'est-à-dire, qu'il ne les rejettera pas d'emblée, ne les exclura pas clairement, qu'il ne reculera pas devant elles comme devant quelque chose de complètement étranger – et cela semble une condition nécessaire pour que la blague produise chez lui un amusement, ou, comme on dit, qu'elle marche. Ainsi, si les attitudes auxquelles l'auditeur se montre au moins sensible, dans le sens que nous venons de préciser, sont mauvaises, il peut être moralement douteux de raconter des blagues qui requièrent ou qui exploitent une telle sensibilité, quelque drôles que ces blagues finissent par être, et il est aussi moralement douteux de les apprécier.

Je m'empresse d'ajouter une fois encore, que je ne demande pas que nous renoncions définitivement à un tel humour, ne serait-ce que parce que la moralité n'est pas tout et que, si on considère plus globalement la manière de conduire nos vies, nous ne sommes pas tenus d'être des "saints moraux". Je suggère seulement qu'il est approprié de se sentir un peu coupable de se laisser aller à un tel humour, plutôt que de nous tromper nous-mêmes en cherchant à prouver qu'un tel humour est entièrement inoffensif et à l'abri de toute critique.

⁷ T. Cohen, "Jokes", *op. cit.*

Il y a encore une autre façon de trouver quelque chose de moralement discutable, quoiqu'à des degrés variés, dans nombre des blagues dont il est ici question, ou plus précisément dans l'exposition publique de ces blagues – qu'il s'agisse de les raconter, de les échanger, ou de les écouter. C'est de considérer qu'une telle exposition publique a une force de *normalisation* à côté de laquelle il est impossible de passer. Autrement dit, l'exposition publique concourt à rendre les idées impliquées dans de telles blagues "courantes", "ordinaires" et même "banales", et donc plus aisément pensables, exprimables, voire éventuellement, acceptables. C'est donc un moyen *d'appriivoiser* leurs sujets qui fait le succès ces blagues. Et ce parce que les situations dans lesquelles les blagues s'échangent – dans la rue, dans un bar, à la maison, ou dans un café-théâtre – sont des situations amicales et sociales, cherchant à créer ou à renforcer le sentiment de communauté et la connivence. Ainsi, toute idée exprimée dans ce cadre devient d'une certaine façon un peu plus accessible, un peu plus familière, un peu plus présentable. Mais est-il vraiment souhaitable de se sentir pour ainsi dire chez soi en présence de n'importe quelle idée, quoi qu'en soit le caractère abject ?

Il est bon d'ajouter qu'un trait partagé par les plus vicieuses des blagues auxquelles je m'intéresse dans cet article, celles qui contiennent les pensées les plus pernicieuses, est qu'elles se font le plus souvent au détriment d'une cible, la plupart du temps un groupe, qui fait déjà l'objet de graves discriminations culturelle, sociales et économiques, et qui est opprimée par les forces dominante de la société à laquelle elle appartient. Etant relativement impuissants et grandement désavantagés, de tels groupes sont ainsi plus susceptibles de souffrir des conséquences imputables à la propagation de ce genre de blagues.

5.

Examinons à présent l'une des manières par laquelle Noel Carroll aborde le problème des blagues moralement choquantes, manière que je ne trouve pas convaincante. Elle apparaît dans ce que dit Carroll à propos d'une blague où il est question de viol, blague racontée par Ronald de Sousa dans un livre, et à propos de laquelle ce dernier affirme que le fait de s'en amu-

ser ou d'en rire est une preuve incontestable de sexisme⁸. La blague est la suivante :

M., une célébrité bien connue pour sa sexualité hyperactive, rend visite aux joueurs d'une équipe de hockey dans leurs vestiaires. En en sortant, elle se plaint d'avoir subi un viol collectif. C'est ce qui s'appelle prendre ses désirs pour des réalités.

Voici une interprétation plausible de cette blague : ce qui est sous-entendu, c'est que M. a eu des rapports avec certains des--voire tous les-- membres de l'équipe de hockey mais que, craignant de passer pour une nymphomane et ayant besoin d'une histoire pour discréditer d'avance le récit que les membres de l'équipe ne manqueront pas de faire de leurs exploits, elle crie au viol collectif, qui se trouve être en fait ce qu'elle aurait préféré qu'il arrivât. Comprise en ce sens, la blague sollicite et exploite au moins deux pensées carrément sexistes : tout d'abord qu'il y a quelque chose qui cloche chez une femme qui cherche ou aime trop les rapports sexuels, et ensuite que le viol est une forme de rapport sexuel comme un autre, et qui plus est une forme hautement désirable.

Cependant, dans ses commentaires sur cette blague, Carroll suggère qu'il y a plusieurs interprétations possibles d'une telle blague, parmi lesquelles une au moins est moralement innocente. Puis il en conclut qu'une réaction d'amusement ou de rire n'est pas toujours condamnable, puisque c'est seulement dans le cas d'une interprétation sexiste qu'il est mal d'avoir cette réaction. Mais cette réponse de Carroll à l'accusation de de Sousa, il est vrai excessive, n'est pas satisfaisante.

Premièrement, comme Carroll lui-même le souligne justement ailleurs, la plupart des bonnes blagues ont seulement une interprétation qui marche vraiment : celle qui, en prenant en compte tous les éléments inconvenants de la blague, produit le plus de sens – et je soutiens que c'est le cas pour la blague en question. En revanche, l'interprétation non sexiste de la blague donnée par Carroll – interprétation que je vous épargnerai ici – est plutôt tirée par les cheveux.⁹ Mais deuxièmement, et c'est plus important, même

⁸ Cf., R. de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 1987

⁹ Pour information, voici l'interprétation de Carroll : "M. était soi-disant une fameuse séductrice. C'est pourquoi j'ai d'abord pensé que la blague suggérait qu'elle avait eu des

si une lecture moralement innocente de la blague en question était concevable, il serait stupide de ne pas admettre l'existence d'une lecture sexiste plus évidente et d'ignorer le fait qu'un observateur extérieur attribuera naturellement cette lecture plus évidente à celui qui rit. Ainsi, si on rit, on finira par être, bon gré mal gré, complice du sexisme de la blague. Autrement dit, quel que soit le biais par lequel on considère raisonnablement les choses, il s'agit bien d'une blague sexiste, et s'en amuser en en faisant une lecture innocente c'est au mieux, être naïf, et, plus probablement, une démonstration de mauvaise foi.

6.

Certains théoriciens affirment que "drôle" est un terme essentiellement normatif, qui indique non pas qu'une chose a simplement le *pouvoir* ou la *capacité* de provoquer l'amusement du public approprié, mais plutôt qu'elle *mérite* cette réaction de la part de son public ou qu'elle en est *digne*. Tout en admettant que l'on puisse faire du mot "drôle" un tel usage – c'est clairement le cas lorsqu'on refuse de trouver *réellement* drôle quelque chose qui provoque pourtant l'hilarité d'un certain public, parce que c'est de mauvais goût, ou lorsqu'on répond "c'est pas drôle" à la question de savoir comment les féministes s'y prennent pour visser une ampoule – l'idée que "drôle" est fondamentalement un terme normatif me semble reposer sur une confusion entre l'*excellence* globale d'une blague, ou sa valeur en tant que tout, et sa *drôlerie*. Que la première soit normative est clair, mais que la dernière le soit aussi l'est moins. Il y a aussi en cause, peut-être, une acceptation bien trop large de ce que c'est d'être normatif.

Il est vrai que certaines blagues nous font grincer des dents et, en premier lieu les blagues immorales, ainsi que celles qui sont grossières ou dégoûtantes. Mais je soutiens que ce n'est pas parce que l'immoralité de telles blagues les *empêche* d'être drôles ou les rend nettement *moins* drôles, mais parce que, à la fois nous *voyons* qu'elles sont drôles, c'est-à-dire que nous

relations sexuelles avec l'équipe de hockey mais avait ensuite essayé de le cacher en racontant qu'elle avait été victime d'un viol collectif – ce à quoi le narrateur sceptique de la blague rétorque efficacement : "tu rêves si je pense que je vais tomber dans le panneau." L'humour venait, d'après moi, du fait de démasquer un Tartuffe." (Carroll 2003, p. 359)

comprendons la blague, et que nous *répondons* à cette drôlerie, c'est-à-dire que nous nous en amusons, même si ce n'est pas sans réserve. Ce qui nous fait grimacer c'est précisément notre propre réaction d'amusement, peut-être déplorable, mais bien réelle. Nous prenons plaisir à la blague et avons de la peine à le cacher, et même à nous le cacher, mais nous avons un peu honte de ce plaisir ou du moins nous sommes mal à l'aise de l'éprouver. Comme nous l'avons noté plus haut, le plaisir pris aux blagues immorales appartient à la catégorie générale des plaisirs coupables. L'immoralité de l'idée qui est au cœur de la blague peut bien, par des moyens qui ont déjà été exposés, diminuer ou saper sa drôlerie, c'est-à-dire son pouvoir de déclencher l'hilarité du public visé, mais sa drôlerie est directement liée à ce pouvoir, et elle ne tient pas compte du fait que ce pouvoir mérite ou ne mérite pas de s'exercer.

Berys Gaut, cependant, fait partie de ceux qui affirment nettement la normativité de la drôlerie :

le fait est que nous rions très souvent de blagues douteuses et que nous les trouvons drôles, et c'est souvent parce qu'elles sont douteuses (...) que nous les trouvons drôles. Mais, et c'est intéressant, cela ne remet pas en question ma thèse. Car ce qui est drôle n'est pas nécessairement ce que les gens trouvent drôle.¹⁰

Ce que veut dire Gaut, et ce n'est pas étonnant, c'est qu'est drôle ce qui *mérite* d'être trouvé drôle, et non pas ce qui est *effectivement* trouvé drôle.

Mais je ne suis pas d'accord. Ce qui est *trouvé* drôle par le public auquel la blague s'adresse, *est* drôle. Comparons cela aux jugements sur les couleurs, qui supposent eux aussi que certaines conditions de réception soient remplies. Si un objet donné est vert, les jugements des daltoniens ne sont pas pertinents ; seuls le sont ceux des personnes qui perçoivent les couleurs normalement. Gaut ne l'ignore pas, comme le suggère la citation suivante :

le simple fait que certaines personnes trouvent amusantes des blagues très douteuses, ne signifie pas que ces blagues sont vraiment amusantes. Non pas que des réactions d'amusement ne soient pas pertinentes pour déterminer ce qui est drôle, mais ces réactions

¹⁰ B. Gaut, *op. cit.*, p. 62

doivent être celles d'individus qui remplissent certaines conditions normatives...¹¹

On notera pourtant qu'ici la normativité supposément liée à la drôlerie n'occupe plus une position centrale dans l'analyse de Gaut et qu'il n'est plus question de ce qui *doit* amuser, ou de ce qui *mérite* d'amuser ; il est question de *caractériser* d'une manière qui est censée être irréductiblement normative, *les individus* aptes à juger de la drôlerie.

Mais que signifie caractériser de manière irréductiblement normative ? Gaut ne le dit pas. En ce qui me concerne, je ne vois pas pourquoi la caractérisation du public apte à évaluer la drôlerie d'une blague devrait nécessairement être irréductiblement normative. Je pense en revanche qu'on peut caractériser effectivement ces publics en faisant appel à des traits comportementaux, ethniques, sexuels, cognitifs, qui ne sont pas évidemment, en tant que tels, normatifs.

7.

Ainsi, je tiens à soutenir la thèse selon laquelle les blagues immorales *peuvent* être drôles, et même dans certains cas *très* drôles, mais que leur immoralité, si elle est prononcée, *diminue* généralement leur drôlerie, parce qu'une telle immoralité exerce généralement sur le public visé, une force qui inhibe l'amusement. Ainsi, si on avait affaire à deux blagues parfaitement comparables, l'une moralement choquante l'autre non, la première serait moins drôle que la seconde, parce que son immoralité agirait en inhibant l'amusement dans la plupart des publics, les gens étant, dans l'ensemble, plus ou moins moraux, et donc plus ou moins conscients des conséquences néfastes qu'il y a à répandre et donc à banaliser les idées qui sont au cœur de telles blagues.

Bien sûr, ce qui complique sérieusement le problème c'est qu'il est *quasiment impossible* de trouver deux blagues *parfaitement comparables*, car le contenu immoral d'une blague est souvent inextricablement lié à ce qui, le cas échéant, la rend drôle. Ainsi, il est chimérique de croire qu'on pourrait avoir une blague comparable à une blague immorale mais plus drôle que

¹¹ *Ibid.*

celle-ci, parce que l'idée immorale centrale en aurait été extirpée et remplacée par une autre, moralement acceptable. Nous pouvons cependant soutenir, un peu abstraitement il est vrai, qu'une blague immorale serait généralement *plus* drôle – qu'elle amuserait davantage, et sans réserve, le public qu'elle vise – *si* elle restait la même mais *sans* actualiser une idée immorale.

Mais étant donné qu'il semble presque impossible qu'une blague reste fondamentalement la même après avoir été débarrassée de son contenu immoral, il faut peut-être procéder autrement pour montrer clairement qu'une blague immorale est moins drôle du fait de son immoralité qu'elle ne le serait sans celle-ci. Plutôt que de soutenir que la blague serait plus drôle si on en extirpait le contenu immoral, il faudrait alors se contenter de dire que la drôlerie d'une blague immorale est une drôlerie *réduite* ou *imparfaite*, du fait du conflit qu'un auditeur moralement sensible éprouve lorsqu'il cède au pouvoir qu'a la blague de l'amuser, par sa malice ou son ingéniosité.

Une autre possibilité consisterait à nier que la répugnance morale qu'inspire une blague immorale aux publics un tant soit peu moraux diminue en quelque façon sa *drôlerie* en tant que telle, étant donné que la pensée immorale qu'elle abrite semble constituer le cœur même de cette drôlerie, et à affirmer à la place que ce qui est compromis par cet inévitable ingrédient immoral est *l'expérience* globale offerte par cette blague. En d'autres mots, on pourrait soutenir que cette expérience est compromise même si la drôlerie ne l'est pas, parce que le plaisir de l'amusement est accompagné d'un certain sentiment de gêne coupable à se divertir de quelque chose de si révoltant, ce dont témoigneraient les grincements de dents qui accueillent de telles blagues.

Les grincements de dents suscités par les blagues immorales, toutefois, ne devraient pas être assimilés à ceux suscités dans d'autres occasions, par exemple dans des cas impliquant une vulgarité ou une grossièreté délibérée, dont la série de films *Borat* de Sasha Baron Cohen constitue un parfait exemple. Ces derniers sont en effet sciemment présentés comme grossiers et vulgaires et les spectateurs viennent y chercher ces qualités en toute connaissance de cause, dans le but de goûter jusqu'à un certain point ces grincement de dents attendus, le tout reposant sur des mécanismes psychologiques que nous laisserons ici de côté. De telles représentations ne

contiennent aucune idée pernicieuse en leur fond, et les quelques idées de ce genre qu'elles pourraient contenir ne tendent aucunement à venir se loger confortablement dans notre esprit, étant donné que les représentations en question ne semblent leur concéder aucune part de vérité ou de plausibilité, qu'on y assiste ou qu'on y prenne part. La répugnance inspirée par les blagues immorales est d'une toute autre nature que la très prévisible répugnance inspirée par une grossièreté et une vulgarité sans vergogne, et cette différence se laisse voir dans la possibilité pour quiconque aime ça de prendre un plaisir sans réserve à la seconde, mais pas à la première.

8.

J'ai soutenu que certaines blagues sont à la fois immorales et, au moins dans une certaine mesure, amusantes – et sont ainsi amusantes bien qu'étant immorales. Certains ont été tentés de rejeter cette conclusion et ont ainsi suggéré que les blagues en question peuvent être rachetées, pour peu que l'on ait le bon type d'énonciateur, la bonne façon de les raconter, et le bon public au bon endroit. Ainsi, la blague, en tant que type, ne serait pas en tant que telle immorale. Mais je suis loin d'être convaincu par cette piste.

Je ne nierai pas que, *en un certain sens*, il puisse y avoir certaines occasions dans lesquelles certaines occurrences du type de blague dont j'ai traité ici parviennent à échapper à l'accusation d'immoralité. Pour certaines de ces blagues, on trouvera probablement des énonciateurs dont l'identité, la position narrative, la façon de raconter, les gestes accompagnant l'histoire ou le contexte de présentation suffiront à neutraliser, contrer ou inverser le contenu pernicieux de la blague, de telle sorte que le solde net qui en résultera ne sera ni une lamentable banalisation de la pensée pernicieuse en question, ni une tendance accrue à y penser sans répulsion, ni une plus grande tolérance à sa mention en publique, mais plutôt quelque chose de moralement positif ou neutre.

Mais en dépit de ces concessions, je voudrais soulever deux points. Le premier est qu'une instance ou un exemple *standard* de cette blague sera tout de même immoral dans le sens où je l'ai entendu, ce qui constitue une raison de considérer la blague entendue comme *type* comme fondamentalement immorale. Le second est que changer de contexte et de but et

raconter de façon critique, ironique, ou en l'accompagnant d'un clin d'œil, une blague du genre qui m'intéresse consiste moins à la raconter et à la répéter qu'à la transformer en une blague *différente*, qui constitue une *appropriation* et une *subversion* de la blague d'origine. Et c'est pourquoi j'ai nuancé la concession ci-dessus en précisant "en un certain sens" : les cas en questions ne constituent pas de véritables *instances* ou *exemplaires* de la blague, mais bien plutôt des occasions dans lesquelles la blague est utilisée comme *matériau de base* dans la création d'une blague ou manifestation d'humour *distincte*, dans laquelle la blague d'origine est retournée contre elle-même. Ça ne change en rien que le récit ou le répétition *standard* d'une telle blague reste dans une mesure immorale bien que drôle.

9.

Une des conséquences de la discussion ci-dessus est que la *valeur globale* en tant que blague des blagues immorales, qui est distincte de leur *drôlerie*, est généralement diminuée, d'une façon ou d'une autre, par l'immoralité qu'elles impliquent inévitablement. Car le fait qu'une blague soit *plus drôle* qu'une autre ne suffit pas à établir que la première est, dans l'ensemble et en tant que blague, *meilleure* que la seconde. Et cela parce que la valeur d'une blague en tant que blague ne se réduit pas à sa drôlerie *per se*, même si, bien sûr, la drôlerie constitue l'essentiel de cette valeur.

Quand nous considérons globalement la valeur d'une blague en tant que blague, et que nous gardons à l'esprit qu'une blague est une forme de pensée, un mode d'expression, peut-être même une œuvre d'art en miniature, comme certains écrits sur l'humour l'ont suggéré¹², il n'est pas difficile d'admettre que la drôlerie *per se* est seulement un des éléments de cette valeur globale. Par conséquent, même si l'immoralité patente du contenu d'une blague ne diminuait pas sa *drôlerie* par le mécanisme que j'ai suggéré, elle réduirait quand même sa valeur globale en tant que création *quasi-artistique*, parce qu'elle flatte nos faiblesses et ne reflète pas ce qu'il y a de meilleur en nous.

Ainsi les blagues immorales drôles ne sont certainement pas des réalisations artistiques exemplaires. Mais cela ne change rien au fait que la plu-

¹² Cf. par exemple T. Cohen, *op. cit.*

part d'entre nous ont tout de même besoin, de temps en temps, d'une dose de ces blagues, bien qu'elles soient artistiquement imparfaites et que rien ne puisse les racheter. Car nous ne sommes pas, pour la majorité d'entre nous, des êtres entièrement moraux, et nous ferions mieux de l'admettre. Car accepter honnêtement les relations que nous entretenons avec certaines formes douteuses d'humour ne peut que nous faire du bien : nous pourrions bien finir par y trouver le sommeil du juste.¹³

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¹³ A l'origine, cet article était suivi d'un Appendice contenant un échantillon de deux types de blague : d'un côté les blagues que je jugeais "limite" sans pour autant constituer une atteinte à la morale, de l'autre les blagues qui dépassaient clairement les bornes et que je jugeais moralement offensantes. Mais j'ai bien dû finir par reconnaître qu'il me fallait omettre cette Appendice, étant donné que, pour peu qu'ait été correcte la thèse avancée dans cet article, il aurait été moralement douteux de participer à la circulation des blagues du deuxième type, même à des fins universitaires.

Cependant, il m'est possible de fournir un exemple du type de blagues dont je traite dans cet article en me contentant d'en répéter une qui a déjà été largement diffusée, pour le meilleur ou pour le pire, par l'ouvrage de Ted Cohen intitulé *Jokes*. La voici :

Q : Comment faire pour empêcher un groupe de noirs de violer une femme ?

A : On leur lance un ballon de basket.

C'est déjà plus qu'il n'en faut, et j'espère que le lecteur me croira sur parole si je lui dis qu'on en trouve de bien pires, moralement parlant, parmi lesquelles celles de la liste que j'ai supprimée.

Perceiving Digital Interactivity — Applying Kendall Walton’s ‘Categories of Art’ to Computer Art

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, it is my aim to explore the relatively young art category called Computer Art. To do this, I will apply Kendall Walton’s formative essay, ‘Categories of art’¹, which will aid in analysing the perceptual features of works belonging to the category of Computer Art. First, I will summarise Walton’s key ideas, from which my interpretation is broadly devised from Brian Laetz’s critical commentary. Second, I will describe two typical examples of Computer Art, to consider its features, and if the category ‘Computer Art’ emphasises their aesthetic features. Finally, I will answer whether or not Computer Art is a Waltonian category of art and address the implications of this.

1. Categories of Art

Categories of art are important, Walton claims, because our aesthetic judgements are broadly influenced by the category we are judging within. In this respect, our judgements are dependent on the perceived category; the artwork in question will be perceived as having certain values, depending on that perceived category. If we look at a work of art within one category, its properties might seem different than if we perceive it within another. By this claim, the aesthetic properties of an artwork are mutable. This is not, however, an implication that an artwork does not have a correct category... In fact, Walton’s, ‘Categories of Art’, sets a framework for perceiving correct categories. But first, what, according to Walton, is an art category?

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¹ Walton, K. L. (1970). Categories of art. *The philosophical review*. pp.334–367.

Categories of art are groups that are perceptually discernable, meaning, the artwork must have perceptual features that are distinguishable, and can be perceived as belonging to that category. A perceptually distinguishable category, that Walton regularly refers to in his essay, is ‘painting’. Paintings are readily recognized because its artworks are typically stationary, flat, and with a painted surface. There are also sub-categories that can be perceptually distinguished from this broader one such as abstract painting or impressionist painting, etc. These perceptually distinguishable categories do not require background information or expertise to be perceived as such. Brian Laetz suggests then, that categories such as forgeries or fakes would not qualify as “Waltonian” because these works are not readily distinguishable (from their forged originals).² This would also indicate, as Walton claims, that ‘Rembrandt paintings’ is not a category of art but ‘paintings in the style of Rembrandt’ is.

The properties or features of the work that are perceptually distinguishable are either standard, variable or contra-standard, to the category you are perceiving it within.

Standard features are features relative to a category “just in case it is among those in virtue of which works in that category belong to that category” (Walton, 1970). Walton’s own example, again, is the category of ‘painting’. If an object is perceptually distinguished as a painting, its flatness and immobility would not be surprising features because they are standard within painting.

Variable features have nothing to do with features that qualify it for that category, whether the features are present or absent. So, with a painting it would not matter whether an Impressionist painter used blue or green pigment to render a patch of grass; in this case, the colour makes no difference to its being perceived within “Impressionism”. As I stated earlier, all features, including variable features, are relative to the category you perceive it as belonging to. Though colour is a variable feature within some categories of painting, in a category of ‘painting-in-the-style-of-Picasso’s-blue-period’, the colour blue might appear standard, not variable.

Contra-standard features are defined as “the absence of a Standard fea-

² Laetz, B. (2010). Kendall Walton’s ‘Categories of Art’: A Critical Commentary. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 50(3). Pp. 287-306.

ture with respect to that category - that is, a feature whose presence tends to *disqualify* works as members of that category". Again, within the category of painting, mobility or three-dimensionality might seem contra-standard. Sometimes, if a contra-standard feature becomes standard, a new category will emerge over time. The contra-standard feature will then be seen as standard. So, paintings with objects fixed to the surface became more readily distinguished as mixed media, assemblage, collage, and the like. Within those categories, any degree of three-dimensionality would seem standard and flatness would, perhaps, appear contra-standard.

Rauschenberg's *Bed* (1955), for example, can be perceived as having both depth *and* lacking depth. Their standard and contra standard properties are dependent on the work's perceived category. If *Bed* appears to either of these features, depth or flatness, both are correct perceptions because, Walton states that, artworks belong within many categories. One criteria that determines the correct category is the one that exploits the aesthetic character of the work. So, while *Bed* might seem sculpture-like to some, sculpture is not the correct category because its depth is not activated within this category—in fact, as a sculpture, it would appear flat and maybe static. Though there are reasons a viewer might perceive it within sculpture, it's not the *best*-suited category. We know this because the work is failing, to some degree. According to Walton, there are five general rules that can indicate the best category.

The correct category is usually one that:

- (a) has the least amount of contra-standard features and has the most number of standard features;
- (b) that work is better within that category;
- (c) is most recognized by society;
- (d) was intended by the artist;
- (e) sometimes can be discerned by the mechanical process used.

A viewer will not use these five rules to determine a category because he or she will have already perceived an object within a certain category. These guidelines do, however, indicate the correct category because the category that includes these five guidelines will typically highlight a work's aesthetic

properties, as a natural consequence of perception, more than other categories.³ For Walton, this is something a viewer can perceptually discern.

2. The Perceptual Features of Computer Art

I am interested in the above with respect to Computer Art, as defined by Dominic Lopes. The proliferation of digital systems within the arts makes it a critical category to analyse; however, before applying Walton's theory to Computer Art, I should first defend my reasons for analysing Computer Art, opposed to other categories associated with technology.

The challenge with digital works is in part due to the nomenclature involved. 'Digital Art' is an umbrella term that signifies a wide array of styles and methods of art production and display.⁴ Its inclusion in art history and philosophy texts has taken on many different forms and meanings. For this reason, the inclusive phrase 'New Media' has often been referenced but it is problematic since the term ambiguously refers to a wide range of possible media used in a given work. 'Systems Art' was coined in the 1960s because of cybernetics' influence on art, a term used within the field of engineering to describe a closed loop system, which was then applied to many social artworks involving a control source and communication.⁵ This too grew to include any art process having a systematic approach, including non-digital painters like Frank Stella. 'Digital Art' is misleading as well because digital technologies can be utilized as a means of production or as a medium within the traditional categories of sculpture, photography, film, drawing, etc. Lopes claims that digital art is an art kind but it is not an *appreciative* art kind.⁶ *Non-appreciative* art kinds can be any grouping based on similar characteristics. Art kinds such as paintings organised by the date they were created, songs whose lyrics have the word 'seventeen' in them, or films directed by a single person can all be useful categories to use for analysis. However, with these art kinds, the appreciative art kind

³ Ibid. pp.296.

⁴ Paul, C. (2008). *New media in the white cube and beyond: Curatorial models for digital art*. University of California Press. pp.53.

⁵ Ibid. pp.19.

⁶ Lopes, D. (2009). *A philosophy of computer art*. Routledge. pp.17.

is painting, music and film, respectively. Lopes claims that the digital medium is similar to acrylic paint in the sense that acrylics did not create a new appreciative art kind, rather, paint did.⁷ Instead, digital works are better suited within subcategories under their traditional parent categories, therefore, digital films belong to the broader appreciative art kind of 'film', digital photographs belong to the appreciative art kind of 'photography', 'digital installations', and so on.⁸ If digital works belong within other categories, then I agree that the *computer* is responsible for the appreciative art kind and, therefore, computer art is worthy of the 'Walton treatment'.

Defining the computer and its basic ontology is not necessary for Walton's process of categorisation but integral to determining those features which are perceivable in Computer Art. A computer is simply anything that runs a calculation, or computational process. According to Lopes, this needs fleshing out or, by this definition, the human brain would qualify as a computer, which would falsely lead to placing some works like Conceptual art, literary works, and musical compositions into the category of Computer Art.⁹ A distinctive requirement of Computer Art is that a computational process must follow a set of prescribed rules to generate the perceivable features of the artwork (its output).¹⁰ A device is needed to input information and a display is needed for that system's output, be it an image, text, sound, etc. The input and output must relate in such a way that the input (by a user or viewer) causes the output; this relationship is known as a transfer function. For my argument here, this excludes analogue works or works whereby the human brain acts as a computer.

Interactive Computer Art is a recent art category. However, Lopes developed the conditions of Computer Art under his definition of an appreciative art kind:

a kind is an appreciative art kind just in case we normally appreciate a work in the kind by comparison with arbitrarily any other works in that kind.¹¹

⁷ Ibid. pp.19.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 18-19.

⁹ Ibid. pp.16-19.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 29-35.

¹¹ Ibid. pp.17.

For Walton, the perceived features of a work are the indicators for the category that it will be perceived within. Comparison classes are also used to perceive a work of art within Walton's definition because we see a work as belonging to a certain category, or comparison class, because we see certain features as standard. Consequently, the burden of proof as to whether or not Computer Art is a bona fide *Waltonian* category rests on its features being perceptually distinguishable.

Lopes definition claims that, an item is a computer artwork just in case:

- (1) it's art, (2) it's run on a computer, (3) it's interactive, and (4) it's interactive because it's run on a computer.

This final condition is important to my research here. Let's consider two prototypical works of Computer Art to analyse.

Dear Esther, developed by The Chinese Room, sometimes labelled as a game and sometimes as a work of literature, allows users to navigate through environments and create different narratives on the computer. According to its description on the website,

"*Dear Esther* is a ghost story, told using first-person gaming technologies. Rather than traditional game-play the focus here is on exploration, uncovering the mystery of the island, of who you are and why you are here. Fragments of the story are randomly uncovered when exploring the various locations of the island, making each journey a unique experience."¹²

The next example is, *Looking at a Horse*, created in 2013 by Evan Boehm:

"You walk into a dark room and projected on the wall in front of you is a frenzied mass of dots. A friend walks in and the dots are connected by a wireframe body-the thing you're watching, you realize, is a galloping horse. As more viewers trickle in, the horse continues to evolve, adding polygonal musculature and a shimmering skin. Eventually, when enough people are watching, the beast transcends its earthly form and transforms into some other ghostly, ethereal thing entirely. Then, as people filter out of the room, it goes through the

¹² http://dear-esther.com/?page_id=2

same process in reverse, dissolving back to the elemental cloud of points.”¹³

Computer Art includes vastly different styles and kinds and this is obviously a limited list. I chose these two examples because, broadly speaking, Computer Art are works that are either run directly on a recognizable computer system (usually videogames or those like *Dear Esther*) or those in gallery spaces that do not usually include obvious systems for the user to interact with (such as *Looking at a Horse*). Though I am sure there are exceptions that could be mentioned in the following analysis, it will be as inclusive to all works of Computer Art as possible.

A typical feature that seems standard in many categories is the medium used (e.g. paint, bronze, wood, etc.). This is more complicated with Computer Art because not all of these works, as with the earlier examples, use a literal monitor, mouse, and keyboard. For works like *Dear Esther*, the computational device would be seen as standard. The absence of a perceivable device might seem contra-standard with *Looking at a Horse*. Furthermore, the digital medium (or the code) is not perceived in the same way that paint or marble or wood are perceived. In the case of digital systems, the code is one thing and its instantiations, or the perceived features, are another. Though the disguised medium is a particular feature of Computer Art, it is not necessarily contrary to its effects being perceivable. The one feature that all of these works have in common, because of the computational device, is interactivity. According to Lopes’ definition of Computer Art, it is a condition of this category that the works be interactive. In fact, Lopes considers the interactivity in Computer art as a medium.¹⁴ (For this paper, I am happy to consider interactivity as a medium of Computer Art). Margaret Boden claims something similar and stresses the valuable difference between various interactive works. She states:

In computer-based interactive art, the aesthetic interest is not only, or not even primarily, in the intrinsic quality of the results (images

¹³ <http://www.creativeapplications.net/openframeworks/looking-at-a-horse-by-evan-boehm/>.

¹⁴ Atencia-Linares, P. (2011). Pictures, Bytes and Values: An Interview with Dominic McIver Lopes. *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics*, 8(2).

and sounds). Rather, it is in the nature of the interaction between computer and human beings.¹⁵

The interactivity in each comes from the transfer function of the digital system. A device is needed for the user to input information and another device is needed for an output, or number of outputs. *Dear Esther* is interactive because it requires a user to interact with a digital system to instantiate the work itself. *Looking at a Horse* is interactive because the viewer is also needed to instantiate different successive states of the work. Though a typical monitor and mouse are not used for the interaction, a sensor or counter receives the input from the person entering the gallery space and a transfer function generates different stages of a horse, or its outputs.

If interactivity is a standard feature in each of these works, *how* they are interactive is variable. Again, variable features do not pose challenges because they do not prevent a work from being perceived within a category. A variable feature of interest to interactivity is the type of system that creates the results of the interaction. Digital systems have the potential for interactivity via either deterministic or stochastic systems. Works of Computer Art will be deterministic in the way they are programmed but have the potential to *appear* as deterministic or stochastic. Arguably, these terms are superfluous to Walton's conditions, however, since a general understanding of the computer is still new to the arts, a brief background may lead to a more accurate recognition of interactivity as a perceivable feature. Deterministic systems have set and predictable outcomes and stochastic systems have known possible inputs but the outputs are random. For example, a car has gas and brake pedals. There are two possible inputs— to accelerate or brake. Assuming the car works properly, if you press the accelerator, the vehicle will always speed up. If you press the brake, the vehicle will always slow to a stop. That is a deterministic example with a known outcome, dependent on the input. An example of stochastic interactivity is the popular arcade game, *Whack-A-Mole*. The user stands in front of a cabinet, the top of which is covered in holes, with the goal of hitting a mole with a mallet, each time it pops up. Once the user whacks the mole on the head (the input), the mole will pop-up again (its output) but in a random fashion. There is no determining where it will pop out.

¹⁵ Boden, M. A. (2009). Computer models of creativity. *AI Magazine*, 30(3), pp.23.

As just described, deterministic or stochastic systems are not an interactive feature exclusive to Computer Art but, one appearance or the other, is a required feature (for Lopes' condition of Computer Art). In some cases, it is possible for a user to perceive whether the interactivity is perceptually deterministic or stochastic, however, and more importantly, general interactivity would certainly be perceivable. Other variable features could include the range of sounds, sights and instances of the work. Like interactivity, they could take on different forms and it would not be dependent on the perceived category of Computer Art.

Before moving on to an analysis of these features, it seems appropriate to mention at least one contra-standard within the category of Computer Art. In most categories of art 'distance' serves as an important characteristic. Distance between an object and viewer allows time and space for the viewer to contemplate and appreciate the work. Interactivity requires a certain immediacy in a user's response to the artwork, meaning that computer art leaves very little time for the viewer to reflect. This poses a serious problem for some philosophers and, in fact, disqualifies some works that have been generated from the computer as 'art', however, assuming Lopes' condition that Computer Art is an appreciative art kind, a lack of distance is an important feature to consider, particularly as it relates to interactivity. While the transfer function guarantees there will be some loss of distance between the viewer and the artwork, an increased distance might render an artwork to be perceived as Computer Art but with features that resemble works from other categories, such as, a tableau, installation, video and so on. *Looking at a Horse* responds immediately to the people in the room. However, while the responses are immediate, the lack of perceivable tech-looking input devices would be disconcerting, in a contra-standard sense.

3. Implications

So, is Computer Art a category of art in a Waltonian sense? Walton suggests the category must have members whose features are perceptually distinguishable.¹⁶ Certainly, a computer (with a monitor, mouse, keyboard)

¹⁶ Thank you to Aaron Meskin for pointing out that a loose reading of Walton does

is perceptually distinguishable. However, with the above examples, only *Dear Esther* utilises a perceptually distinguishable device. *Looking at a Horse* does not have any perceivable devices, save for the video screen.

Similarly, though *Dear Esther* is run on a computer, its user might perceive the work within 'literature' or 'game'. Now, according to Walton, there is not just one category a work could belong to, so there should be no problem with either categorisation. But, the correct category exploits the aesthetic character of the work more than any other category. Let's consider the guidelines that Walton framed for this. His first guideline states that the category that decreases the number of contra-standards and increases the number of standards will heighten the aesthetic value of the work's properties. For a game, *Dear Esther* lacks standard gaming features, yet, for those perceiving it within literature, the literary features can only be accessed with some traditional gameplay. For literature, it would seem incredibly open-ended and interactive. For gamers, it would seem less interactive than other games such as *Skyrim* or *Mass Effect*.

For users who prefer works like *Dear Esther*, the category 'art game' or 'interactive literature' is sometimes used, in which case, these categories both seem to fulfil guidelines one and two because they highlight the properties their given users would regard as important. Walton's third guideline states that the category that is most recognized in society is also more likely to increase the perceptual effect, than categories less recognized. 'Literature' has been firmly established as a category and 'Interactive Literature', though mostly associated with children's game books and detective stories, is also somewhat familiar. 'Interactive *Electronic Literature*' is probably less so. 'Games', including videogames, have been established in society as a popular entertainment category but less so as an art kind. In both cases, the broader categories are more established and, while they are correct categories, they do not fully exploit the unique features of *Dear Esther*. Fourthly, Walton states that the artist's intended category is more likely to be a correct category. This, too, is going to cause some challenges with *Dear Esther* because, though it was originally advertised as a game, it was created "by Dan Pinchbeck, a researcher based at the Uni-

not require such stringent requirements for perceptual properties (as with Stacy Friend and her work on fiction).

versity of Portsmouth (UK) in 2007, *as part of a project funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council to explore experimental game play and storytelling*” [italics are my own]. In this quote, we can see that the intention was for both categories. When it was first released, there was significant backlash from gamers for its minimal game-like qualities. For those interested in interactive literature, the game-like features were unfamiliar. Now, it seems to have found its niche with ‘art game’ associations, which seems to activate the perceivable features. The final guideline states that the mechanical production, or method used to make the work of art, will typically highlight a work’s important features. In the case of *Dear Esther*, the computer is the method of production and, one that suggests ‘videogame’ or ‘art game’ as the category with the most impact.

But would a user typically perceive these works as Computer Art? While they might be associated with the computer, or maybe even as Computer Art in an ontological sense, my initial thought is that they would more readily be perceived within other categories. Walton’s guidelines highlight categories that emphasise the interactive feature of these works but Computer Art does not seem to be one of the perceptual categories. To be fair, Computer Art, as a category, is relatively new. *Dear Esther* is, in one sense, an easy case because it is run on a computer. In another sense, it is a hard case because videogames are more widely appreciated by gamers. These users would not typically discern this work as Computer Art but would instead perceive its category as ‘interactive literature’ or ‘game’. Certainly, Computer Art includes a much wider range of works beyond works like *Dear Esther*. *Looking at Horse* is more typical of museum-related works but it may not be any less problematic for discerning its category as Computer Art. For one, it does not have a perceivable computer and the video screen might cause the viewer to perceive the work within film or video installation. However, its responsiveness to the user’s presence and movement is contra-standard to those categories. Instead, the viewer might intuit its category as both ‘interactive installation’ and ‘interactive video’. The fact that certain works belonging to a category are not always perceived within that category, does not mean that the category is not a legitimate (perceptually distinguishable) category. My observation is simply that Computer Art has the potential to be perceived (and operate) as ‘interactive’ forms of Waltonian categories. If perceived within

other categories such as film, literature and music, the strong degree of user control, the free-form (non-linear) narratives and optional outcomes would seem contradictory to those categories.

Walton claims that if certain features which are Contra-Standard to the perceived category become expected, or no longer disconcerting, they sometimes create new categories of their own. It could be the case that Computer Art, as that new category, will become more established in society and, at that point, it would be the perceptually distinguishable category. It might also be the case that certain works such as those described are readily perceived as 'interactive' categories, more than they are perceptually distinguished as 'Computer Art'. This research points to the significance that interactivity has within all the arts, particularly Computer Art. Though all these works could appropriately be categorised under the genre of 'interactive', in one manner or another, the categorical name loses all meaning if the categorical description ends there. It would be unfair to compare these interactive works and claim that a traditional installation is not as interactively responsive as works like *Looking at a Horse*. They are interactive in a categorically different way. So, though the works themselves can be categorized in a Waltonian sense, whether it is perceived and categorized as Computer Art, in a Waltonian sense, remains to be seen. Regardless, this importantly emphasises the significance of the interactivity within all appreciative art kinds and categories. It also emphasises the overuse of the interactive term and suggests interactivity needs further defining in order to be more informative.

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Seeing-From — Imagined Viewing and the Role of Hideouts in Theatre

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ABSTRACT. The objective of this paper is to assess in what ways the dramatic device of hideouts is capable of prompting the spectator into an awareness of what it is to be watching and / or what it is to sense being stared at. At the same time we want to consider the implications of this rather paradoxical situation of assuming that someone is invisible when everything else in theatre is designed for visualization. Also, we want to test the hypothesis that theatrical hidden characters constitute a device akin to cinematic subjective shots, leading to the question of how the experience of watching a hidden character on stage alters the theatre spectator's imagining and visualizing.

I. Introduction

This paper is included in a larger research project on the ways art spectators are sometimes called to turn their own aesthetic experience into an *experience of an experience* or rather to inquire the mode in which they are experiencing what they are experiencing. One way of achieving this which seems artistically valuable is to summon the spectator to somehow integrate her own perceptual experience into the object of that experience. Richard Wollheim's notion of the "spectator in the picture" (1987) is a way of achieving this.

Turning our attention to the performative arts we find a somewhat analogous device in the preference playwrights have for showing hidden characters on stage, surreptitiously watching what other characters are doing. Examples abound: Polonius behind the curtain (*Hamlet*), Cherubino behind the chair (*The Marriage of Figaro*), *Tartuffe* under the table (*Tartuffe*),

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Falstaff in the laundry basket, Willie digging his hole in *Oh Happy Days!*, or Oktavian in the closet (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

The objective of this paper is to assess in what ways the dramaturgic device of hideouts is capable of prompting the spectator into an awareness of what it is to be watching and / or what it is to sense being stared at. At the same time we want to consider the implications of this rather paradoxical situation of assuming that someone is invisible when everything else in theatre is designed for visualization. Also, we want to test the hypothesis that theatrical hidden characters constitute a device akin to cinematic subjective shots, leading to the question of how the experience of watching a hidden character on stage alters the theatre spectator's imagining and visualizing.

The issue may be divided into two halves. First, there's the question of considering the special empathy / sympathy that this device adds to the more common, let us say, Aristotelian way of assessing the usual ties that bind spectators and theatrical characters. Secondly, there's the issue of analyzing the particular cognitive twist – if any – that a hidden character – a character turned spectator – introduces in the way the spectator imagines her mode of visualizing the fictional events on stage.

2. To Be: Empathy / Sympathy / Proprioception

How far is the spectator (or “spectatorship”) an integral constituent of an artistic performance? One way to answer this is to pursue a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* by testing whether we can have theatre without an audience.

Paul Woodruff argues that audiences possess a constitutive role as theatre is “the art by which human beings make or find human action worth watching” (2008, 18) and requires a co-exercise of both audience and performers: “take away the audience and the watching ends. If no one is watching, it's not theater, though it may truly be a performance” (2008, 42). Well, not even a performance, added Paul Thom (1993, 172). But how intrinsic is this act of watching to the proper characterization of theatre? Is the relation of the audience to the performance somehow different in theatre than it is in other performing arts? *Theatron* in Greek literally means “a place for watching” and despite the importance of the

spoken word theatrical performance is distinctively based on the experience of visualizing human actions. But does this visualizing require a segregated audience?

As usual, philosophers differ in this respect. Some authors, like Nelson Goodman argue that as unread novels are proper novels so performative events without an audience may be properly described as genuine artistic performances (1984, 142). All that is needed is that a proper explanation of the stylistic options or ordering of events involves an assessment of the way they would affect potential – not necessarily real – spectators. Other authors, such as Paul Thom, disagree: genuine theatrical performances require a specific address towards an audience. In the end, what distinguishes artistic performance – say, from sporting events – is that they require a special kind of *attention* from the audience, an engagement, i.e., a “playful beholding”: Goodman’s analogy between performances without an audience and novels without readers cannot be sustained since – according to Thom – literature does not hold the same kind of “address” as theatre does:

“In performing, I believe myself to be referring to present persons, to whom I am in effect saying “You, attend to me” and if no one is present at the performance, there is a failure of reference. By contrast, if the novel remains unpublished (...), then there is no failure of reference because the work did not refer to anyone in the first place (...).” (1993: 192).

Against Thom, David Davies proposed a closer inspection of the notion of “intended audience” (2011, 176). Under Thom’s account, the notion implies that the performer is guided by a set of “beliefs and expectations” concerning the audience’s reactions to her actions. But this does not necessarily imply that she believes that her audience truly exists. All that is required is that the performer is able to “place her actions within a particular *explanatory space*” (2011, 176) and part of this space is constituted by “the agent’s expectations as to their reception by an intended audience” (2011, 177). But if this is true two counterintuitive consequences seem to follow: 1) the performer could be said to be her own “intended audience” and be performing to herself; 2) much of what performers do while rehearsing and preparing for actual public performances should already count as

“performance”. To solve this problem one should, again, bear in mind that to consider someone as properly performing is to place her within an “explanatory space”.

However, Thom holds yet another argument in support of his idea that an actual audience is a necessary condition for having a proper performance: “the act of performing assumes the existence of a gaze that that is making a certain demand of it, and it supplies what that demand seeks” (1993: 192). I.e., there is a causal connection between the gaze – though probably not necessarily the gaze of the spectator – and the performer’s actions. Performances change if the audience changes. Along the same lines, David Osipovich (2006) stresses the fact that audience and performers have to contend with each other in a shared space for what characterizes theatre is the conjunction of an act of showing and an act of watching.

Thom and Osipovich regard liveliness as the source of aesthetic properties that distinguish theatre from the likes of cinema or television (even live television). However, there may be works such as Trisha Brown’s famous *Roof Piece* (1971) for which no spectator is able to watch the entire performance. Thom replies “Maybe nobody saw everything that was done to produce this performance, but the performers collectively saw it” (1993, 193). Does this mean that the performers are each other “intended audience”? it seems unlikely this could be the case. Although the dancers may be a *possible audience* for this performance, they are not the “*intended audience*” whose eventual reactions shape the stylistic options of the performers. Now this is intriguing because it separates the notion of “possible audience” and “intended audience” which does not seem helpful in proving that there cannot be proper performance in the absence of an actual audience.

James Hamilton worked along the same lines as Thom and Woodruff: he agrees that the interaction between artists and audience is necessary in theatre and a distinctive trait *vis-à-vis* the other arts: “Whereas playing music and dancing commonly can have both audience and non-audience forms of practice, theatrical playing has no common non-audience form of practice” (2007: 51). Why? Because “performers shape what they do with a view to the fact that audiences will observe them. Performers are also disposed to modify what they do in response to the reactions of an observing audience” (2007: 52). In the case of theatre, the performers’ ex-

pectations of the audience's reactions include an anticipation of the various interactions between performers and audience and this is, according to Hamilton, an exclusive feature of theatre. Suzanne Jaeger describes theatre pretty much in the same spirit: "Stage presence can be defined as an active configuring and reconfiguring of one's intentional grasp in response to an environment" (2006, 122).

So, theatre seems to call for the actual existence of an attending audience because the *configuration* of the work shifts according to the interaction between stage and auditorium. But what does "attending" mean? It can simply mean the physical sharing of a space. But it should also include the fact that this audience is *predisposed* to attend to what they're watching. Attention and sensitivity to what is being shown compose the explanation philosophers usually provide when they want to describe what it is to attend an artistic performance. And part of this attention is guided by what cognitive neuroscientists call the "mirror neurons".¹ These are neurons especially abundant in the pre-motor cortex that are activated when I perform certain actions or when I observe someone else performing those very same actions. Its functioning in the latter case is quite fascinating because several brain scan data show that mirror neurons participate in the merely imagining the performing a given set of actions. Some studies show that the mere imagining performing some workout routines actually activates the muscular fibers involved in those routines. Other studies show that these neurons explain, for instance, why newborn children are capable of mimicking facial expressions without observing their own faces. Mirror neurons are a key element of what Richard Shusterman calls *proprioception*, i.e., the activity through which one is constantly obtaining information about the positions of our own bodies. By means of receptors situated in ligaments and tendons, proprioception is constantly informing the brain about the way the body is disposed.

Philosophers such as Barbara Montero are now entertaining the idea that proprioception plays a significant role in dance and other performative arts. Proprioceptive beauty would be something like a "felt property of the movement" and one which would go unnoticed if movement were to be considered only as visual property:

¹ Cf. Montero, 2006; Shusterman, 2009; Davies, 2011.

“In some cases, one might proprioceptively judge that a movement is beautiful because one knows that the movement, if seen, would look beautiful. But in other cases one might visually judge that a movement is beautiful because one knows that, if proprioceived, this movement would feel beautiful.” (2006: 236)

An immediate objection would be that proprioception seems to imply that there are aesthetic properties of some works - particularly in the case of dance - that would only be accessible to the performer. But to this Montero replies that through proprioception the spectator is able to experience proprioceptive properties of the performer's movement, which is justified by the role of mirror neurons: the neurological activity of the spectator tends to mirror the neurological activity of the performer executing a set of movements, and this is true both of dance and of theatre. Thus, both art forms share a proprioceptive awareness of the execution of that movement *and* a proprioceptive awareness of its aesthetic properties.

On an earlier essay I defended a kind of proprioception in an analysis of Pina Bausch's *Café Müller*. On her first entrance the character originally interpreted by Pina Bausch herself walks with her arms open and leaning forward. There is a sense of unbalance and lack of support. This should be understood in a straightforward gravitational sense: Pina's spectre - a distinct character that never interacts with anyone else - is evidently lacking physical support. She denotes it by the way her arms are kept open outwards and leaning forward forcing her body to advance in small steps as if performing a village dance, a clumsy convulsion that stops when she gets to the stage's wall. This, I argued, could be taken as the very physiognomy of solitude, the piece's main topic: unbalance, incompleteness, an anxious openness, the search for a physical support that is momentarily provided by the sidewall. If the viewer tries to perform this very gesture something of a generative nature occurs. Imagine you're standing in this position; imagine you're facing the same unbalance and compulsion forward, the same kinaesthetic need for physical support. There is no mediation there, just an automatic empathy. The very feeling of loneliness is triggered by this kind of behavior.

There are at least 3 important objections to this extension of current findings in neuroscience to the performing arts that may disrupt this path

of analysis: 1) Visuo-motor mirror neurons have been exemplified in monkeys but not in humans. What has been exemplified in humans is the mirroring between engaging in a given activity and imagining that one is engaging in that activity. 2) Mirror neuronal activity has been confirmed, in monkeys, for movements of the face and arms. But nothing has been proved regarding leg movements, which may be a problem for sustaining that there are proprioceptive aesthetic properties in dance. 3) Philosophers such as Montero and Shusterman assume that mirror neurons provide not only proprioceptive *information* but proprioceptive *awareness*. This is fundamental if one wants to defend that it is possible to acquire a “third-person knowledge of proprioceptive aesthetic qualities” as Montero puts it. When watching someone else performing an action I am proprioceptively aware of how it feels to perform such an action. But experimental data is not sufficient to sustain this connection between mirror neuronal activity and awareness.

Nevertheless, and all things considered, there seems to be no reason against adopting a rather moderate notion of proprioception applicable to the particular case of watching other people watching. And if we do, then we should consider the particular kind of perception pertaining to theatre. Bence Nanay (2006) has suggested that there are three different kinds of perception. *Action-oriented perception* which is “seeing the possibility of action in the stimulus” even when “the agent only perceives the possibility of action; the action itself is not performed” (2006: 246). Action-oriented perception is – contrary to more traditional views – our primary form of perception. When perception is not action-oriented then we have “*detached perception*”. When we watch a theatre play we are engaged with the way some characters afford actions for other characters. In the example given by Nanay, Mack the Knife is in prison and without any chance to escape until the entrance of Lucy, the police captain’s daughter. Upon her entrance, inevitably the audience perceives Lucy as the facilitator of a course of action for Mack and their “perceptual experience depends counterfactually on the very complex action Mack is inclined to perform with Lucy” (2006: 249). Thus, *theatrical perception* becomes a kind of third way between detached and action-oriented perceptions. It is more detached than action-oriented perception since it is the character’s life and not our own which is at stake and it is more action-oriented than detached per-

ception since we perceive the space of performance as containing actions.

This mixed kind of perception provides a basis for reassessing the *veraxata questio* of “identification” in theatre. As Murray Smith put it, we are supposed to “imagine ‘from the inside’ the character’s experience” (1997, 412). Kendall Walton described this as involving “imagining oneself in the shoes of the person identified with” (1990, 255); Gregory Currie suggested that within the primary imagining of construction the fictional world one is often led to a “secondary imagining”, i.e., a “process of empathetic reenactment of the character’s imagination” (1995, 153) and Richard Wollheim considered the idea of “centrally imagining”, i.e., to “imagine, or visualize, one event (...) from the standpoint of one of the participants” as opposed to “imagine the event from no one’s standpoint” (1974, 187).

They all seem to agree on the same: when I centrally imagine a theatre character I imagine having her perceptual experience but the exact extent and phenomenology of this emulation constitute a very tricky subject. Proprioceptive identification, i.e., “central imagining”, seems similar to action-oriented perception. Theatre and staging provide us with a prepared way to shuttle back and forth between central and a-central imagining, between action-oriented and detached perception. And accordingly hiding characters in the setting is precisely one way of prompting the spectator towards the recognition of motor actions, starting off with the way characters preserve or divert this tension between being visible and invisible.

Naturally, skepticism regarding the possibility of an emotional identification with fictional characters – empathy – could easily be transposed against the possibility of perceptual identification. Noël Carroll’s skepticism, for instance, is directed against explaining the ties that bind characters and audience through different versions of simulation theory. Carroll’s objections could easily be used against any suggestion of “central imagining” and his suggestion that “sympathy” is a better candidate for explaining the relation between characters and audience works against the function I’ve been attributing to theatrical “hideouts”. “Sympathy” is something we direct at other people not an emotional state that I can feel for myself; it is “a non-passing pro-attitude towards someone else” (2005, 303). Certainly, if sympathy constitutes the core of our relationship with fictional characters and if this implies that our emotional reactions

are quite different from the emotional states suffered by the fictional characters that are being targeted by our sympathy, the same could be said of perceptual identification. However, even a skeptic like Carroll is willing to give proprioception a distinct role when it comes to explaining the connection between fictional characters and audience. Mirror reflections – i.e., the way we are biologically conditioned to produce fac-similes of our respondent facial and bodily expression also play an important role here: “watching a video of Riverdance, the audience stomp their feet, surrendering to a simulacrum of the dancers vigorous pounding” (2005, 311). The importance of this mirroring is twofold. On the one hand, it keeps us on a high level of excitement and reinforces our concentration on the work; on the other hand, through this muscular mimicking the spectator derives useful information that will reinforce her connection with the character. For instance, mimicking an actor or dancer’s posture and following a kind of down-top nervous path, one may gain access to the actor or dancer’s state of mind – thus contributing to an inner comprehension of the character’s psychology.

But isn’t this also a kind of empathy? Through this biologically driven process of emulation aren’t we in fact being induced towards a kind of kinesthetic “central imagining”?

3. To See: Imagined Visualization

I want to suggest that the presence of a “spectator-actor” on stage works as a sort of proxy for the actual audience and that this fact prompts the audience to imagine seeing the scene from that particular vantage point. Now, the question of how viewers may or may not adopt different vantage points and thus be able to “visualize” from where they are not is a much discussed topic on philosophy of film (not so much, for obvious reasons, in philosophy of theatre). Hence it is probably useful to take a closer look at the different accounts of what movie viewers imagine is the mode in which they see what they are seeing. In other words, what is it that viewers imagine about the way they came to see what they’re seeing.

Two related theories of imagined visualization seem particularly relevant in this context: the Fictional Showing Hypothesis (FSH) and the

Imagined Seeing Thesis (IST).²

A. Fictional Showing Hypothesis: Face-to-Face Viewing

Endorsed, among others, by Jerrold Levinson (1996), FSH sustains that (almost) any showing of a fictional scene or story involves a fictional showing [by a putative or implied agent] of the represented elements:

“The presenter in a film presents, or gives perceptual access to, the story’s sights and sounds; the presenter in film is thus, in part, a sort of *perceptual enabler*. *Such perceptual enabling is what we implicitly posit to explain how it is we are*, even imaginarily, *perceiving* what we are perceiving of the story, in the manner and order in which we are perceiving it. The notion of a presenter (...) is *simply the best default assumption* available for how we make sense of narrative fiction film.”
(1996, 252; italics are mine)

George Wilson has reworked Levinson’s arguments and transformed them into what he called the “face-to-face” version of FSH. What this means is that the viewer is led to believe that she has been fictionally placed in front of the scene presented. Now, of course it is *not fictional* in the work that the viewer occupies such a position, which would correspond to a narrative twist similar to that of Manet’s paintings, as suggested by Wollheim (1987). It is only fictional that the “viewer’s imaginative perceptual engagement” with the film is that by which the scene is being offered.

Notice that the theatrical hideout posits a different kind – a stronger version, perhaps – of “perceptual enabler”: it is indeed fictional in the work that someone is occupying a hidden position. And if *proprioception* and *explanatory space* hold some explicative traction, then the fact that there is a hidden spectator on stage affects the other performer’s creative options and the spectator’s awareness of the space as well as her awareness of the integration of the *sense of being stared at* in the fictional world. If, as in Manet’s or Friedrich’s paintings, the act of observing and the corresponding sense of being observed become the artistic topic, then:

- (a) There is exemplification of spectatorship through the inclusion of the hidden character;

² Cf. Wilson, 2011.

- (b) There is a fictional reference to the spectator's privileged position vis-à-vis the scene (unobserved observer);
- (c) The performance provides a proprioceptive imagining of occupying that position;
- (d) Establishes a kind of self-reflexivity by making the spectator proprioceptively aware of what it is to be an observer but also of the condition of being observed;
- (e) Affects the performers' "explanatory space".

Now, for this to happen one has to consider that when the spectator proprioceptively imagines that she is seeing the scene from the hidden character's perspective, she also proprioceptively imagines being at that hideout. But is this a reasonable assumption?

This shift from *imagine seeing* to *imagine being* is indeed what authors such as Carroll and Currie think is definitely wrong with FSH. When someone is actually watching a scene from a certain visual perspective she is located in a position which offers that perspective. But it doesn't follow from that that when someone *imagines* seeing a scene from a given perspective she also *imagines* being at a place that offers that perspective:

"Do I really identify my visual system, in imagination, with the camera, and imagine myself to be placed where the camera is? Do I imagine myself on the battlefield, mysteriously immune to the violence around me, lying next to the lovers, somehow invisible to them, viewing Earth from deep space one minute, watching the dinner guests from the ceiling the next?" (Currie, 1995, 171)

Currie goes one step further and argues that no version of FSH is correct for it is impossible to fictionally provide perceptual access to the picture viewers:

"To *see* is to see from a point of view: there is no such thing as *non-perspectival seeing*. You cannot imagine, of a certain scene presented to you on screen, that you are seeing it, but not that you are seeing it from any point of view. To imagine seeing it is to imagine seeing it from the point of view defined by the perspectival structure of the picture." (Currie, 1995: 178).

But this does not seem right. Surely it seems plausible that there is a distinction – often not attended to – between saying

- (i) In viewing film A, I imagine *being situated at P* and seeing X from that position

which is what people would colloquially say - and saying

- (ii) In viewing film A, I imagine seeing X from the visual perspective one would have *if* one were situated at P.

which is what people imply when they say that they are imagining seeing X from position P.

George Wilson insists – against Currie and Carroll – that the apparently counterintuitive concept of “nonperspectival seeing” or “visual experience from an unoccupied perspective” is indeed quite plausible. The basis for his argumentation is that normally the question of the *source* or *arché* that explains our visual imaginings is *left indeterminate* in our imaginings. In particular, when I imagine watching X from an unoccupied position, I do *not* imagine that I am *not* at that position and “I do not imagine anything about the causes and conditions of my having the relevant visual experience – it is *imaginatively indeterminate* how this came about.” (2011: 41). Thus, film – as representational painting – can guide our visual imaginings “without establishing much of anything about the causal conditions of the imagined experience” (ibid.).

But, of course, sometimes those conditions are established. Narrative and visual cues normally prescribe to the viewer the proper viewing protocol. In watching a film about voyeurism and gaze – such as Alain Guiraudie’s *L’inconnu du lac* – spectators are readily commanded to adopt a proper mode of visualization. Sometimes – particularly when we are instructed to imagine seeing X following the gaze of character C – something like a FSH watching mode is activated with important cognitive consequences: attention to the possibility of that camera angle being disrupted by a different character emerging from behind the gaze or apprehension for the possibility that the watched murderer suddenly looks directly into the camera. *Mutatis mutandis*, painting also adopts specific strategies for prescribing the viewer with a mode of imagining and to lead the viewer

to imaginatively place herself at a given vantage point in the picture. The “internal spectators” in paintings by Manet or Friedrich are among such strategies³ and if our initial hypothesis is true than this would also be true in the case of theatrical hideouts.

However, two facts remain – according to Wilson – (a) that it is quite different to imagine seeing a scene from a visual perspective and to imagine seeing a scene from the picture’s specific vantage point, and (b) that for the most part it is indeterminate for art viewers what, if anything, permits them to view the artistic objects. In other words, we can have imagined seeing without assuming a fictional showing – the *showing* is not an element of our imagining.

B. Imagined Seeing Thesis: Mediated Viewing

“Fictional showing” is what the movie images allegedly try to achieve and “imagined seeing” is the viewer’s proper reaction to those images.

Of course most films are comprised of shots of actors in real places, and one could introduce here the distinction between “picture shots” of actual events and objects and “movie story shots” of fictional characters and behaviours. Movie story shots have the role of “making it fictional in the movie that P” so that “fictionally for the viewer, it is as if the scene S actually took place, there are motion picture shots of S, and the movie story shot X, as it occurs in the movie, is one of these” (Wilson, 2011: 45). Adding to this Kendall Walton’s Transparency Theory of photographs, Wilson comes up with a Mediated Version of FSH:

“When a viewer sees a movie story shot of a fictional scene S, then it is thereby fictional for the viewer of the movie that she is actually seeing S by means of a motion picture shot” (Wilson, 2011: 46)

To Currie, this would entail that viewers were to imagine that it is fictional that a camera was present at the scene, which is obviously absurd. Wilson’s reply follows the same kind of argument as before: in the real world it is obvious that the only justification for producing shots of a scene is to posit

³ One could consider also whether *trompe l’oeil* pictures, particularly those based on anamorphosis, are among these strategies. Spectators of Andrea del Pozzo’s massive frescoes are literally required to assume a vantage point position.

the fact that a camera was actually present at the scene. However, when imagining that there is a motion picture shot of a scene, spectators are not commanded to think that this was obtained through “real world means” (2011: 46). Its source remains largely indeterminate and spectators do not speculate about how that movie story shot of S came to existence. They are “naturally iconic images”, i.e., shots that do not directly implicate the property of “being made by a particular kind of picture-generating device” (2011: 47).

Noël Carroll also argued against the concept of “seeing imaginarily”: “Spectators see cinematographic images on screen which they use to imagine what is fictionally the case. (...) They do not imagine seeing the event...” (2006: 184). Wilson objects that a proper account of the phenomenology of experiencing fictions in film must be able to distinguish between what we fictionally see and don’t see. Consider the case of the murder sequence in Fritz Lang’s *M*. Viewers *see* the murderer meeting the little girl and purchasing her a balloon, then they *see* the balloon floating adrift and they infer that the girl was murdered. In Carroll’s account, all three events are on a par since we are deterred from saying that we *see* the first two episodes and imagine the third (they are all imagined).

Moreover, it should be remembered here that according to Wilson’s Modest Version of IST, to defend that viewers imagine seeing does not entail that viewers imagine being there within the fictional space. In fact, it is indeed very rare that movie viewers project themselves into the fictional space they are watching. The same is true for radio theatre. Listeners acknowledge the existence of an “auditory perspectival structure” (2011: 83) but this does not mean that they imagine themselves located within the dramatic space.

But does this apply to theatre and hidden characters on stage? Can we assume that the presence of a fictional spectator on stage somehow conditions or alters the spectator’s perspective of the scene? For all matters concerning the possibility of an “imagined seeing”, i.e., the question of visualizing something which is not literally seen – like an unobserved observer –, it is useful to revisit Bernard Williams’ famous essay “The self and the imagination”. At a given point in his essay, Williams considers the “case of visualizing an object (...) where the idea that it is not seen by anyone is intensionally contained and (...) is essential to the imaginative

project” (1973, 31) He goes on to compare two narrations of a “never seen tree”, one in which the narrator tries to imagine an unseen tree, without any reference to the act of seeing, and the other in which the narrator tries to imagine herself seeing a tree.⁴ Analyzing both statements one would have to conclude that there is “some incoherence in imagining oneself seeing an unseen tree” and that the second narration involves an important incoherence.

Does it follow – as purported by Carroll or Currie – that it is impossible to visualize an unseen object? A Visualizer – i.e., someone who can only imagine by way of visual images – would have to say no because he can only visualize the tree by imagining herself seeing a tree. But the fact that the first narrator’s description is perfectly coherent suggests otherwise: “that although a man may imagine an unseen tree, and do it by visualizing, he cannot do it by visualizing an unseen tree” (1973: 32) in which case he would have to imagine herself seeing that tree. Even when we imagine by way of visualizing, there is always the possibility to subtract elements that are present in what we are visualizing (namely, our seeing the unseen tree or our watching the hidden character):

“Thus on this account, a man can imagine an unseen tree, and *by way* of visualizing a tree; but he does not, and cannot, visualize an unseen tree, and the reason why what he visualizes is different from what he imagines is that he is allowed to discard elements from his visualization incompatible with the essentials of his imaginative project.”
(Williams, 1973: 34; italics are mine)

But this is not all. There are good reasons to consider that visualization usually means visualization of an object as seen from a point of view – and this assumption is the ground for Carroll or Currie’s criticism of IST. Therefore, it seems natural to consider that when I visualize I cannot help but thinking of myself seeing. Still, Williams argues that even so this does not mean that there is an “imagined seeing” going on in the visualized scene. In other words, what I visualize does not include the element that it is being seen:

⁴ This leads back to the discussion that we previously followed, regarding the possibility of an imagined seeing without “egocentric” consequences (Wilson versus Carroll and Currie).

“I (...) do not necessarily belong inside the world that I visualize, any more than I necessarily do so in the world that I imagine.” (1973: 35)

In theatre, we are spectators of a world we are not in. One can say that we see Hamlet in front of Elsinore Castle and we see it from a certain perspective. But our seat in the audience is not related to that perspective. There is a “lack of formal identity” (Williams 1973, 35) between scenery and setting. Because we are not part of the world of the play, things can happen in the play and remain *unseen*, like characters hiding in the setting. In theatre as in film, *we are not there*. Of course, as Williams points out, theatre and cinema are only partly related to the nature of visualization. In proper visualization – as corrected by Williams’ analysis – nothing is really seen whereas in both theatre and film we really do see something. But even if we were to allow visualization to include thinking that I am seeing and from a particular vantage point, still there would be no reason to consider that this vantage point belongs to the world that is visualized.

Now, our hypothesis runs contrary to Williams’ assumption. The introduction of a hidden character – a character turned spectator – (and if a rather moderate version of proprioception is adopted) makes it possible to conceive that the spectator is engaging on a different mode of visualization, one in which a particular vantage point within the fictional world is indeed shared by spectator and character. In a way, the seeing element becomes the very centre of our imaginative project. But how does literal visualization turn into imagination? Is the combination of proprioception, theatrical perception and a highly adapted version of imaginative seeing enough to exhaust the symbolic and phenomenological wealth granted by hideouts in theatre?

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Tensions in Hegelian Architectural Analysis — A Re-Conception of the Spatial Notions of the Sacred and Profane

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ABSTRACT. In *The System of the Individual Arts* in his *Aesthetics*, Hegel presents an analysis of the history of architecture from ancient Greece to the modern age from the vantage point of his philosophy of religion and metaphysics of spirit. I argue that his analysis is flawed, to the detriment of Greek architecture, as it depends upon a false analogy in comparing (only) a part of the Greek sanctuary, the temple, with the whole of a Gothic cathedral. This false analogy is grounded in a view of sacred space that privileges a Christian paradigm, and this view overlooks a manifestly different understanding of the sacred and the profane in Greek religion and religious architecture. I offer an architectural analysis of the Greek *temenos* (the whole religious precinct), and show that it, no less than the Gothic cathedral, meets Hegel's own criteria for the manifestation of absolute spirit, what he believed was realizable only in the Gothic cathedral.

G. W. F. Hegel describes architecture as chronologically the first form of art and indicates that, "its task consists in so manipulating external inorganic nature that, as an external world conformable to art, it becomes cognate to spirit" (Hegel, *Aesthetics* vol. I, 2010: 83-84). He divides architectural history into three periods - the symbolic, the classical and the romantic - with this final phase a balanced synthesis of formal and functional elements. The chapter on architecture in *The System of The Individual Arts*, part III of his *Aesthetics*, which presents Hegel's comparative analysis of the classical Greek temple with the romantic Gothic cathedral, is problematic in many ways, and I argue that the root problem is Hegel's manifest misunderstanding of Greek notions of sacred space; more particularly, he presents a false analogy in comparing a part of the Greek sanctuary, the temple, to the whole of a Gothic cathedral, to the detriment

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of the former. Hegel misunderstands the role of the Greek temple within the context of the whole Greek sanctuary, namely that the temple itself is only one of many externalized (public) components that comprise the totality of the sanctuary. It simply cannot be compared by itself (on its own) to a Gothic cathedral. Further, I argue that Hegel bases his notions of sacred space on the paradigm with which he is most familiar, where sacred components are internalized (privatized) within the confines of the walls of a cathedral, a reflection of the interiority that is the grounds of Christian theology. This particular understanding of sacred space leads Hegel to a fundamental re-conception, and misconception, of spatial notions of the sacred and profane within the context of the ancient Greek religious worldview. The irony is that Hegel fails to realize that the very formal-functional synthesis he prizes in (post-classical, romantic) Gothic cathedrals is present in its own way in the Greek sanctuary. Unless the ‘complexity’ of the Greek religious sanctuary is carefully considered and presented, any cross-historical comparisons are premature at best.

In order to understand the Greek sanctuary in context, and to accurately compare it to the Gothic cathedral, a brief discussion of Greek religion and its influence on the components of the classical Greek sanctuary is warranted, and I present one in due course. It is my contention that by revealing the Greek sanctuary *in its entirety*, as the built environment of Greek religion, a synthesis of form and function that is productive of a sublime independence, which for Hegel is the crowning achievement of *romantic* Gothic cathedrals, can be found within the *classical* Greek sanctuary. The result of this analysis will be that, far from identifying sublime independence and absolute spirit primarily with Christianity (and its religious architecture)—which, as Hodgson points out, results in “the identity between Christianity and the concept of religion [being] established on the basis of definition [a priori]: the concept is what it is because Christianity is the fullest instantiation of it, and vice versa,” (Hodgson, 2005: 219)—a more pluralistic conception of absolute spirit emerges, which allows Greek religious architecture to be seen in its own historical context. The particularity of Greek religious experience, including its built environment, may be seen and properly evaluated on its own terms.

At the end of the introduction to the *Aesthetics*, Hegel says that, “*symbolic art* attains its most appropriate actuality and greatest application in

architecture, where it holds sway in accordance with its whole conception and is not yet degraded to be the inorganic nature, as it were, dealt with by another art” (vol. I, 2010: 90). This statement foregrounds the necessity of ‘formal’ independence in architecture, or the built environment rising above mere functionality. In *The System of The Individual Arts* of the *Aesthetics*, where he devotes specific chapters to individual art forms, his further analysis of architecture consistently maintains that of all other art forms, architecture as a whole epitomizes the symbolic, and that it achieves its apex in the romantic stage. He considers romantic architecture, illustrated by the Gothic cathedral, as the epitome of architectural evolution, and states that, “no one thing completely exhausts a building like this; everything is lost in the greatness of the whole. It has and displays a definite purpose; but in its grandeur and sublime peace it is lifted above anything purely utilitarian into an infinity in itself...It is precisely where particularization, diversity, and variety gain the fullest scope, but without letting the whole fall apart into mere trifles and accidental details...and this length and breadth of varied details is gripped together unhindered into the most secure unity and clearest independence” (vol. II, 2010: 685). Hegel prizes the Gothic cathedral as the fusion of use and (material) functionality, and sees as “its business, so far as is architecturally possible, to make spiritual conviction shine through the shape and arrangement of the building and so determine the form both of its interior and exterior” (vol. II, 2010: 687). He explains further, “just as the Christian spirit concentrates itself in the inner life, so the building becomes the place shut in on every side for the assembly of the Christian congregation and the collection of its thought. The spatial enclosure corresponds to the concentration of mind within, and results from it. But the worship of the Christian heart is at the same time an elevation above the finite so that this elevation now determines the character of the house of God” (vol. II, 2010: 685). Hegel believes this synthesis of utility/religious worship and functionality/constructed space produces sacred space (the realm of spirit), and the supreme manifestation of sacred space is to be found manifest in the Gothic cathedral. By contrast, for Hegel, the foundation and nature of Greek religion do not manifest that kind of ‘internalized’ paradigm that is clear in Christianity, and so, because of its ‘exteriority,’ Greek religion, and religious space, is denied any potential for the mani-

festation of absolute spirit. But before we succumb to Hegel's conclusion, let us briefly consider the religious beliefs of the Greeks in the context of their own built environment. Let us consider whether the Greek sanctuary, its own sacred space, fits the explicit criteria that Hegel himself sets out as paradigmatic.

In the introduction of his *Aesthetics*, Hegel states that, "every work of art belongs to its own time, its own people, its own environment, and depends on particular historical and other ideas and purposes" (vol. I, 2010: 14). After this promising pluralistic assertion, Hegel reveals himself as insufficiently sensitive to the Greek model and its own correlations between religion and sacred space. If the Greek temple is placed within the context of the Greek sanctuary, and viewed in the context of the Greek religious worldview, the very same synthesis that Hegel recognizes and values in the Gothic cathedral becomes manifest in the Greek model. Let us then examine the religious beliefs and structures of the Greeks within the context of the communitarian 'exteriority' of Greek society.

Instead of monotheistic transcendence, Greek gods, personifications of natural forces, walked the earth; nature was their realm, and nature was everywhere. Humans dwelled within the land of the divine, among a multiplicity of gods, and performed rituals and sacrifices as a means to seek guidance, appease indiscretions and curry favor. Every aspect of ancient life was integrated within Greek religious practice, from the administration of state institutions to concerns of a more personal nature. "In Greece, where the cult belongs in the communal, public sphere...religious ritual is given as a collective institution; the individual participates within the framework of social communication, with the strongest motivating force being the need not to stand apart...its function lies in group formation, the creation of solidarity, or the negotiation of understanding among members of a species" (Burkert, 1985: 54-55). Greek religion is very much a public, not an introspective and private, affair, and on account of this Greek religious life and practice is communitarian in ways Christian religious culture is not. Greek sanctuary and temple design reflected this openness, unlike the introverted, self-reflective individuality emphasized in Christianity, where "engaging in heartfelt devotion and elevation of soul has...a variety of particular features and aspects which cannot be carried out in open halls or in front of temples" (vol. II, 2010: 687). Hegel himself describes the Greek

temple as “of simplicity and grandeur, but at the same time of cheerfulness, openness, and comfort, because the whole building is constructed for standing about in or strolling up and down in or coming and going rather than for assembling a collection of people and concentrating them there, shut in on every side and separated from the outside world,” but seems to miss the socio-cultural implications responsible for this alternative use of space (vol. II, 2010: 676). Where Christianity is focused on the interior, in both creation and use of space, consistent with one’s internal inner-being, and employs individualized, more passive worship strategies like personal prayer, Greek worship is performed on the communal level, where members engage in participatory activities that serve to bind and reaffirm their status as members not only of their respective communities, but as agents who dwell within the divine, which necessitates the exteriority that is a hallmark of Greek sanctuaries. Consistent with this exteriority, any allusion to one’s inner-being is conspicuously absent from Greek religious experience. Rather, *orthopraxy*, or correct and proper performance of religious activity is paramount in Greek religious experience, as opposed to *orthodoxy*, or correct belief, the hallmark of interiority found in Christianity. By incorporating places and acts of worship within the exteriorized natural world, Greek society embraces the fundamental tenets of their religious practice. Because Hegel views the Greek temple through spectacles tinted with the stained-glass windows of the Gothic cathedral, and employs the pure interiority of Christianity as his gauge for assessing the classical world, he fails to grasp the suitability of the form and functionality of the Greek sanctuary within the framework of Greek religious practice. By his own standards, namely that the “spiritual conviction shine through the shape and arrangement of the building and so determine the form both of its interior and exterior,” he ought not to fault the focus on exteriority found within the walls of the Greek sanctuary (vol. II, 2010: 687).

These programmatic conclusions are drawn from a descriptive analysis of the form and correlative function of the Greek temple sanctuary. In what follows I offer this analysis and reiterate my conclusions. My conclusions do no more than present a tension in Hegel’s aesthetics. Further work may suggest a revision in Hegel’s grand historical narrative of the development of architecture from classical to romantic models.

A Descriptive Analysis of the Classical Greek Sanctuary and Comparative Spatial Analysis with the Romantic Gothic Cathedral

Walter Burkert, in his seminal work *Greek Religion*, offers a comprehensive discussion of not only Greek religion, but the physical accoutrements necessary for instantiation of its practice. “The Greek sanctuary... is properly constituted only through the demarcation which sets it apart from the profane (*bebelon*). The land cut off and dedicated to the god or hero is known by the ancient term which really signifies any domain at all, *temenos*” (Burkert, 1985: 86). This has implications regarding the spatial notions of the sacred and profane within the Greek context. By defining *temenos* as both “land cut off and dedicated to the god” and also “the ancient term which really signifies any domain at all” Burkert alludes to explicit connections, indeed attenuations of the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane. While all land may be understood as sacred, the holy dwelling site of the god has a heightened, proprietary significance. It is demarcated from the ordinary and signified as the property of the god through the creation of a *temenos*, which should be viewed as a correlate to the walls of the Gothic cathedral. Like the Gothic cathedral, special purification restrictions are placed upon those who enter. It is important to note that the analogy here is between an entire sacred space or precinct with the barrier walls of a sacred cathedral. It is just this juxtaposition that I believe Hegel overlooks.

The *temenos*, or boundary demarcating the sacred space of the Greek sanctuary, can be rendered in various ways, always with natural material, but usually by the hands of humans and not by pre-existing barriers of the physical environment. Hewn or unhewn rock walls can be employed, as can rows of trees or strips of forest. Burkert states that, “the tree...is even more important than the stone in marking the sanctuary...The shade-giving tree epitomizes both beauty and continuity across generations. Most sanctuaries have their special tree” (Burkert, 1985: 85). Indeed, most deities have specific trees associated with them, and this embodiment of nature reaches its high point in the temple of Hera at Samos, where the willow, the associated tree of Hera, is contained within the altar itself.

In water one sees also a fundamental element of sanctuary design. Its purposes are both profane and sacred. Temple livestock, to be used in

ritual sacrifice, as well as congregants of the sanctuary, must have access to drinking water, but water itself is used for sacred purification rituals for both congregants and for the sanctification that elevates the otherwise profane status of animals used in ritual sacrifice. Burkert alludes to the similarities between the use of sacred water in Greek and Christian worship when he states that, “vessels containing water, *perirrhanteria* are set up at the entrances to the sanctuaries, like the fonts of holy water in Roman Catholic churches” (Burkert, 1985: 77). Congregants must perform necessary ablutions to enter the sacred space, and also in preparation of participation in sanctuary events. In conjunction with water, fire is also cultivated in the sanctuary hearth, and completes the incorporation of natural elements within the complex. One can’t help but associate the sacred hearths of Greek sanctuaries, the fire source for all ritual activity, with votive candles found in Gothic cathedrals.

As is evidenced by the integration of the natural world within the *temenos* of the sanctuary, the fundamental focus of the Greek experience is nature - gods, personifications of nature, are everywhere, and humans dwell in the realm of the divine. Hence, there is a real conflation of the sacred and the profane. The Greek sanctuary precinct reflects this exteriority, and has as its focus an incorporation of the natural world. By contrast, Christianity, with its emphasis on individuality and pure interiority, both in ritual and architectural practice, constrains its sacred components within one interior space, and seeks the exclusion of nature from within its walls. Even natural light is excluded from the Gothic cathedral, and requires the mediation of stained-glass windows for entrance. Hegel says, “for here [in the cathedral] it is a day other than the day of nature that is to provide light” (vol. II, 2010: 690).

Not only are external boundaries conceived differently, but internal use of space differs between the classical and romantic paradigms as well. The Greek sanctuary represents exteriority, and its various components are distributed across an open and natural, albeit clearly demarcated, sacred area in which the congregants move freely about. The Gothic cathedral, as a space of pure interiority, tightly incorporates its components within the framework of its enclosure. Yet, even within the confines of the Gothic cathedral, additional barriers are erected to further delineate space. Piers divide the space of the nave, creating side aisles in which

the congregants move to access their designated area for worship, the pews contained within. Screens cordon off the chancel, further restricting the flow of movement, both physical and visual. In contrast to this, the Greek sanctuary is an example of pure exteriority, and displays a symmetry of the public-spirited openness and communitarianism of Greek society. While “theatre-like terracing which could make the ceremonies visible to a greater number of people” is a common feature near the main altar, there is greater potential for freedom of movement within the *temenos* of the Greek sanctuary (Burkert, 1985: 87).

When viewed in its entirety, the Greek sanctuary precinct exhibits many of the same institutional features as the Gothic cathedral. The religious structures of the Greek sanctuary and the Gothic cathedral are similar in many ways. First and foremost, each is an edifice of religion and worship, and contains within it the structures necessary for its respective rituals. Each has a congregation, who, upon entry to either, is expected to perform ritual ablutions with water to achieve the purity necessary to partake in the succeeding rituals. Both contain symbols of their deities, the statue of the god or gods to whom the sanctuary is dedicated in the Greek example, and the cross and representations of Jesus in the cathedral. Both have altars.

Analogous to the way that the *temenos* of the Greek sanctuary must be viewed in relation to the walls of the Gothic cathedral, the Greek temple must be seen as analogous to the cathedral chancel. As the chancel is one component of the inner sanctuary of the Gothic cathedral, so the Greek temple is one aspect of the sanctuary proper. Like their exterior counterparts, the Greek temple and Gothic chancel have features in common. Both have similar spatial orientation, serve similar functions and share varying hierarchical restrictions of space. The temple and chancel are spaces of elevation. This elevation takes the form of literal elevation, i.e., occurring higher than surrounding areas, and symbolic elevation, i.e., containing the holy relics in Christianity or cult statue in Greece. Their elevated status distinguishes them from public areas, and indicates, literally and symbolically, that this space is different from others around it. Each represents the holiest areas of their respective structures. The Greek temple contains the cella, an interior room where the statue of the god is located, while the Gothic chancel contains the high altar of the cathedral.

Because they house the holiest accoutrements of their religion, the Greek temple and Gothic chancel have hierarchically restricted access and limitations on the use of space. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Greek temple has less rigidly restricted access than does the Gothic chancel. As Burkert notes, "Greek religion might almost be called a religion without priests: there is no priestly caste as a closed group with fixed tradition, education, initiation and hierarchy...in Greece the priesthood is not a way of life, but a part-time and honorary office" (Burkert, 1985: 95-97). The (relative) egalitarianism found in Greek religious practice, which is another example of its fundamental exteriority, is in direct contrast to that of Christianity. The Gothic chancel is reserved for the church hierarchy alone. "The high altar, this real centre of worship, is placed in the chancel which is thus the place devoted to the clergy in contrast to the congregation which has its place, along with the pulpit, in the nave" (vol.II, 2010: 691). Unlike the exteriority and openness of the Greek temple, where, while physical access may be restricted to priests and temple staff, visual access is not, the Gothic chancel is always enclosed by an elaborate screen that serves not only to demarcate and restrict physical access to the space, but also to visually obscure the holiest area from the nearby congregation. This space is reserved for the clergy alone, who devote their lives to the service of their god, and who alone possess the knowledge and rituals of that service.

When viewed within its historical and cultural context, the whole Greek sanctuary precinct exhibits the same synthesis of utility and functionality of purpose that Hegel prizes in the romantic Gothic cathedral. Hegel values the quiet, contemplative cathedral as the ultimate expression of absolute spirit because he interprets its form as being in complete balance with its function, thereby creating a space of solitude that allows its congregation to commune most effectively with their god. He views the Greek temple, and its cult statue, by reference to the Christian standard, even though the paradigm of worship does not remain the same for these two religious cultures. The Greek sanctuary, with its orientation within nature, reflects the religious orthopraxy and spatial conceptions of its own time and place, and by evaluating it by comparison to an orthodox Christian standard, Hegel misses the form-function synthesis that is the glory of Greek religious architecture. The Greek sanctuary should be evaluated according to its own normative standards. By employing Greek concep-

tions of the sacred and profane, and by understanding that this very dichotomy is less pronounced in Greek religious culture than in Christianity, the Greek sanctuary emerges as a synthesis of form and function, no less than the Gothic cathedral, and exhibits the potential for a manifestation of absolute spirit.

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Sentimentality as an Ethical and Aesthetic Fault

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ABSTRACT. Robert Solomon has defended that there is nothing wrong with sentimentality, and that it should be defined minimally as the “expression of and appeal to tender feelings”. Against Solomon’s proposal, this paper defends a conception of sentimentality along the lines of the standard view, as a moral and aesthetic fault. I claim that sentimentality is a form of emotional self-deception linked to untrue expression. First, I defend that the sentimentalist fabricates certain feelings by expressing them; and second, that he is deceived about his own emotions.

*To be called sentimental is to be ridiculed or dismissed.
Sentimentality is weakness; it suggests hypocrisy.
Or perhaps it is the fact that
sentimental people are so ... embarrassing.*

(Solomon, 2004, p. 3)

I. The Standard View

Sentimentality is thought to be a tendency to undergo sentimental emotions. And sentimental emotions are considered generally wrong. From an epistemological perspective, sentimental emotions are said to be wrong because unwarranted. Thus, sentimentality is first of all a flaw against truth, because either the belief involved in emotion is false, the feeling

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is directed towards a wrong object, or because the affective response is disproportionate in the circumstances. In the first, qualitative, cases the thought content of the emotion is false, or the feeling is directed towards inadequate objects; therefore, the emotion is deemed unwarranted. In the second, quantitative, case, there is an excess of feeling in relation to the content. So in the overall the emotion is unjustified too.

The standard view attributes to the sentimental person emotional weakness, having the emotion for “its own sake”, indulging and taking pleasure from the emotion, obtaining a self-gratifying image from it, and not acting upon it. The last feature of the sentimental character is found to be the most undesirable consequence of sentimental emotions: their lack of motivational force, therefore the unreliable character of the sentimentalist.¹

In his article “In Defense of Sentimentality” R. Solomon challenged the standard view and proposed instead a “minimal definition” of sentimentality, as “nothing more nor less than ‘an expression of and appeal to tender feelings’”. Consequently, he claimed “...there is nothing wrong with sentimentality.”² According to Solomon, usual criticism against sentimentality is just consequence of philosophical and high culture prejudices against emotions in general, traditionally taken as irrational forces against ethical self-control and aesthetic detachment. Moreover, “It is not a secret that the charge of sentimentalism has long had sexist implications,”³ since

¹ As the famous Wilde’s letter to Alfred Douglas emphasized: “The fact is that you were, and are, I suppose still, a typical sentimentalist. For a sentimentalist is simply one who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it. You think that one can have one’s emotions for nothing. One cannot. Even the finest and most self-sacrificing emotions have to be paid for. Strangely enough, that is what makes them fine. The intellectual and emotional life of ordinary people is a very contemptible affair. Just as they borrow their ideas from a sort of circulating library of thought – the *Zeitgeist* of an age that has no soul – and send them back soiled at the end of each week, so they always try to get their emotions on credit, and refuse to pay the bill when it comes in. You should pass out of that conception of life. As soon as you have to pay for an emotion you will know its quality, and be the better for such knowledge. And remember that the sentimentalist is always a cynic at heart. Indeed sentimentality is merely the bank holiday of cynicism”. (Quoted in Tanner, M. (1976–7), “Sentimentality”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 77; p. 95.)

² Solomon, *op. cit.*, 4.

³ Solomon, *op. cit.*, 6.

sentimentality is said of warm and tender affects, such as love, compassion, pity, which tend to be linked to sexist views about women's weakness. While outrage or wrath, male dominant passions, may be qualified as wild or violent, but not sentimental.

Together with the historical and ideological causes of the philosophical virulence against sentimentality, Solomon pointed out the failure of philosophical attempts to define sentimentality. Referring to the epistemological argument, Solomon held that by itself the falsity of the emotional cognitive element does not directly make an emotion inadequate, insofar as the person sensibly believes (have reasons to believe) it. Even though she was clearly mistaken, hers would be a cognitive mistake, but not an emotional one. Solomon pointed to the impossibility of omniscience and the ubiquity of errors also in rational subjects as well. But more to the point, rational subjects' beliefs are often motivated and biased by desires, emotions, and so on, without their motivated nor biased beliefs turning by themselves an emotion inappropriate, still less, sentimental. Besides, Solomon concludes, sentimental emotions may indeed be epistemologically wrong, without being for that reason ethically or aesthetically flawed. And together with the epistemological argument, Solomon challenged the rest of arguments about sentimentality immorality and bad taste.

First, he refused the idea that sentimentality is "emotional weakness". He called it the loaded definition of sentimentality, as it supposes that an excess of emotion weakens.

Second, Solomon pointed that self-indulgence is neither sufficient nor necessary to characterise sentimentality. On the one hand, one of the most invoked charges against the sentimentalist is that he finds pleasure or gratification in undergoing certain emotions. But the truth is that we often indulge in and obtain pleasure from many other emotions: proud of our children, love, or melancholy. Proud specially is directly linked to a gratifying image of one-self, and so is reciprocated love. On the other hand, it is not clear in which sense can negative sentimental emotions be gratifying, and obviously some sentimental emotions, such as unrequited love or jealousy may be painful.

Finally, Solomon challenges a third and much invoked charge against sentimentality's immorality: against what could be expected, sentimental emotions do not lead to moral action. It was implicit in Wilde's phrase,

“the sentimentalist wants to have the luxury of the emotion *without paying for it*”, meaning that he does not act upon his emotion. Solomon answers that, on the one hand, emotions do not always motivate for action, and some of “our ‘best’ emotions may sometimes be those upon which any “direct action” is simply impossible.”⁴ On the other hand, he holds that the sentimentalist might be better prepared for moral action than the detached person, since she is sensitized by her emotions to certain features of the world, which could pass overlooked by others. So for instance sentimental feelings towards the infancy may prepare us against children abuse.

In sum, against the standard view, Solomon defends the rationality of sentimental emotions, which may be well-directed, appropriate and lead to action. Besides, sentimental emotions can be directed towards the wrong object, be inappropriate or paralyze. But other emotions may also be exaggerated, ill directed, self-involving, the object of self-gratification, or motivationally lacking. And nevertheless they do not deserve the bad press that accompany sentimentality.

2. Fabricated Emotions and Self-deception

The starting point of this paper is that sentimentality is not identical to an “expression of and appeal to tender feelings”, as Solomon’s “minimal definition” states. It is tender or sweet emotions that are usually considered sentimental. However there are other more ‘masculine’ emotions that may also be sentimental, such as anger, righteous indignation or jealousy.⁵ In fact all emotions can be sentimentalized. The “minimal definition” seems too minimal, even if Solomon is right that the features mentioned by the standard view are neither sufficient nor necessary conditions of sentimentality. Instead of the minimal definition I shall claim that sentimentality is a moral and aesthetic fault, a form of emotional self-deception linked to untrue expression. M. Tanner and A. Savile, among others, have already maintained that sentimentality is a form of self-deception, linked to the

⁴ It is obviously so with grief, compassion or sympathy. See Solomon, R., “On Kitsch and Sentimentality”, in Solomon, *op.cit.*

⁵ Solomon himself often comments on Kundera’s denunciation of political kitsch and sentimentality.

pleasure and the gratifying self-image that the sentimentalist obtains indulging in certain feelings. What I want to emphasize here is the expressive source of the deceit. So, I aim to define sentimentality in terms of fabricated feelings, and emotional self-deception.

First, I shall claim that the sentimentalist fabricates an emotion. Thus, sentimentality is in the first place a flaw against sincerity. Secondly, I will try to show that the sentimentalist is deceived about the true nature of her emotions. So sentimentality is also a form of self-deception. That what is characteristic of the most interesting cases of sentimentality is that sentimental persons are not liars or impostors, in the sense that they do not try to mislead others about their real sentiments, but rather they behave and try to lead a life in a certain sentimental way. It may be well possible that at the core of a sentimental emotion there is the desire of feeling intensely, or leading an intense emotional life, which makes the sentimentalist fabricate the emotion. The satisfaction of this desire explains self-indulgence and deprives the sentimentalist the critical attitude required for self-knowledge.

I shall present this proposal by analysing how can emotions be fabricated? (§ 3), and how is emotional self-deception possible? (§ 4) That is, how one can be deceived about the real nature of emotions that one-self has forged. Although both questions are closely related, I shall refer first to the source of sentimental emotions, and then turn to the question about the possibility of emotional self-deception.

3. How Is It Possible To Fabricate Emotions?

There are two plausible answers to the first question or ‘How is it possible to fabricate emotions?’ First, by finding an adequate content for them. Second, by making up the expression of feelings conventionally associated with the emotion.

3.1. One way to fabricate emotions is indirectly by finding adequate contents for them. When reality does not offer material to feed her emotions, the sentimentalist tries to make it fit with the emotion, looking for objects big or small that could do the trick, overestimating the importance of certain events, or misperceiving certain figures or events. It is in this sense

that Savile⁶ holds that the sentimentalist idealizes or beautifies reality in order to secure the emotions he seeks for. So Don Quixote mistook the peasant woman, Aldonza Lorenzo, for his Lady, Dulcinea del Toboso⁷, and equally the sentimentalist gives deals with a created reality he superimposes on the actual.

The problem is how something that one-self makes can be perceived as something that really is the case, and that consequently prompts an affective response. Interest, desire, expectation, or ideology may also cause misperception or wrong belief. The point is that the sentimentalist is said to be responsible to be the active agent of the distortion, and therefore he is suspicious of not believing what seems to believe. Not belief, but make-believe is the characteristic source of the sentimental distortion of reality. The sentimentalist is fond to storyze, and to imagine the world be certain way. And by making-believe she provokes the arousal of the corresponding feelings.

That make-believe may trigger rational feelings is a central point of different accounts of fiction⁸. According to these accounts, entertaining the thought of, envisaging, or seeing in a screen, a dangerous situation may provoke fear, even though the represented state of affairs is fictional. But also in real life, make-believe is source of feelings and actions: for instance, walking alone back home late at night on a deserted street the mere imagining of someone around the corner provokes fear, trembling, makes one be alert, and even run to the entrance door of her house. It contributes to the success of make-believe that in real life like in fiction

⁶ Savile, A. (2002), "Sentimentality", Neill, A. & Ridley, A., *Arguing about Art. Contemporary Philosophical Debates*, London: Routledge, p. 316.

⁷ "Her name was Aldonza Lorenzo, and upon her he thought fit to confer the title of Lady of his Thoughts; and after some search for a name which should not be out of harmony with her own, and should suggest and indicate that of a princess and great lady, he decided upon calling her Dulcinea del Toboso—she being of El Toboso—a name, to his mind, musical, uncommon, and significant". (The Spanish names sound connotes vulgarity and delicacy respectively).

⁸ Specifically, Walton's account of representations as make-believe. See *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Cambridge Mass. Harvard University Press, 1990. But other accounts such as Currie's simulationist model or Lamarque's and Carroll's thought model share the idea that fictitious representations prompt rational feelings based on merely entertained thoughts or imaginings.

make-believe has norms and uses props that support the make-believe. A corner impedes the vision to the other side, in a solitary street nobody can help us in case of a dangerous encounter, Aldonza Lorenzo is an existing woman, with whom Alonso Quijano was in love in a time, even windmills move their like arms. Perception and imagination, belief and make-believe merge and explain feelings and behaviour of the sentimentalist.

Obviously once make-believe has triggered the corresponding feelings, feelings in turn influence the perception of reality, and sometimes reality itself. It goes without saying that reality is obviously not something that can be changed at will, but nevertheless social reality depends on the very agents engaged in the situation. Imagination plays a role in many everyday occasions, without distorting or blurring reality. For instance, anticipating an event, or envisaging a situation, is convenient preparation for action. We go happily to a party anticipating the fun, and that predisposes us to find the party, and eventually making it, enjoyable. That is, nourished by make-believe expectations and attitudes contribute to the creation of the state of affairs that has been firstly just imagined.

Sentimental distortion of reality may come out from an active engagement in make-believe, which nevertheless is also a psychological recourse in everyday life. The make-believe situation does not come out of the blue, but reality offers the sentimentalist props for his feelings. So the sentimentalist's imagination and stories find ground in perception, and belief. Only the sentimentalist exploits the recourse for his entertaining the feeling. Eventually, feelings that make-believe provokes may in the circumstances render also reality sentimental. This is the case with sentimental relations, whether erotic, familiar or of friendship.

3.2. A second way to fabricate emotions consists in making up the expression corresponding to feelings associated to certain emotion. This mechanism goes deeper into the affective and aesthetic rather than cognitive character of the sentimental flaw. And it is in this sense in which I hold that sentimentality's source is basically untrue expression. That is why the sentimentalist is often considered, to say the least, theatrical. But expressing and pretending to feel that way or so intensely, the sentimentalist is overwhelmed for his own acting.

The reason why a faked expression may be source of the feeling ex-

pressed should be looked after in the vicinity of expression and feeling. It was James who first pointed out that having an emotion is being aware of the physiological or corporal changes provoked by the perception of certain states of affairs.⁹ So emotion was considered to be not the cause of the body changes, but to the contrary their awareness. This idea inverts the picture according to which first comes the feeling, expression, latter.

Certainly, referring to basic emotions like fear or disgust, expressive behaviour seems to be quite indistinguishable from the feeling. The more or less immediate reaction to certain situation is expressive. That what is felt is the tensed muscles, the trembling or the nausea. It may be held that it is not clear in which sense this body changes are expressions. Nausea is not. And neither are the trembling nor the tension in the muscles, at least to the extent that the person cannot control them. But limiting the use of expression and expressive behaviour to those movements controlled by the subject, or those gestures or behaviour in which the person express fear or disgust, instead of being the fear or the disgust which are expressing – revealing themselves, also primitive reactions can be considered expressive, when the person's body shows a cognitive perception of the objects that cause gesture or movement. Expressing anger or disgust is more than noticing the trembling or the nausea, but realizing the causal connexion between the states of affairs and the trembling or the nausea. So that the person is afraid of the dog, or Cindy Sherman's *Untitled #175* disgusts her.

Expressive behaviour is very dependent on context, on the agent's traits of character, or education even in the simplest cases. Besides, expression it is not always an immediate reaction to an external situation. Cognitively more complex emotions may require intellectual analysis of the situation and of the self's attitude towards the situation. So that not only expressive behaviour, but also feeling itself, is dependent on context, personality or education. The fact that expressive behaviour as a response to external circumstances is not always immediate only means that feeling is neither. Cannot be feelings unexpressed, then? In principle, the expression of feelings can be repressed – even disgust can be. But then we are admitting that to some degree the expressive movement has been started.

⁹ "My thesis is that the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion", James, W. (1884), "What is an Emotion?" *Mind*, 9, 34, 189-90.

There seems to make no sense the idea of a feeling, which is not bodily felt in some degree.

We need not commit with the idea of feeling as posterior to expression to defend that the sentimentalist fabricate the emotion forging its expression, however. Without endorsing total identification between feeling and expression, often creating the symptoms of feeling – adopting gestures and demeanour – stirs the feeling¹⁰. Singing with expression moves, and reciting a poem with the appropriate intonation and rhythm provides it with expressive form, as if were the outcome of feeling. The sentimentalist ends undergoing the emotions whose expression has made up, not due to her credulous character but because of the very nature of expression.

And nevertheless there is something misleading in the former considerations. To express an inner condition is not just to move certain parts of the body or to utter certain words. Something else is required to fake an emotion with some guaranty of success. It is often remarked how many muscular movements are implied in facial expression, so that a liar can be discovered because it is unable to control them all. What I find illustrative here is that it is not moving the muscles what makes a facial lie expressive, but the intention of expressing or letting out an inner condition. Expressive behaviour does not merely reproduce expressive patterns, but it is rather the performance of an expressive activity. There is expression properly when a voluntary or not inhibited bodily movement comes out as the result of an expressive activity of the subject. So to scream in the grip of anger does not consist in making certain movements with the vocal organs, but in performing the action of screaming in anger. Anger may start by artificially elevating the tone of voice and getting the muscles tensed, but when these body movements are connected with the mental condition of getting angry. Or imagining getting angry, which is the state in which the sentimentalist put himself. The performance stimulates the feeling, and in turn the feeling feedbacks the performance.

The sentimentalist behaves expressively as it is considered to be ad-

¹⁰ In “Four Theories of Artistic Expression” Gombrich refers that “when the cockatoo feels happy, it nods its head up and down; allegedly, it is easy to change the mood of the bird from anger to happiness, simply by grasping its head and moving it up and down”. And he added: “in a way we are all such cockatoos.” (Gombrich, E.H. (1980), “Four Theories of Artistic Expression”, *Architectural Association Quarterly*, 12, 151).

equate in the circumstances; that is, her expressed feelings are directed towards appropriate, although selected at will or idealized objects. And here comes the relevance of the first mechanism for fabricating emotions: to imagine or make-believe the content of the emotion. Both mechanisms, imagining the object and expressing the feeling, collaborate. While in the creation and interpretation of a fiction we are aware of the imaginative or make-believe character of our thoughts, and the corresponding feelings towards characters and other fictional objects, expressing insincerely the sentimentalist creates the feelings, and she is taking in by his pretence.

Sentimental people are said to be prone to undergo unwarranted and shallow emotions. But very often they are also blamed for expressing their feelings with exaggeration, or affectedly, up to the point that the sentimentalist is often suspicious of forging emotions, or expressing emotions he does not feel, or not with the intensity his expression shows. Their theatricality deserves the aesthetic disapproval that is at the same time a charge for insincerity. And nevertheless he could be blind to the failure.

4. Sentimental Self-Deception

Now I turn to the second question or how can the sentimentalist mistake his faked feelings for real ones? Or how emotional self-deception is possible. Emotional self-deception is such a common phenomenon as cognitive self-deception, even if internalism may have more chances referred to affective states than to cognitive states. It is hard to see that one can doubt about feeling sad or being afraid. But looking into the past, we are often surprised to figure out our real sentiments, how deep was our affection towards someone, or how shallow our happiness. Beliefs, desires, social conventions, other emotions and so on make us often to be mistaken about our real emotions. What is even more complex to explain is how are we mistaken about the real character of feelings that may be our construction, as I have defended about sentimental feelings. That is, how can the sentimentalist be self-deceived?

4.1. Primarily, emotional self-deception may be explained as an easy consequence of cognitive self-deception. A believes that she believes that P, while she actually believes that no-P. Correspondingly, she believes that

she feels E, while actually she feels no-E. For example, because María believes that she believes that Juan is cute, she also believes that she likes him. And nevertheless, since she does not really believe that Juan is a cute child –but she rather finds him spoiled–, she does not feel genuine sympathy towards him. Because María brings herself to the idea that Juan is cute, and because she behaves expressively corresponding to such an idea, she does not permit herself to elaborate her intuition about the real character of the child. So she is self-deceived about her liking. The example may show that cognitive self-deception needs not point to the simultaneous occurrence of contrary beliefs, but other cognitive states may better explain self-deception. There is no need to explain María's attitudes, the false and the actual ones, as of belief. An assumed thought (that Juan is cute) may be cancelling a perception, an intuition (that Juan is spoiled). The cause may be that María might have a sentimental tendency to believe in children's innocence.

Tamar Szabo Gendler has claimed that pretending to believe instead of believing may do better to explain cognitive self-deception. She holds that when we are self-deceived, we do not simultaneously maintain two contrary beliefs (P and not-P), but instead that we imagine, make-believe, or fantasise that not-P, while really believing that p. Self-deception is psychologically plausible due to the phenomenological similarity between both mental states, belief and make-believe, and here she appeals to the vivacity of imagination or make-believe, and to the potential motivational force of the make-believe or imagined representation of reality.¹¹

Now if Gendler is right, make-believe may deceive the self about her actual beliefs, and consequently about her actual feelings. Moreover, it is likely that since make-believe prompts feelings, the make-believe feelings contribute in turn to cognitive self-deception. By making-believe the content, the sentimentalist fabricates the feeling, and in turn the feeling secures him about the accuracy of the make-believe state of affairs. In

¹¹ “*Self-Deception as Pretense*: A person who is self-deceived about not-P pretends (in the sense of *makes-believe* or *imagines* or *fantasizes*) that not-P is the case, often while believing that P is the case and not believing that not-P is the case. The pretense that not-P largely plays the role normally played by belief in terms of (i) introspective vivacity and (ii) motivation of action in a wide range of circumstances”. Tamar Szabo Gendler (2007), “Self-deception as pretense”, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 21, Philosophy of Mind, 233-4.

fact the “introspective vivacity” of make-believe contents that make self-deception possible has relation with the phenomenology of the corresponding feelings. So the phenomenological similarity between genuine and fictional feelings may play a role explaining cognitive self-deception, particularly in sentimentality.

4.2. Emotional self-deception may also be explained by the difficulty of obtaining evidence about the self’s own emotions. For testing the veracity and the deepness of an emotion requires testing more than the truth of its content, knowing about the attitude in which the self stands towards the content. In this respect, feelings usually are taken as source of that knowledge. In spite of the possibility of error, the vicinity of the self and her feelings makes it difficult to doubt about them. In fact, feelings are often considered the best evidence about emotions. It is not inadequate to infer from the expressed anxiety felt in presence of the beloved that the persona speaking in Sapho’s *Ode to Anactoria* is in love. Sapho’s depiction of the implicit persona’s feelings and feelings’ expression when she sees her beloved is evidence of her love, and of the intensity of her love:

For when I see thee but a little, I have no utterance left, my tongue is broken down, and straightway a subtle fire has run under my skin, with my eyes I have no sight, my ears ring, sweat pours down, and a trembling seizes all my body; I am paler than grass, and seem in my madness little better than one dead.¹²

It is indeed a short and intense fragment among the first lyric expressions of erotic love. The value of the poem rests on the poet capacity to give expression to the felt distress of the I of the poem at the sight of the beloved. Now, it is obviously the reader, and not the poem persona who knows about the emotion that overwhelm her. The I of the poem expresses an emotion, and expresses it truly, without minding about knowing herself, and the reader gets convinced of her feelings quality. Expressing sincerely is in a sense the closest distance in which one can stand of self-knowledge, but sincerity of expression is precisely what the sentimentalist lacks. So, even though feelings can be considered evidence of emotions, the truth is that it is not to the self to know about the feelings but to express them.

¹² Sapho’s *Ode to Anactoria* (Translated by H.T. Wharton)

For once the self asks herself about the significance of certain feelings trying to know about the emotions they might be symptoms of, the partition of the self enters in play, and so the possibility of deceit.

4.3. According to the preceding paragraph once self-reflection comes into play error is possible. However self-reflection and introspection are necessary tools of self-knowledge. Now testing our emotions by introspection requires bringing the emotion (or its feelings) to the mind: possibly recalling or imagining their objects, the scenario, and imagining ourselves in it. It involves mental dramatization that provides the self with images that have the benefit of intimacy and that are at the same time the clearest evidence, and also the best deceit: the clearest evidence due to the close connection between imagining feeling and feeling;¹³ and the best deceit because dramatization implies the possibility of the self acting other than what she would actually behave. That is, the most obvious objection to the efficacy of introspection as a means of self-knowledge is the active role that the self plays in it, and the more or less conscious manipulation of memories, thoughts and feelings.

However, once again the problem about self-deception is how can one be deceived about something she is doing? For the main difference between make-believe as the mental operation working on fictional engagement, and make-believe in private imagining, or self-observation, is that in the first fictional case we are the audience and on certain occasions the actor, while in mental dramatization we are also authors and actors. Reading the *Ode to Anactoria*, that is, endorsing the first person's voice of the poem or just empathizing with her, Sapho's poem guide our acting or our responses. But in the mental dramatization required to imagine one-self in certain circumstances in order to investigate her responses, the self is at once the author, the actor, and the audience.

For the sentimentalist mental dramatization is in itself a source of self-deception. For in mental dramatization the make-believe self needs not be identical to us, whatever this means. We can make-believe being the first person voice of Sapho's poem, that is, imagine from the inside being Sapho's character, and we can also imagine from the inside to be better

¹³ Wollheim, R. (1974), "Imagination and Identification", *On Art and the Mind*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

person, smarter or more sensitive than we really are. In the latter case we create our character, but in both cases identification is psychologically plausible. In fact, identification with someone similar to us, just a bit better, is quite general, even though the script is likely to be not so good as Sappho's. Literature, and art in general, provides us with models that we will be willing to imitate, but sentimental people, like Don Quixote or Emma Bovary, do not always enjoy the great literature. But this is another topic.

The point of introspection as a source of self-knowledge is to let the self behave such as she would do in real life situations. So that even if we activate mental dramatization, that is we are the authors of the representation, there is a point in which the drama can go on without the conscious intervention of the self.¹⁴ There is a point after which we are no more dictating the make-believe, but the character we imagine to be, ourselves, acts without our direct intervention. We don't need to guide consciously her acting, but the character in our dramatization acts on our mental repertoire and possesses our character. As far as we are the actors, the reflective spectator self can learn something about us that we were not sure or conscious about. But there is no way to control the accuracy of our acting.

4.4. Emotional self-knowledge is really hard work, and that may explain self-deception. But more than the difficulties of knowing about one's own emotions, that what characterizes the sentimentalist is the attitude she adopts towards the knowledge. For she accepts without reserve the picture obtained from mental dramatization. According to Tanner:

Eventually, for the sentimentalist is not hard to be mistaken about her emotions not only due to the nature of feelings, but also for the attitude adopted by the self towards herself. For it is characteristic of the sentimental emotion as a form of self-deception that it is resistant to falsification. The sentimentalist lacks a collaborative attitude for testing her emotions. It is characteristic for sentimentalist to inhibit those checking devices which are available, though hard to handle, for interrogating one's experiences, for asking whether one's

¹⁴ Wollheim, *loc.cit.*, p. 36.

feelings are primarily controlled by their object if they have one, and what *kind* of communication they are maintaining with it.¹⁵

The reason why the sentimentalist resists to test her emotions is often said to be that she has the emotion for “its own sake”, what causes her to lose contact with the object of the emotion. In separating from its object the emotion tends to feed on itself, and the belief about the object and the object itself are merely instrumental. The sentimental person in fact tends to react in the same way, and with same intensity to different objects, and in different contexts. She is predictable in her reactions, as the object is minimally relevant to her responses. The love lover falls in love for every person over whom to project his imaginings, the righteous indignant protest against all unfair situations without minding whom it affects, or if it is really injustice the cause of the harm. That is why Tanner points to the relevance of the kind of communication that the feeling keeps with its object, and he suggests that asking for this communication is a way to test our emotions.

According to D-H. Lawrence famous words: “We all want to have certain feelings: feelings of love, of passionate sex, of kindness and so forth”.¹⁶ At the core of sentimental emotions may be a desire of having an intense emotional life, which is satisfied vicariously. The desire to feel passionately is source of the disconnection between feeling and object. I think that a sentimental emotion has the wrong *kind* of communication with its object because the emotion rises from a desire with no connection to the object. The desire influences the development of attitudes towards objects that do not actually provoke the wanted feelings, attitudes that are surrogates of emotions rooted in desires and attitudes harder to obtain and less subjected to manipulation. The object may well be worthy of the feeling, sentimentality may sensitize us to certain features of the

¹⁵ Tanner, *op. cit.*, p.100.

¹⁶ The whole fragment goes: “We all want to have certain feelings: feelings of love, of passionate sex, of kindness and so forth. Very few people really feel love, or sex passion, or kindness, or anything else that goes at all deep. So the mass just fake these feelings inside themselves. Faked feelings! The world is all gummy with them. They are better than real feelings, because you can spit them out when you brush your teeth; and then you can fake them afresh again” (D-H Lawrence, *John Galsworthy*”, cited in M. Budd (1995), *Values of art*, London, Penguin, p. 96.)

world that deserve attention, and may motivate us for action, as Solomon pointed out. But instead of spontaneously reacting to certain objects or events, the sentimentalist makes a voluntary move to consider object or event good occasions to express the adequate feelings, and to satisfy even if only imaginatively her desire to undergo these feelings. The sentimentalist fabricates the emotion because she knows the kind of objects that stimulates genuinely the feeling. But the conditions of a genuine or deep emotion have not grown in her. And once the feeling has been expressed, it nourishes itself, and it is not surprising that the object that served to excite it loses force, or disappears, since it does not belong to the causal story of the sentimental emotion, whose real cause is the desire related to one own life and self-image.

Actually the desire may be so forceful and its satisfaction so gratifying that the tendency to indulge in fabricated feelings overwhelms the sentimental person. As Tanner claimed we all are more or less sentimental depending on certain objects or others –pets, children, injustice, love, or time past. And adult life cannot be valuable without introspection, which is so close to the dangers of dramatization, and without memory and melancholy, which are so easily sentimental.

5. Self-Knowledge and Sincere Expression

In paragraph § 4.2 above I said in passing that self-knowledge might well amount to sincere expression. I can't defend the idea here but referring to the sentimentalist, the basic reason of her self-deceit because she is untrue to herself. She indulges in faked real or make-believe expression, and the inaccuracy of the feelings she undergoes can be matched against nothing else but her own sincere expression. That is why there is no easy way to avoid sentimentality, but emotional, basically expressive, education. To finish I want to suggest two routes emotional education can take. The two of them turn to be aesthetic in character, each referring to the two sources of sentimental feelings that I have been analysing. In the first place, acquaintance with good literature (and art) would make our make-believe richer and deeper, less fond to bright but shallow feelings. The second form of emotional education is expressive learning.

According to James emotional education consists in going against the expression of those feelings that seem suspicious of being too nice or intense to be true:

There is no more valuable precept in moral education than this, as all who have experience know: if we wish to conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in our selves, we must assiduously and in the first instance cold bloodedly, go through the *outwards motions* of those contrary dispositions we prefer to cultivate.¹⁷

James' precept however seems hard to follow, and not without risks. I shall point briefly to some of the risks that threaten education against sentimentality: first, the risk of insensitivity. Repressing (the expression of) emotions that are suspicious of distorting reality, dislocate from its objects, or cause pleasure comes close to repress all kinds of emotions. To that extent, it is obviously better to be sentimental than insensitive. Besides inhibiting the expression of those conditions that we "prefer to cultivate", we might miss many of the pleasures of life: not just to feel, but also to share the feeling.

A second risk that Solomon put in the foreground is that criticism of sentimentality may well be paradoxically a sign of self-deception: "the attack on sentimentality is wrongheaded and, possible worse, a matter of self-deception or serious self-denial"¹⁸. At the core of the deceiving may lay a fear of vulnerability, frustration, or incapacity to bear pain in the world, as Solomon convincingly made the case about Nietzsche's refusal of *Mitleid* or compassion.

Third is the risk of confusing "sentimentality" with "emotional generosity", in Tanner's terms. Contrary to the sentimentalist, the emotional generous behaves freely on her emotions, "without anxiety about the point and value of doing it"¹⁹. This anxiety characterises sentimental expression,

¹⁷ James, W., *Loc. Cit.* p. 198. I owe this particular idea, and inspiration for my whole conception of sentimental self-deception to Manuel Hernández Iglesias (2007), "La voluntad de no creer", <http://philpapers.org/asearch.pl?pubn=AnálisisFilosófico> *Análisis Filosófico* 27 (1): 5-22.

¹⁸ Solomon, *op. cit.* 19.

¹⁹ About emotional generosity Tanner declares: "... I take to be (emotional generosity), together with vitality, to which it is closely linked, the most desirable of all human qualities." Tanner, *loc. cit.*, p. 104.

contrary to the easiness of sincere expression. And that is the main reason why I consider sentimentality to be aesthetically flawed. Sentimental expressions often make manifest the expresser's anxiety, in need of being reinforced in the feeling and recognised by the others. There is nothing worse for expression than being overworked. That is also why sentimentality in art is linked to kitsch and the use of clichés.

As Solomon ironizes in the fragment mentioned at top of this paper, we are usually timorous to confront big or intense expressions of emotion. Expression has not primarily a communicative, rhetoric, cathartic, or other purpose, but it is rather the outer counterpart of a mental state. The spontaneity that characterises the emotional generous is a mark of sincerity, but social life, the other's eyes, and our own self-consideration make us nearly always anxious about expression. May be only sense of humour can help us to accept the possibility that our sincere emotions may pass unrecognized and our sentimental ones detected.

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The Fall of Reason and the Rise of Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I'll argue that it is only when the mantle of high reason and absolute rationalism is (through Kant) shown to rest upon the presumption of unconditioned qualities, does aesthetics come into own as the embodiment of moral reason and disinterested judgement. By this I'm arguing that the *fall* of reason is more important for the development of aesthetics than the traditional separation between sense and intellect entertained by Leibniz, Wolff and Baumgarten.

The above argument is addressed by examining transformations to the practice of reason as it shifted from the high reason of Leibniz and Wolff to the critique of reason in which Kant outlays the limits and virtues of reason.

There are therefore three stages I want to take the listener through. The *first* entails briefly describing the status of reason throughout much of the eighteenth century and how figures such as Wolff and Leibniz contrasted intellect and sensation. The *second* part describes the challenges that Kant brings to practice of reason – most notably how reason often exceeds its own limits and must call upon the unconditioned to complete itself. The *third*, as the core of the argument, demonstrates that the unconditioned quality of moral reason combined with disinterested judgement transforms the traditional stigma of art as a “confused” form into the “complex” example of higher order thinking.

I. Argument

The core of this argument is never going to be neatly contained – its stage opens up just as the eighteenth century closes and represents the intersection of events which have a definitive effect upon a modern day conception of the arts. In this presentation I want to argue that within the age

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of aesthetics the status of reason itself had a far greater effect upon the modern artistic movement than any formal aesthetic theory which tries to address a theory of art. More specifically, what I'm arguing is that the modern conception of art owes a great deal to how reason, exceeding its own limits, is reconceptualised by Kant for the sake of moral reason.

There are, immediately, a number of problems this argument has to address. Firstly, one is not so much a problem, but a necessary explanation. This paper is titled "The fall of reason and the rise of aesthetics" – but I'm not claiming that reason falls out of sky with a great thump. I'm using the 'fall of reason' as one might say 'the fall of an empire' – the high optimism in which reason was held during the early parts of the 18th century faded towards the end of it. It is not a matter of reason suddenly becoming useless – but a manner of knowing its limits. Secondly, whilst the late eighteenth century is boom time for aesthetics, I don't believe the growth and interest in the arts has much to do with a "science of the senses".

How can I possibly make this outrageous claim? There are two factors which strongly influence this argument. *One is the timing in which the plastic arts become autonomous*, and *the other is the direction the arts take after becoming autonomous*. Autonomy (to describe it in very general terms) is the period in which the status of the plastic arts shifts from a discipline which is conceived in terms of technique, skill and craftsmanship, to one that equals the status and independence of poetry or music. Given the merits of Renaissance painting and sculpture it seems logical that the plastic arts should have granted this autonomy long before the age of reason. I think it is altogether revealing that it happens at this particular point in time. There has been almost two thousand years of philosophical discussion concerning the role of the imaginary – and in that period it has always been regarded by philosophers as beneath language and reason. At best it was regarded as a confused form of reason, at worst the painted imitation represented a form of deception that impressed fools and children.

The other factor is the direction that art takes after this autonomy. In fifty short years the confidence to depart from literal representation gives birth to the modern artistic period. I'll argue that the character of modernism cannot be explained with reference to aesthetics alone – but must draw upon the status of reason itself. This isn't a problem that aesthetics normally concerns itself with, but the manner in which it influences

a particular fusion of moral and aesthetic judgement arises for problems concerning the short-comings of reason itself. The other problem is that the correspondence between moral and aesthetic qualities is well known – the association between beauty and goodness is archaic – why should Kant's conception make any difference? For that matter why should this focus solely on Kant? What about Baumgarten, Schiller, Hegel and perhaps even Schopenhauer? The first will be addressed by characterising the age of reason and the ideals that it holds, along with the criticisms directed at that very ideal. The second, concerning the focus upon Kant, is something I'll return to towards the end – once all the cards on the table (so to speak). Apart from these foundations, the third section will focus on a number of principles within Kant's moral reason that became instrumental to a modern conception of art.

2. The Age of Reason

I'm going to describe the philosophical mood of reason and rationality in the eighteenth century because there is quite a marked difference by the time Kant is through with it. It is also useful because the concern for reason and rationality is not solely a German preoccupation but is also well developed amongst English philosophers. Both of these traditions sought to modernise philosophy by attempting to separate what they perceived as the virtues of philosophy, from the background of religious and theological ties. In a sense the quest for absolute reason is philosophy's striving for autonomy.

To talk about the age of reason is to describe the kind of problems philosophers were reacting against. With the rise of science in the seventeenth century advocates such as Francis Bacon were heavily critical of the scholastic system in which one could teach medicine without ever having any practical experience – the classical method of consulting the old masters was indeed a science based upon the empty authority of antiquity. To generalise vastly, the threat that science would largely consume philosophy gave rise to its strict emphasis upon reason and rationality as a means of distancing themselves from some of the more nefarious aspects of religion and spirituality. This is not to say it was a rejection of God and religion – to the contrary reason and rationality sought to fortify the morals and

teachings of God without the ultimate fallback upon holy ghosts, miracles and supernatural beings.

If one could imagine the most perfect case of rationalism it would be one in which philosophy cannot draw upon indeterminate, incomplete or confused notions to form an argument. Reason and rationality was meant to epitomise the clarity of logical argument in which the parts and their functions could be discerned clearly in relation to the whole argument. Reason and rationality were meant to liberate us from the manner in which history and culture conditions arguments. The vision thus afforded by this was meant to pave the way for an absolute clarity of thought.

One more thing I need to comment on concerning the age of reason is the division it held between thought and sensation. Leibniz speculated that if we could break perception down into its component parts, then we would be able to access reality directly (Beiser, 2009, p. 39). The point Leibniz is making is that the world exhibits a unity to the senses which appears “composite” – we can perceive the unity of the thing presented but its components, in his words, appear to us as “confused” – not chaotic, but blended in such a way we cannot identify what makes this object different from others. For Leibniz aesthetic comprehension is certainly a lesser form of cognition. Whilst the sensory took in the surface of things, it was the intellect that penetrated the inner workings of a thing. This is a key distinction – and one I’ll return to later when thinking about changes to how we perceive art.

3. The Fall of Reason

If we observe that art’s autonomy emerged at the height of conversation concerning aesthetics we could be mistaken in thinking that the intense discussion alone somehow elevated the arts into their own separate domain. Whilst I’m not denying that the seriousness for which Leibniz, Wolff and Baumgarten applied to the question of sensation, it is revealing that art emerges at the point in which the strictness of reason and rationality is reigned in by Kant’s critique of reason. In his own way Kant reconciled some serious doubts concerning the practice of reason. I’ll return to this point soon, but it is illustrative to quickly grasp some of the general problems that such a reliance upon reason presented.

The effectiveness of philosophical reason has long been disputed by sceptics going all the way back to the pre-Socratics. Gorgias, often called both a nihilist and sophist, expressed this by claiming that there is no truth. And even if there was, you wouldn't know it, and even if you did, you could not express it. In addressing the plight of reason in the eighteenth century the primary source of scepticism emerges from the English philosopher David Hume. There are others, but Hume's influence is curious in at least two respects – one is the survival of the imagination amidst the decimation of reason, and secondly his influence upon Kant's contemporary Johann Georg Hamann.

In the *Treatise of Human Nature* Hume argues that metaphysics has become so obscure that every argument takes a great deal of attention to work our way through abstruse concepts. Hume's *empiricism* is based upon a radical distrust of reason as the improbity of the passions generating rules unto themselves.

He examines this weakness by pulling apart the traditional notion of justified reason by arguing that reason is often a well founded case of inference and probability. The probability of past conditions causing an event leads us to a belief in reason concerning the casual relations between objects. However, Hume argues that this is hardly a solid foundation for the establishment of facts. Throughout section three of the *Treatise*, Hume repeatedly demonstrates that the certainty of reason is a tenuous claim. He believes that all reasoning is nothing more than a comparison and discovery of relations between two or more objects. His final claim is that we have no reason to draw any inference beyond the objects we have experienced. It so falls that the imagination plays an exponential role in continuing above and beyond the dictates of experience. Imagination allows us to form the identity by joining together successive and resembling ideas.

What I've just described is Hume's blunt application of reason upon reason itself – which, as he describes it, is perpetually diminished the more we apply reason.

Hamann, a contemporary of Kant, takes up the scepticism of Hume as the basis for his attack upon the enthusiasm for pure reason. Hamann extends this considerably by arguing that the process of reasoning cannot be isolated from culture, language, history and religion. Hamann's critique

of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* not only encapsulates his disagreement with the enlightenment as a whole, but also Kant's transcendental reason as fundamentally misled by an abuse of language which seeks to separate itself from the physical world. Hamann likens this urge to isolate reason to a type of despotism in the sense that reason becomes almost like a rule unto itself. He accused those who pursued reason as attempting to emulate the mind of God and went so far as to describe original sin not in terms of sexuality, but in the overemphasis upon reason itself (Griffith-Dickson, 2007, §II).

These are two positions which question the status of reason. They describe the manner in which reason fails on two accounts. One is the process by which reason consumes itself, the other is the process by which reason consumes all the human values that cannot be substantiated through reason, but exist in spite of it. The former points to reason's inadequacy as a method in itself, the later places stress upon human complexity.

In the preface to his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant acknowledges that reason often transcends its own powers – capable of imagining questions it cannot ignore, yet for all its power is incapable of answering them (Kant, 1929, p. 5). Reason, which depends upon a series of conditions for completion (or closure), eventually reaches a point where it cannot achieve this by the knowledge it has gained from experience alone. Exceeding its own limits, reason oversteps the limits of experience and appearances by gravitating toward unconditioned values which allow it complete the series of conditions. At its ultimate point the unconditioned depends upon nothing else for its significance. Concepts such as God, the soul and the notion of beauty are examples of unconditioned values. But rather than dismissing these as phantasms of the mind, Kant claims that these are the natural products of reason.

In saying that reason has a tendency to move toward universals without conditions he is by no means dismissing the entire project of reason. On the contrary Kant states that unconditionality 'by necessity and by right' is required by reason to complete the series of conditions (Kant, 1929, p. 24). This freedom from conditionality allows us conceive of our own humanity as an end in itself and therefore allows us to form universal principles which cannot be grounded by experience alone (Kant, 1953, p. 98).

4. Moral Reason and Aesthetic Value

By arguing that unconditionality is essential for the sake of moral reason, Kant is mending the criticism that the pure exercise of reason leads to nihilism. Instead of banishing this to the function of inexplicable ideals he argues that this freedom to conceive of the ultimate ideal is essential for moral reason. Kant calls this freedom the absolute ground upon which moral principles are formed – and it remains unconditioned because the concept of freedom cannot be explained either through experience nor can it be observed in nature. He claims that it is only by this freedom that moral principles are capable of producing the very concept of God. Without this freedom it is impossible to imagine universal principles which transcend the particularity of interests. It is by this that Kant lays down the imperative which demands that we, ‘Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law’.

It is worth mentioning, at this point, that by the time Kant finishes *The Metaphysics of Morals* in 1797, the practice of art – in particular the plastic arts begin a transition to autonomy in which they are elevated to the seriousness for which music and poetry have long enjoyed.

To be sure Kant himself realises that the effect of art exhibits a kind of moral presentation. Throughout the *Critique of Judgement* Kant constantly reminds us that *sensations* of “goodness” or “truthfulness” are pleasures which emerge from reason, and not from the thing itself. His argument rests upon the dictum that we cannot know anything in itself, but instead we can only know how the object impresses itself upon the senses. This is not to demote the role of sense – as philosophers before Kant have done – he argues that if the subjective constitution of the senses is removed all relation between objects in space and time – and even space and time itself – would vanish (Kant, 1929, p. 82). For Kant without sensation there is no understanding – and without understanding no concepts can be formed (Kant, 1929, p. 65).

It is therefore the case that Kant says that only morality, and humanity so far as it is capable of morality, can possess dignity. He comments that the value of art and nature resides in the attitudes of the mind rather than any intended virtue or promise. For Kant the actions of art do not

produce effects in any determinate way but rely upon the state of mind which receives it.

Yet the strength of moral presentation in the form of beauty and the sublime is particularly strong in Kant's case. Both examples are deeply connected to reason as a kind of symbolic representation of reason itself. For Kant beauty is a symbol of the morally good. As the beautiful is said to demand the assent of all, its universality comes close to the moral maxim which favours no *particular* interest. It also symbolises the freedom of the imagination – in doing so recalls the capacity for the human mind to imagine God. Whereas beauty is meant to inspire love the sublime is claimed to demand respect – even contrary to our interests. The sublime is given an intellectual character which represents the magnitude of indeterminate reason above and beyond the comprehension of mere human cognition.

It is important to dwell on the incomprehensible character that Kant gives to the sublime. It is something that cannot be measured except through a supersensible impression – one that invokes feelings of respect rather than love and affection. The qualification of what cannot be determined links back to the concept of freedom as a value which cannot be gained by experience, nor explained by reference to nature. It is not so much that freedom is inexpressible – freedom must *remain* inexpressible for the sake of human dignity.¹

As art emerges autonomous it increasingly takes on the ethos that art is beyond rational explanation – by which modernism takes up the maxim that art is not art if it can be easily explained. Compelling art is never without a certain 'freedom-from' prior expectations and conventions. It increasingly established itself along the axis of essence without determination. From the original Platonic notion of essence as a property which cannot be reduced to anything else, the work of art is elevated for its very presentation of freedom conceived without conception – through the symbolism attached to self-definition.

If Kant had not characterised the over-extension of reason as symbolising the very freedom which grants human autonomy above all else, the modern conception of art would not have developed. The conception

¹Derrida comments that the pure sense of beauty that Kant refers to must, by necessity, be *free* – as in detached from all determination (Derrida, 1987, p. 92).

of art about the time of Kant through to Hegel is still conceived of in terms of technique, skill, craftsmanship combined with a medieval notion of science. In his *Philosophy of Fine Art* Hegel argues that the artist, for the period in which Romanticism begins to grow tired, is perfectly adapted, in the material and intellectual sense, to take up the role of science (Hegel, 1920, p. 392). Yet this end-of-art prediction could not have been more wrong. Instead of gravitating toward science, artists rebel against the dullness of naturalism and the rigidity of literal representations. The imprecisions of what first appears to sensation as impressions of colour and light are what the artist returns to. This primacy and directness rejects the ethos of technical precision in favour of an indeterminate impression which connects it with the freedom of the imagination. By this it takes on a type of dignity – a thing existing for its own sake under the measure of its own strokes.

This certainly isn't the only cause to art's autonomy and a movement toward a modern notion of the arts. The key shift can be seen in how art is no longer a "confused" demonstration of reason, but is often described as complex in the same manner that Kant views the magnitude of indeterminate reason when he ascribes an intellectual quality to the sublime. If one has read enough modernist criticism it is clear that the virtue of complexity nearly always suggests superior art. Complexity is no longer the mess of cognition *beneath* reason – complexity without ultimate determination becomes a reason unto itself as if demanding the same liberties as personhood.

5. End/Summary

The argument here is that, to a significant degree, Kant's moral principles have been taken up by modernist thinkers – whether he approved of it or not. The modernist critic Clement Greenberg considers modernism to be, 'the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant.' (Greenberg, 1993, p. 85). What I want to underline is that autonomy, freedom, unconditionality and dignity become crucially important qualities for artistic modernism. Once Kant establishes a system of values in which these elements expresses a kind of moral matrix, it follows that artistic modernism reoccupies a kind

of spiritual void in which reason and rationality had previously ravaged. It is telling, in the late nineteenth century, that the critic G. L. Aurier, bemoaning the fall of religion, urges us to fling ourselves upon the spectre of art as the last hope of salvation (Chipp, 1968, p. 89).

It is probably clear why I've chosen to pick on Kant. It is timely that Kant's particular synthesis of moral reason and aesthetic qualities immediately precede an important elevation of the arts from a kind of "confused" form of reason to a complex example of experience which cannot be subordinated to metaphysics. However, what I haven't explained – which would take infinitely more time than I have here, is that Kant's conception of the arts synthesises a number of different positions which can be seen by examining the works of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume. It is the strength of Kant's formulation of reason as having crucially errant properties – for the sake of freedom and autonomy – that catalyses the very elevation of art.

It is within modernism that art has defiantly moved away from the notion of "content". Greenberg describes art's content as, 'indefinable, unparaphraseable, undiscussable'. This is, to quote Greenberg again, 'what art, regardless of the intention of artists, *has* to do, even the worst art; the unspecifiability of its "content" is what constitutes art as art.' (Greenberg, 1993, p. 269).

Through autonomy we come to trust and appreciate the very indetermination that art often presents to the rational mind – as the modern artistic period matured, we came to valorise this independence as the very essence of modernism itself.

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The Garden — Between Art and Ecology

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ABSTRACT. A widely held opinion is that the aesthetic attitude toward nature is a step leading to an ethical perspective. Such an approach results in the belief that people should change their attitude toward nature and start to treat it with respect, to care for it, or in other words to see it as a partner who has an intrinsic value which does not stem from human attitude or interests. The non-anthropocentric approach is one of the possible and highly debated ingredients of ecological thinking. What is more, such a perspective is often backed up by the idea that we should acknowledge nature's agency. Very seldom – if ever – does anyone analyze a phenomenon that fits within this approach quite well, namely the garden, so the aim of my paper will be to analyze the intersection of the aesthetic and the ethical which is an essential feature of every garden as well as of gardening. I understand gardening as a cultural practice oriented towards nature, a practice whose *differentia specifica* lies in its aesthetic as well as ethical dimension.

The past few decades have sparked a growing interest in the natural environment for the fields of aesthetics and ethics. This trend has been accompanied by an analogous interest from the art world and as a consequence genres such as land art, eco art or sustainable design have emerged.

Although art is not a major field of interest for the exponents of environmental aesthetics or ethics, they do not neglect it, focusing either on land art or environmental art and showing how the aesthetic dimension and the ethical one overlap in these projects in a variety of ways (Carlson, 2000; Parsons, 2008; Boetzkes, 2010). It is noteworthy that it has been recently pointed out that art is a perfect means to promote the concept of sustainability as a quest for a balance among environmental, social, economic, and aesthetic concerns (Kagan, 2011; Naussauer 2008; Prigan & Strelow & David, 2004).

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A widely held opinion is that the aesthetic attitude toward nature is a step leading to an ethical perspective which can be defined as, among other things, treating the elements of nature as subjects (e.g. Carlson & Lintott, 2008).

Such an approach results in the belief that people should change their attitude toward nature and start to treat it with respect, to care for it, or in other words to see it as a partner who has an intrinsic value which does not stem from human attitude or interests. Such an approach is present in aesthetics as well, for it is claimed that we should get rid of the traditional way of aesthetic experiencing and appreciating of nature, because it is based on artefacts and as such it “artefactualizes” nature to some extent, making it impossible to approach nature “on its own terms” (Saito, 2008). It is only when we experience nature aesthetically as nature, the argument goes, that we can grasp for example its emotional values which are objective and are not mere projections of human states of the soul.

Thus, the non-anthropocentric approach seems to be one of the possible and highly debated ingredients of ecological thinking. What is more, such a perspective is often backed up by the idea that we should acknowledge nature’s agency. Thus, nature should not be regarded as a passive realm which only patiently accepts our efforts and has no influence on the results we obtain, so its share in them cannot be dismissed as it is traditionally done (Jones & Cloke, 2002).

However, very seldom – if ever – does anyone analyze a phenomenon that fits within this approach quite well, namely the garden. This may strike one as odd because contemporary literature on gardens is abundant. Gardens are studied in terms of cultural history and art history, aesthetics, phenomenology of Being, social and gender issues, language, literary and philosophical motives, ecosystems, *etc.* (see e.g. Leslie & Hunt, 2013). In one way or another these perspectives assume that gardens are places between nature and culture, or to put it differently: they are places where nature becomes culture, and culture becomes nature. Despite the fact that the ethical dimension of gardens is not totally neglected it seems to be somewhat precluded by their aesthetic aspects – gardens are, after all, places, where we somehow experience nature aesthetically. Nevertheless it is precisely the aesthetic attitude which is inherent to gardens that makes one approach nature present in them in ethical terms, as well.

The aim of my paper will be, then, to analyze the intersection of the aesthetic and the ethical which is an essential feature of every garden. For the sake of the argument I assume that gardening is everything that people do in gardens either as gardeners or as mere visitors. In other words, I understand gardening as a cultural practice oriented towards nature, a practice whose *differentia specifica* – as I will try to show – lies in its aesthetic as well as ethical dimension. What is more, I contend that gardens are places which make people approach nature both in an aesthetic and ethical way.

Even if it may sound as a gross oversimplification, for the scope of this paper let us assume that nature is present in gardens solely in the form of plants, and as a consequence anything gardeners do is aimed at making plants follow their projects whatever shape they may take: from excessive pruning generally associated with French or formal gardens, to loving care so typical for amateur gardeners described by, for example Karel Čapek in his *Gardener's year* (Čapek, 1961) or Michael Pollan in his book *Second nature* (Pollan, 1991). Gardens are, then, places where nature is not pristine, but influenced by culture.¹ Thus, I suggest that we treat gardens as a sort of “laboratories” in which we may observe – as active gardeners or as visitors – a spectrum of aesthetic and ethical issues concerning the relationship between people and nature.

As far as plants are concerned we may note (following Michael Marder, the author of the book entitled *Plant-thinking* [Marder, 2013]), that contrary to Eastern cultures and so called primitive cultures – Western culture has always tended to see plants as uninteresting and their existence as unproblematic. Although we encounter them on a daily basis in many ways, we usually overlook them and treat them as an inconspicuous element of our predominantly urban lives. In a word, even if we look at them, we somehow are inclined to look “through” them as if they were transparent. This is so even where they come to the foreground as economic resources – on such occasions, for example on farms, they are seen mainly as possessing only instrumental value and not an intrinsic one (Marder, 2013, p. 4).

Not only are “plantcapes” invisible for they are either a background of

¹ I would like to avoid plunging into the debate over the status of the culture/nature dichotomy, although, I eagerly admit that gardens are places where it is at stake.

our cultural activities or sources of material energy, but they are invisible as well in the sense that we do not feel any kinship with them: our highly biologically and socially organized life has nothing to do with plants' supposedly simple existence. Plants, more than anything else, are our "other". Marden, thus, asks if there is any way to handle this otherness in such a way as to appreciate plants and respect the fact that they are so different from us and at the same time not to fall into idolatry? Given that it is not only a theoretical issue (as instrumental thinking is not a pure theory for it has deep practical consequences that can be found for example in industrialized agriculture), Marden suggests that we let plants be what they are, but nevertheless we should acknowledge that we use the botanical world for our purposes. In other words, we should care for them, respect their time, processes of growth *etc.* and even if we have to use them we should not treat them as something whose existence is solely justified by our consumption. On the other hand we should not treat them as subalterns for whom we should speak. We had better set up a dialogue with them in which we treat them as equal partners. One would add that if we were to look for a place of such a dialogue and co-existence, no doubt that it would not be a natural park understood as a place beyond culture and human influence – but rather a garden.

Similar ideas may be found in Matthew Hall's book *Plants as Persons* (Hall, 2011) in which he states that we should treat plants as *autonomous, perceptual and intelligent*, (p. 13) underlining the fact that paradigms of such an approach are given by primitive cultures. Hall is well aware that our human interests and those of plants may conflict as they are contradictory, nonetheless people realizing their aims should reduce to the minimum their activities that may harm botanic life. Again, this perspective does not opt for pristine nature as an ideal which we ought to pursue – leaving nature alone is not a good strategy, it comes too late for nature is something to be cared for. And this care should be based on a dialogue – one would say: a cooperation – that is on listening to what nature tells us, which, according to Hall, results in a dissolution of the dualism humans *vs* nature.

Marden's theory as well as the one offered by Hall seem to correspond to what Thomas Heyd calls the „culture of nature”, or „culture affirming nature” which consists of methods of action and perception which discover particular values of nature (Heyd, 2007, pp. 123-137). „Culture

of nature” is then, according to a typology offered by Gisli Pálsson, an Icelandic anthropologist, a form of communalism. Pálsson states that there are three models of how people relate to nature: “orientalism”, that is a domination over nature based on a strict division between society and nature; “paternalism”, likewise based on a division between society and nature which, nevertheless, treats nature as its “other” which is to be protected; and finally “communalism” in which – as in primitive cultures – the division society/nature is not clearly defined and, what is more, society and nature cooperate with each other in no other than dialogical way (Pálsson, 1996).

On the one hand, for Heyd an example of the „culture of nature” is offered by national parks in which, according to him, culture does influence nature but in such a way as to promote its spontaneity. On the other hand, a similar role is played by botanical gardens, albeit the bias of culture, here understood mainly in the etymological sense as “cultivating”, is much heavier. Botanical gardens are for Heyd places which show how human art, conceived more as technique or skill, may cooperate with nature’s dynamics: people and plants are interactive subjects there.

A similar theory which, however, stems from a different perspective and does not explicitly assign agency to plants or nature in general is offered by Gernot Böhme, a German philosopher, who directly associates gardens – not so much botanical as English or landscape ones – with ecological aesthetics (Böhme, 1989). For Böhme nature is always socially constructed in the sense that it is always conceptually and physically defined by human ideas and activities. Ecology, then, according to him, must neither limit itself to sheer acceptance of nature as it supposedly is, nor create new environments. As such it should follow in the footsteps of landscape gardening which consisted of creating within a culture a place for nature as nature.

This is not a place to discuss whether Böhme does or does not fall for a romantic illusion which makes him overlook the huge amount of human art and labour indispensable for making nature look naturally – in reality in landscape gardens there is much less place for nature as one may think. We should, however, notice that for him a landscape garden is aimed at nature’s intention, that gardeners adjust themselves to nature which is not a sheer medium of their art, but due to its autonomy and spontaneity is

at least a co-creator of gardens. Gardening is then an art stemming from, as Böhme writes, a “covenant” between humanity and nature according to which a gardener lets plants be, that is grow, and as a result creates a particular quasi-objective atmosphere. According to Böhme just the opposite is offered by French or formal gardens (again it is debatable to what extent this juxtaposition is justified) where plants are heavily pruned because it is regarded as the only way to maintain gardens, i.e. to preserve the desired shape from nature’s revindication. A French garden may last only thanks to a constant human fight against nature’s dynamics and as such, Böhme states, is the main modern paradigm of the approach to nature which is seen as something which we should control.

In a formal garden plants are reduced to the level of a material upon which certain social forms are imposed and therefore it cannot be a model for an ecological aesthetics. It seems then justified to state that Böhme’s landscape gardens are examples of Heyd’s “culture of nature”.

Botanical gardens and landscape gardens are not the only ones to be associated with ecology: Arnold Berleant, for examples, describes Chinese gardens as embodiments of the principles of ecological aesthetic (Berleant, 2012, pp. 131-146). Now, given the quite wide range of cited sorts of gardens, it seems legitimate to ask whether it is possible to treat any garden – including the excluded ones, such as formal gardens or even gardening allotments in which vegetables are grown – as ecological laboratories?

A garden can be defined as a place where nature is subject to cultivation, the term “cultivation” meaning all the human activities that are somehow in a commonsensical way external to nature but at the same time are a continuation of processes going on in it. Despite that cultivating nature in a garden is a practice which people undertake in their own interest – and this may vary a lot: it can be pleasure, health, eating, giving oneself the desired social status etc. – as they do in many other places, this kind of cultivation is different from other ways of doing it because it considers nature’s interest as well, even if it has only a biological dimension. Thus, gardens may be thought of as places of a particular harmony between culture and nature, which, by the way, follows a very long tradition of seeing gardens as earthly paradises.

Without falling prey to the illusion of such a harmony, one can state – and this is my opinion – that this partnerial relationship is based on our

aesthetic approach towards plants. Gardens are places which – contrary to all others places, including national parks – make us experience nature in an aesthetic mode: on the one hand we pay attention to nature as such and so it can give us some aesthetic satisfaction – no matter how we understand it – and on the other hand simply because we start to notice nature, its formal qualities as well as biological conditions and processes, we can focus on and appreciate its otherness. It is the aesthetic approach that Marder, for example, sees as a perspective inciting one to let plants freely be (I will come back to the issue of the limits of this freedom later on) (Marder, 2013, p. 4). And this is the core of Böhme's argument as well.

In other words, gardens make us look at nature – or engage in it, as Berleant would have it – in a disinterested way. Disinterestedness is not, however, to be understood here as an indifferent, disengaged contemplation of formal qualities, but more in the way suggested by Malcolm Budd for whom disinterestedness means considering nature “in itself”, getting other satisfaction than the one “of the subject's desires that the world should be a certain way” (Budd, 2002, p. 15). Such a disinterested perspective does not exclude, then, a body of knowledge that may be useful or even indispensable for someone to know what he or she has in front of or around him or her.

In other words, nature in a garden may have different functions, may convey different meanings, but is always cultivated and experienced as an object of aesthetic appreciation. Certainly, it does not mean that outside of the garden one cannot take such a standpoint. There is little doubt that it is possible, but nonetheless it is not necessary: neither a crop field nor a wild wood are *per se* objects of aesthetic experience, while a garden and all that is inside is in fact an object of aesthetic experience. To put it another way, if people, for some reason, happen to neglect the aesthetic dimension of plants growing in a garden, they do not grasp them as what they really are, namely as nature-in-a-garden, and thus they do not perceive the garden as a garden. In such a case, they might treat it in the same manner as they would treat a farm field – for example, they treat fruit trees only as producers of fresh consumption goods or they appreciate bushes of lavender only for their scent or to be precise, not so much for the aroma that actually comes to their noses from the flowers but for the future fragrance which will be produced and used in parfums. On the other hand they may

very well treat a garden as a particular ecosystem whose only value is biodiversity.

My first contention is, then, that every garden is a place where we experience nature aesthetically. This results from, so to say, the essence of the garden, which obviously should not be understood in an idealistic or platonic vein but rather in a phenomenological manner: I just cannot think of any other way of defining a garden which would distinguish it from other spaces where we encounter nature, such as farms or national parks, to mention only the two extremities. This is its *differentia specifica*.

Given that gardens in one form or another have always been present in all the cultures and they have been conceived of as particular places other than what was outside of them (Foucault calls them “heterotopias” [Foucault, 1986]), there must be a reason for that. One – in my opinion plausible – explanation is that people have tended to change their attitude toward plants within the garden’s walls. No matter what meanings people associated with flowers, trees, fruits and so on or what uses they would put them to, I think they enjoyed them “in themselves”, that is in their materiality, they took delight in their colours, tastes, smells, and at the same time they admired the complexity of botanical life. In other words, nature in a garden has always been, so to say, opaque, has always received people’s attention. Of course, one of the reasons why it was possible, was that nature in a garden was domesticated and as such could be freely contemplated. What is more – and this is my second contention – the aesthetic experience enables one to discover the agency of nature and so to treat it plants as subjects, or non-human persons as Matthew Hall would say.

Any garden, then – be it botanical, Renaissance, formal, landscape or even a vegetable one – is a result of the “technique of the covenant”. This covenant does not stem, however, from human good will or a particular concept of nature as it was the case in the 18 century, but it is imposed by nature itself. The pruning mentioned by Böhme, or *ars topiaria* as it was called, which may indeed appear as an example of a brutal domination is not so much an autonomous human practice whose aim is to destroy nature’s resistance, as it is an activity which is always contained within the field of possibilities offered by nature, or to be precise – by the plant being pruned. “Trees have shaped pruning just as much as, in the end, pruning shapes the tree” – write Owain Jones and Paul Cloke, the authors of the

book on the non-human agency of trees (Jones & Cloke, 2002, p. 68).

Even if one may think – as Böhme presumably does, just as the visitors of the French garden, but maybe not the gardeners who are more likely to feel the resistance of nature – that a geometrically pruned hedge is a proof of human total control over nature, were it not for the plant's consent for the pruning and its "will" to define the limits of this action, any attempt at showing how people can master nature would necessarily fail – the plant would simply die. Moreover, it can be said that if people did not believe that nature can stand up against their plans, *ars topiaria* would not prove human's ability to domesticate wild nature. The difference between French and English gardens – if we stick to this dichotomy – lies, then, not in dominating nature or not, but in showing or hiding nature's agency.

The agency of nature is probably felt by all those who garden themselves. The two mentioned authors, Karel Čapek and Michael Pollan describe very well how nature – even in the highly reduced form of a yard – resists their efforts of cultivation, sometimes shows them what to do and what not to do. In his book *The botany of desire* Pollan takes – as he writes – "seriously the plant's point of view" (Pollan, 2001). The change of perspective is due to a question that one day he asked himself: "did I choose to plant these potatoes, or did the potato make me do it?" And he answers: "In fact, both statements are true." He writes: "Gardeners like me tend to think such choices are our sovereign prerogative: in the space of this garden, I tell myself, I alone determine which species will thrive and which will disappear. I'm in charge here (...) Even our grammar makes the terms of this relationship perfectly clear: I choose the plants, I pull the weeds, I harvest the crops. We divide the world into subjects and objects, and here in the garden, as in nature generally, we humans are the subjects." (Pollan, 2001, *Introduction*). What he suggests is, then, to treat plants as subjects, that is as beings which can act in the light of their own interests.

And here we arrive at the issue of supposed "freedom" of plants which we acknowledge whenever we experience them aesthetically. The question is, then, how the aesthetic and ethical approaches combine?

It is only when we treat plants as subjects possessing their own interests, we may evaluate human actions in terms of whether they correspond to nature's goals or not. On one hand, Pollan rightly notes, a garden needs

constant care based on nature's needs, but on the other hand – this care involves violence. Gardens are artificial – or we could say: cultural – places, which nature wants to reclaim as it is proved by the ubiquitous weeds. However, whether a plant is qualified as a “weed” or not does not depend on its essence but on whether it endangers other plants. A gardener, then, defends the plants which he or she sees (or is made to see) as valuable. Therefore, a garden is not at all a harmonious paradise, at least if we take into consideration the plant's point of view. If we were weeds, we would undoubtedly have to state that there is nothing worse than growing in a garden for it is only within the limits of a garden that we turn out to be weeds. This is why, contrary to what Böhme seems to imply, the atmosphere in a landscape garden is far from bucolic – power and violence are hidden, but not absent. In this regard French gardens are more “frank” as they patently admit their absolutist character.

However, we may ask what would happen to a garden if we did not set up a covenant with particular plants at the expense of others? Such a garden would rather quickly become wild. In other words, a garden needs a constant cultivation because otherwise it ceases to be a garden. This shows that the violence is inherent to garden, but that it stems not only from human agency but also from the one of nature. What is more, it shows that despite that gardener's activities as cultural practices are somehow different from nature's own actions, they all form a continuum and as a result the perspective which sees gardens solely in terms of either culture or biology cannot grasp what really is going on in a garden as a garden.

Certainly, one could object here by stating that in this regard gardens are not very different from other places, for example from even the most industrialized farms as even there nature has agency (even if we tend to deny it) and human actions are only a continuation of natural processes. Indeed, but gardens as such make this agency visible for they turn nature into the object of aesthetic experience and contrary to national park or crop field they are places where we enter into a dialogue with nature and start to treat nature as a partner on a par with us and not someone only either to use or to protect. The fact that we take into account nature's interests does not mean that we treat them as idols – after all, gardeners care for their plants because they want to get cultural aesthetic satisfaction, but they do not think of what they get in terms of a product, but

more in terms of a gift as David Cooper in his *Philosophy of gardens* writes quoting Pollan (Cooper, 2006, p. 73).

This is why, following in the footsteps of Böhme and Berleant, but in a much broader dimension, we may state that a garden, any garden, is a paradigm for ecological aesthetics. Given that it is not possible to leave nature alone, the question is what form our relationship with nature will take. It may be orientalism, paternalism and communalism, and it seems that the last one is the most profitable for both parties: society and nature. And it seems that gardeners – at least those described by Čapek and Pollan – are human subjects who treat plants as non-human persons and are sensitive to plant-thinking and thus form with them communities which are not, however, devoid of tensions. Therefore such gardeners are aware that the power and the violence are inherent to their gardens – and so they are very much like those who prune geometrical hedges – but this is why they at the same time try to mitigate them, letting nature act on its own – and so they are very much like those who take care of landscape gardens.

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Kant on Human Beauty

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ABSTRACT. The inseparability-problem is a touchstone for a theory of human beauty: If we see someone as a human being, we are aware of the human duality between the mere physical appearance and the character of the person, and exactly this awareness makes it difficult to perceive them separately. A Kantian perspective on human beauty embraces this problem. Kant formulates a character-expressionist theory of human beauty in the § 17 of his “Critique of the Power of Judgement”. The ideal of beauty is one of human beauty. A human being would be ideally beautiful if her outward appearance conformed to the aesthetic normal idea and was completed by the “visible expression of moral ideas.” This theory derives from Kant’s view on dependent beauty and human perfection. Kant’s character-expressionist theory not only acknowledges the inseparability-problem, but adds a normative aspect to it. With reference to Kant’s moral theory, one can argue that human beings, as ends in themselves, should always be judged as dependent, never as free beauties. In this respect, human beauty takes a special position in Kant’s theory of taste.

I. Introduction

Beauty is only a side issue of the contemporary (analytic) aesthetic debate. But if one does not restrict aesthetics to art, beauty regains interest. Our society holds human beauty dear: Beautiful people tend to fascinate, the media are obsessed with them, and many women and men strive for personal beauty. Since the Nineteen Seventies, human beauty is also object of empirical investigations.¹ The empirical research on attractiveness tries to identify objective features of human attractiveness and investigates into the psychological, sociological, or economic effects of attractiveness. So the role which human beauty plays in and out of the philosophical sphere is very different.

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¹ See, e.g., Menninghaus (2003), chap. I/II.

This paper aims to (re-)approach the topic of human beauty philosophically and searches for a theory of human beauty. Inspired by Nehamas, the first section argues that the so-called inseparability-problem is a touchstone for a theory of human beauty: If we see someone as a human being, we are aware of the human duality between the mere physical appearance and the character of the person. Exactly this awareness hampers us in perceiving them separately.² The second section turns to a Kantian perspective on human beauty and argues that Kant's theory of human beauty can solve the inseparability-problem. According to Kant, human beauty is dependent beauty. This amounts to a character-expressionist theory of human beauty.³ We judge a human being to be beautiful if her outward appearance conforms to the aesthetic normal idea and we believe to see visible signs of a moral character. This character-expressionist theory does justice to the inseparability-problem and expands it by a normative aspect. It is not only psychologically challenging to judge human beings only based on their mere physical appearance; this would also be a wrong way to judge them. Human beings, as ends in themselves, should always be judged as dependent, never as free beauties. Insofar human beauty takes a special position in Kant's theory of taste.

2. The Inseparability-Problem

If one searches for a theory of human beauty, it seems as if one first has to decide whether human beauty is only skin-deep or whether true beauty comes from within. In other words, one has to choose between a body-centred and a dualist theory of human beauty. A body-centred theory is a kind of formalist theory. It claims that human beauty solely depends on the visible physical features of a person. A dualist theory assumes that besides this beauty of the physical appearance a kind of inner beauty exists, that is, the beauty attributed to the character of a person.

Even before these theories are elaborated in detail, they are confronted with a major problem. Let us call it the inseparability-problem. Both theories assume that it is possible to perceive the *mere physical* appearance

² See Nehamas (2007), pp. 53 ff.

³ Cooper (2008) calls it a virtue-centred theory of human beauty.

of a person. But think of an everyday situation in which you meet another person. Even if you try to concentrate only on her physical appearance, I assume, you rather quickly start to think about what kind of person she is. We have learned from experience to read certain facial expressions and gestures as expressions of the character of a person. We see the look in someone's eyes, and this gives us clues to what kind of person she is, or at least we hope so. So, how someone appears to us does not only depend on bodily features, or as Nehamas says:

In other words, psychological and bodily features interpenetrate [...] ⁴

Why is this so? If we see someone as a human being, we know that the body that we see is animated. This brings along the awareness of a kind of human duality. Seeing someone as a person means to be aware that she is more than her looks. We tend to distinguish between the outward appearance and the character of a person.⁵ And exactly this awareness makes it so difficult to focus on the mere physical appearance because we immediately start to look for visible signs of what kind of person someone is. In short, the appearance of a person never is a mere physical appearance.

The inseparability-problem does not claim that it is per se impossible to judge human beings only based on their visible physical features. Under certain circumstances, this might be possible. If I show you a photo of a nude person, standing in front of a monochrome wall, looking at you with the most neutral facial expression, you might be able to concentrate on her mere physical appearance. But such a situation is rather artificial and does seldom occur in normal life. So the inseparability-problem claims that it is challenging and hard to concentrate only on the bodily features of a person. Therefore, we barely judge human beings only based on their visible physical features.

If the inseparability-problem describes an observation about how we tend to perceive other human beings, how does this bear upon a theory of human beauty? Assumedly, a theory of human beauty should help to understand judgements like "X is a beautiful person" or "Person x is beautiful". If a theory of human beauty analyses human beauty (at least partly)

⁴ Nehamas (2007), p. 68.

⁵ This is not an ontological point. I neither argue for or against a reductionist project.

as mere physical beauty, it assumes that it is possible judge human beings only based on their visible physical features. But if this is only possible under exceptional circumstances, most of our statements about human beauty remain unexplained.⁶ Therefore, a theory of human beauty should embrace the inseparability-problem.

3. Kant on human beauty

What kind of theory of human beauty can solve the inseparability-problem? A Kantian perspective on human beauty can help to answer this question. Asking Kant for help in this respect might surprise. Kant barely speaks about human beauty, that is, about judgements of beauty whose objects are human beings, in his *Critique of the Power of judgement*. And secondly and more importantly, Kant states that judgements of beauty do not depend on concepts.⁷ One does not even have to have a concept of an object and can still judge it to be beautiful.⁸ But the inseparability-problem arises because we have a certain concept of a human being in mind and are aware that we see a human being. So how can Kant help to solve the inseparability-problem?

3.1. Free and Dependent Beauty

In the § 16, Kant mentions human beauty for the first time in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Human beauty is one example of dependent beauty.⁹ § 16 introduces the distinction between two kinds of beauty, free or vague and adherent or dependent beauty:

The first presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be; the second does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it.¹⁰

⁶ Thereby, I am not committed to a subjective theory of human beauty. Even if one favours an objective theory of beauty, one should take the inseparability-problem serious. Otherwise one would have to assume that human beauty, as mere physical beauty, is inaccessible for human beings. This is contra-intuitive, even if one allows the possibility of aesthetic errors.

⁷ See Kant (2000), 5:219.

⁸ See Kant (2000), 5:207.

⁹ See Kant (2000), 5:230.

¹⁰ See Kant (2000), 5:229.

At first sight, what Kant has said about judgements of beauty so far seems to contradict this statement.¹¹ But Kant has only spoken about free beauty previous to § 16, and so no contradiction occurs.¹² Nevertheless, it is unclear how a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with this concept can ‘enter’ into a judgement of beauty without destroying it.

§ 16 allows of at least three different interpretations of dependent beauty: an additive, a negative or external, and a positive or internal interpretation.¹³ According to an additive theory, judgements of dependent beauty are complex judgements. They consist of a judgement of free beauty and one of perfection. Or, in other words, an aesthetic, disinterested pleasure and an intellectual pleasure, that is, being pleased that an object fulfils a certain purpose, lead to a judgement of dependent beauty.¹⁴ If Kant says that neither perfection nor beauty gains by each other, this seems to support such an interpretation.¹⁵ But an additive theory has difficulties to explain how dependent beauty can be a second kind of beauty and not only a subspecies of free beauty and why ‘dependent beauty’ is not an aesthetically superfluous term.¹⁶

An external or negative theory assumes that a concept restricts the free play of the cognitive faculties in the case of dependent beauty. Some forms of an object are incompatible with the object’s purpose.¹⁷ Although one would judge an object to be freely beautiful, one does not judge it to be dependently beautiful. The following passage suggests such an interpretation:

Now if a judgment of taste in regard to the latter is made dependent on the purpose in the former, as a judgement of reason, and is thereby *restricted*, then it is no longer a free and pure judgment of taste.¹⁸

¹¹ See Lorand (1989).

¹² See Stecker (1987), p. 91; (1990), p. 71.

¹³ See Guyer (2002a).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Janaway (1997).

¹⁵ Kant (2000), 5:231.

¹⁶ See Mallaband (2002), p. 66.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Scarre (1981); Guyer (1997), p. 219.

¹⁸ Kant (2000), 5:229; my italics.

The beginning of §16, however, chooses a stronger formulation:

[...] the second [i.e. adherent beauty] does *presuppose* such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it.”¹⁹

This speaks for a more intimate influence than a mere negative one.²⁰ Therefore, an internal or positive theory claims that the concept of an object and its perfection in accordance with it are necessary (although not sufficient) for a judgement of dependent beauty.²¹ So it is possible that one would judge an object to be dependently, but not to be freely beautiful. This leaves room for speculations about how the free play of our cognitive faculties functions in the case of dependent beauty.

Wicks, for example, analyses dependent beauty as “the appreciation of teleological style.”²² In the case of free beauty, both components of the free play of our powers of cognition, imagination and understanding, are free. In the case of dependent beauty, an object’s concept and purpose fixes our understanding. This still leaves room for a free play because how a purpose is fulfilled is not a priori determined.²³ This ‘dependent’ free play of our powers of cognition is bound to a special aesthetic pleasure:

Our pleasure in an object’s dependent beauty is thus grounded upon the free play of the imagination, but only in relation to how this free play illuminates the contingency of the object’s actual systematic structure in view of the object’s purpose.²⁴

Guyer criticizes that Wicks’ proposal presupposes a conscious recognition of objects’ contingency, which he describes as un-kantian. He objects that Wicks’ proposal is too intellectualised.²⁵

I suggest that Kant’s latter remarks on the aesthetic ideas can help to better understand judgements of dependent beauty.²⁶ The beginning of § 51 states:

¹⁹ Kant (2000), 5:229; my italics.

²⁰ See Wicks (1997), 389.

²¹ See, e.g., Wicks (1997); pp. 392-395; Guyer (2002b), pp. 448 ff.; Mallaband (2002).

²² See Wicks (1997).

²³ See Wicks (1997), p. 393.

²⁴ Wicks (1997), p. 394.

²⁵ See Guyer (1999), p. 359.

²⁶ For a similar idea, see Stecker (1987), p. 93.

Beauty (whether it be beauty of nature or of art) can in general be called the expression of aesthetic ideas: [...] ²⁷

An aesthetic idea is the counterpart to an idea of reason. An aesthetic idea is a “representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it.” ²⁸ No concept can be adequate to the intuition of an aesthetic idea. ²⁹

If something expresses an aesthetic idea, it triggers a kind of play of our powers of cognition. ³⁰ Our understanding tries to find a concept adequate to the intuition of the aesthetic idea, but it has to fail because no concept can ever be adequate to it. This failure brings one back to the intuition. But our understanding does not simply give up. Again and again, new concepts come to one’s mind, are tested and fail.

If one does not claim that this ‘search-and-fail-game’ or a free play of association has to be fully conscious, this description is compatible with how § 9 describes the free play of our powers of cognition. First, § 9 does not claim that no concepts are involved in the free play. All that is said is that “no determinate concept restricts them [i.e. our powers of cognition] to a particular rule of cognition.” ³¹ Secondly, one can understand why our powers of cognition are in harmony in the free play. ³² Our imagination and understanding are in harmony like two children playing on a seesaw. If our understanding tries to put the intuition under a determinate concept, it is on the ground, metaphorically speaking. But as soon as this attempt fails, it is thrown into the air by the imagination. But the seesawing is not stopped thereby. Rather new concepts come up, again and again, and keep the harmonious seesawing in motion. This picture also helps to understand why the free play is a self-sustaining activity, ³³ which animates our powers of cognition. ³⁴ So it is understandable why beauty should be

²⁷ Kant (2000), 5:320.

²⁸ Kant (2000), 5:314.

²⁹ See Kant (2000), 5:314.

³⁰ See Kant (2000), 5:316.

³¹ Kant (2000), 5:217.

³² See Kant (2000), 5:218.

³³ See Kant (2000), 5:222.

³⁴ See Kant (2000), 5:219.

an expression of aesthetic ideas.³⁵

To understand the difference between free and dependent beauty, it is important to see how § 51 continues:

[...] only in beautiful art this idea must be occasioned by a concept of the object, but in beautiful nature the mere reflection on a given intuition, without a concept of what the object ought to be, is sufficient for arousing and communicating the idea of which that object is considered as the expression.³⁶

Kant draws the distinction between the beauty of nature and the beauty of art. It is difficult to generally equate free beauty with the beauty of nature and dependent beauty with the beauty of art.³⁷ The examples of free and dependent beauties mentioned in § 16 comprise both natural objects and artefacts.³⁸ Nevertheless, it seems legitimate to read the distinction drawn in the just quoted passage as one between free and dependent beauty because Kant describes the beauty of nature as free beauty and introduces beauty of art as dependent beauty in the § 48.³⁹ It seems reasonable that § 51 refers to this description. If this is so, in the case of the beauty of art, that is, in the case of dependent beauty “this idea must be occasioned by a concept of the object.”⁴⁰ This implies that the just described free play might not start without a concept of what the object is supposed to be in the case of dependent beauty. One must have a concept of the object in order to see something in the object, which brings a determinate thought, that is, concept to one’s mind.⁴¹ Under this concept one then unsuccessfully tries to put the intuition, but the intuition evokes new concepts, and the free play of our powers of cognition begins.

This interpretation is compatible with § 16’s remarks on dependent beauty. If a concept starts the free play, this is a kind of restriction because the concept, as the starting point, tends to form and to lead the free play

³⁵ For a similar explanation, see Förster (2011), p. 140.

³⁶ Kant (2000), 5:320.

³⁷ See, e.g., Schaper (1979).

³⁸ See Kant (2000), 5:229–30.

³⁹ See Kant (2000), 5:311.

⁴⁰ Kant (2000), 5:320.

⁴¹ See Stecker (1987), p. 93.

of association into certain directions. In this sense, the free play becomes fixed. But the free play, once ‘in motion,’ is indistinguishable from the ‘normal’ free play. Therefore, we can understand why dependent beauty is a kind of beauty and why beauty does not gain by perfection.

3.2. *The Ideal of Beauty*

With this internal interpretation of dependent beauty in mind, let us turn to human beauty. If human beauty is dependent beauty, the concept of a human being and the perfection of a specific human being in accordance with this concept are necessary in order to judge this human being to be beautiful. § 17 makes clearer what this amounts to. This paragraph is the most informative with respect to human beauty.

§ 17 introduces the ideal of beauty. An ideal implies the maximization of concept.⁴² Hence the ideal of beauty can only be one of dependent beauty.⁴³ And the concept of the ideal’s object has to sufficiently determine the object’s purpose. Therefore, the ideal has to be about human beings. Only the end of human beings is a priori determined enough because only human beings are ends in themselves.⁴⁴

The ideal of beauty requires the aesthetic normal idea, that is, the image of the average, standard human being.⁴⁵ But the aesthetic normal idea is not sufficient. If the appearance of a person conforms to the aesthetic normal idea, “the presentation is academically correct.”⁴⁶ It does not aesthetically please, it only does not displease. In other words, the aesthetic normal idea is necessary, but not sufficient for the ideal of beauty.

In order to please universally, something characteristic is missing in the aesthetic normal idea.⁴⁷ What this is becomes clear if one bears in mind that the ideal of beauty is one of dependent beauty. Hence human perfection has to come into play. Something is perfect if it is what it is supposed to be.⁴⁸ Human beings, as ends in themselves, are supposed to

⁴² See Savile (2003), p. 192.

⁴³ See Kant (2000), 5:232.

⁴⁴ See Kant (2000), 5:233.

⁴⁵ See Kant (2000), 5:234.

⁴⁶ Kant (2000), 5:235.

⁴⁷ See Kant (2000), 5:235; (1996), 7: 298.

⁴⁸ See Kant (2000), 5:227.

act according to their rational nature, they are supposed to have a good will.⁴⁹ But the ideal of beauty does not consist in the moral, only in its visible expression. Otherwise, the ideal would not be one of beauty, but of perfection. So:

In the latter [i.e. the human figure] the ideal consists in the expression of the moral, without which the object would not please universally and moreover positively [...].⁵⁰

According to a minimal interpretation, all human beings express the moral because as human beings they are able to act morally. However, Kant adds that what counts as a visible, bodily expression of moral ideas only experience can teach.⁵¹ This supplement only makes sense if not all human beings display visible signs of the moral. Only some facial expressions or gestures count as the expression of the moral. In his *Anthropology*, Kant illustrates this idea further. In order to call someone ugly, bodily disfigurements are not enough.

We should not charge any face with ugliness if in its characteristics it does not betray the expression of a mind degraded by vice or by a natural, though unfortunate tendency to vice, for example a certain characteristic of a person who has the tendency of sneezing maliciously when he speaks [...].⁵²

Formulated positively, in order to call a person beautiful, her outward appearance does not only have to conform to the aesthetic normal idea.⁵³ One must also see visible signs of a moral character displayed in her outward appearance. So Kant defends a version of a character-expressionist theory of human beauty.

⁴⁹ See Kant (1961), 4:414.

⁵⁰ Kant (2000), 5:235.

⁵¹ See Kant (2000), 5:235.

⁵² See Kant (1996), 7:298.

⁵³ Kant says that no actual human being ever conforms to the aesthetic normal idea (Kant (2000), 5: 235). Therefore, some aberration from the aesthetic normal idea must be allowed if one judges an actual human being to be dependently beautiful. What matters, is that her appearance does not displease and one see moral ideas visually expressed.

How does this relate to what has been said about dependent beauty in the previous section? The end of § 17 seems to explicitly support an additive interpretation of dependent beauty.⁵⁴ It states that we can be greatly interested in the object of the ideal of beauty.⁵⁵ If we see someone as a perfect, that is, a moral human being, we take an interest in this kind of perfection, and this might lead to an intellectual pleasure. The passage in question, however, mentions only one and not two kinds of pleasure. And another more important consideration speaks against an additive and also against an external, negative theory. Both theories have to allow that we would judge a human being as freely beautiful even if we had no concept of human beings and no idea of their perfection. But it is dubitable whether a certain facial expression would please aesthetically if we had no concept of a human being and no idea of human perfection in mind. An internal theory, in contrast, allows that a human being can be seen as a dependent beauty, although not as a free beauty, and can explain why this is so. We need to see someone as a human being and to have an idea of human perfection in order to be able to interpret certain facial expressions or bodily movements as expressions of a moral character.⁵⁶ Otherwise we would not think, for example, of honesty, a thought, which starts the free play of our powers of cognition and leads to a judgement of dependent beauty.

3.3. Human as Dependent Beauty: A Moral Requirement

As a character-expressionist theory Kant's theory of human beauty embraces the inseparability-problem. Although the beauty of a human being only depends on her outward appearance, human beauty is not mere physical beauty. Rather interpreting certain features as visible signs of a person's character is necessary to judge a person to be dependently beautiful. Trying to focus only on the mere physical features would interfere with this. So the inseparability-problem is no problem at all if human beauty is dependent beauty.

Assumedly, Kant would even argue for a stronger version of the inseparability-problem. The inseparability-problem argues that seeing someone as a human being brings along the awareness of the human duality between

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Wicks (2007), p. 390.

⁵⁵ See Kant (2000), 5:236.

⁵⁶ See Stecker (1987), p. 92.

the mere physical appearance and the character of a person. Exactly this awareness makes it so hard to perceive them separately. As we have seen, a character-expressionist theory of human solves this problem. The inseparability-problem by itself, however, does not determine signs of what kind of character positively influence a judgement of human beauty. Kant's stronger version of the inseparability-problem, however, not only leads to a character-expressionist, but to a "moral character"-expressionist theory. It can be called the purposiveness-problem: Seeing someone as a human being brings along the awareness of what human beings are supposed to be, that is, of the internal purposiveness of human beings. If I see someone as a human being, I am aware that a human being, that as an end in herself, is supposed to be a moral agent. And it is psychologically challenging and hard to abstract therefrom.

Pursuing this line of thought helps to explain why Kant introduces the distinction between free and dependent beauty in the first place.⁵⁷ With certain types of objects, it seems to be psychologically challenging and untypical to abstract from their concepts and their internal purposiveness. We know what they are supposed to be; we know their purpose.⁵⁸ § 16 explicitly mentions human beings, horses, and buildings, and indirectly representational works of art as examples of such objects.⁵⁹ If this is true, if we have problems to abstract from the concept and purpose of these objects, dependent beauty can explain how we can still judge such objects to be beautiful. This is important because Kant aims to analyse judgements of beauty. If he could not explain how the purpose of an object can come into play without destroying judgements of beauty, he would leave many judgements of beauty unexplained. Therefore he introduces dependent beauty as a second kind of beauty.

So far the distinction between free and dependent beauty has been understood in a weak categorical sense: Although it is not per se impossible, it is rather untypical to judge certain types of objects as free, others as dependent beauties. But does Kant not imply a stronger distinction, namely a normative categorical distinction?⁶⁰ According to such an interpreta-

⁵⁷ For a similar idea, see, e.g., Teichert (1992), p. 45; Wicks (2007), p. 62.

⁵⁸ See Kant (2000), 5:229.

⁵⁹ See Kant (2000), 5:229-30.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Guyer (1997), p. 221.

tion, some types of objects *should* only be judged as free, others as dependent beauties. However, the end of § 16 shortly mentions one way how to solve (some) aesthetic disagreements, and this solution speaks against a normative categorical distinction. Sometimes we aesthetically disagree because one judgement is one of free, the other of dependent beauty. If we recognize this, the disagreement is resolved.⁶¹ If Kant had a normative categorical distinction in mind, he would have offered another solution, namely that only a judgement of free (or dependent) beauty is adequate for this type of object. So he seems to defend rather an optional categorical distinction. Although it might be untypical to judge certain types of objects as free, and others as dependent beauties, this would be still a legitimate way to judge them. We can choose whether we want to make a judgement of free or dependent beauty.⁶² If, for example, we have no concept of the end of an object or manage to abstract from it, we can ‘switch’ from a judgement of dependent beauty to a judgement of free beauty.⁶³

However, the case seems to be different with human beauty. Kant’s Maori-example is one of a judgement of free beauty whose object is a human being.⁶⁴ But the supplement “if only it were not a human being”⁶⁵ implies that this is not the right way to judge a human being.⁶⁶ But what normative reasons speak against it? Kant’s moral theory can help to justify this normative claim. In order to judge a human being as a free beauty, one has to abstract from the concept of the end of human beings, that is, that they are ends in themselves.⁶⁷ But the second formulation of the categorical imperative demands never to treat human beings as a mere means to an end because they are ends in themselves.⁶⁸ Formulated positively, we are asked to treat human beings always as end in themselves. Regarding x in a certain way means to treat x in a certain way, especially if one forms a judgement based on how one regards x. Hence we should always regard human beings as end in themselves. But if so, we have to be always aware

⁶¹ See Kant (2000), 5:231.

⁶² See, e.g., Crawford (1974), p. 114–115; Teichert (1992), p. 45.

⁶³ See Kant (2000), 5:231.

⁶⁴ See Kant (2000), 5:230.

⁶⁵ Kant (2000), 5:230.

⁶⁶ See also Kant (1996), 7:298.

⁶⁷ See Kant (2000), 5:231.

⁶⁸ See Kant (1961), 4:429.

that someone is a human being and what a human being is supposed to be. We are not allowed to abstract from this. But exactly this would be necessary in order to judge a human being as a free beauty. Hence, due to normative, moral reasons, human beings should always be judged as dependent beauties.⁶⁹

If this is true, then human beauty takes a special position in Kant's general theory of taste.⁷⁰ Human beauty remains exceptional even if one defends a categorical normative distinction also with respect to other types of objects. If one argued, for example, that (representational) works of art should be judged as dependent beauties, the normative reasons could not be the same as in the case of human beings.⁷¹ Only human beings are ends in themselves and should *therefore* be judged as dependent beauties.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to sketch a Kantian theory of human beauty and to show that such a theory does justice to the inseparability-problem. The first section has argued that a theory of human beauty has to embrace the inseparability-problem: As we hardly can judge human beings only based on their physical appearance, human beauty should not be attributed to the mere physical appearance. The second section has turned to Kant's perspective on human beauty and has worked out his character-expressionist theory. If we judge a human being to be beautiful, her outward appearance not only conforms to the aesthetic normal idea, but we believe to see bodily expressions of her moral character. This brings to mind a determinate thought. We unsuccessfully try to put the intuition under this thought, but thereby a new thought is evoked, and the free play of our powers of cognitions begins. This character-expressionist theory can solve the inseparability-problem. Although human beauty is bound to the outward appearance of a person, this appearance is not only physical. The character of a person expresses itself in her outward appearance. What we interpret as such an expression influences our judgements of

⁶⁹ For a similar idea, see Wicks (2007), p. 62.

⁷⁰ Schaper (1979, p.90) suspects, but does not elaborate such a special position.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Stecker (1987), pp. 96-98; Allison (2001), p. 291-296.

beauty. Additionally, the second section has argued that Kant not only defends a stronger version of the inseparability-problem, the purposiveness-problem, but adds a normative aspect to it: One must not forget or abstract from the concept of the end of human beings because human beings are end in themselves. Hence human beings should always be judged as dependent beauties, never as free beauties. These considerations secure human beauty a special position in Kant's theory of taste.

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Musical Sublimity and Infinite Sehnsucht — E.T.A. Hoffmann on the Way from Kant to Schopenhauer

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ABSTRACT. Kant's criterion for a work of art to be considered beautiful was the question whether we could appreciate it for its mere form. Unfortunately, Kant had no idea about how to enjoy (or even to experience) form in music. But one of his students had, and moreover, he proceeded from enjoying the beautiful in music to recognizing music as the sublime expression of infinite longing. Thus, E.T.A. Hoffmann bridged the gap between Kant's disregard and Schopenhauer's glorification of music as the highest of all art forms.

1. Pleasant or Beautiful

The state of affairs as established by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* did not offer a prospect for a glorious role of music aesthetics in the 19th century. On the contrary: it seemed that Kant had pinned down music to a very modest position in the realm of fine arts – if music were to be admitted to that realm in the first place. For Kant finds it hard to allow music a separate platform in the hierarchy of arts. In his tentative division of arts in § 51, music has to share the position of the 'beautiful play of sensations' with the 'art of colours'. According to Kant, 'we cannot say with certainty whether colours or tones (sounds) are merely pleasant sensations or whether they form in themselves a beautiful play of sensations, and as such bring with them in aesthetical judgement a satisfaction in their form' (Kant, 1914, § 51).

His choice of the term 'sensations' makes it clear that these arts have little to offer to the intellect. Therefore, Kant found it difficult to decide

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whether even this common denominator of ‘*beautiful* play of sensations’ is not too much honour for these ‘arts’. If, indeed, they have to be considered as mere sensations, they can only be qualified as ‘agreeable’. The condition for them to be elevated to the status of being *beautiful* would require them to appeal to our finding enjoyment in their *form*.

Kant obviously strikes out upon paths that are entirely new – certainly for him. He is stumbling around to find the right terminology, and clearly does not feel at ease here. His search for the justification of his hierarchical division involves a cumbersome detour through the physical and physiological aspects of our reception of tones and colours – an approach that he feels more at home with than the aesthetic judgement of their structural qualities. Only with a lot of hesitation he must admit that maybe, after all, these sensations are not *merely* sensations, but do also include a judgement of *form*. And in that case, we might be forced to consider such games as instances of ‘beautiful arts’. Kant’s phrasing does not betray any sign of enthusiasm for this idea.

In § 53, he compares music to poetry and finds her superior only on the level of amusement; this, however, is not what we are or should be looking for in our engagement with fine arts: ‘For although [music] speaks by means of mere sensations without concepts, and so does not, like poetry, leave anything over for reflection, it yet moves the mind in a greater variety of ways and more intensely, although only transitorily. It is, however, rather enjoyment than culture [mehr Genuss als Kultur]’ (Kant, 1914, § 53).

It is, indeed, one of the most striking paradoxes in the history of aesthetics that the philosopher who even today is identified as the one who broke the grounds for that new discipline, called *aesthetics*, was himself so hesitant to tread these grounds. Kant remains caught in a web of forms – not the aesthetic forms whose mental appreciation he is trying to uncover, but the formal reasoning of the *Schulphilosophie* that he was brought up with. With all credit to Kant for blazing the new trail, it would be left to others to bring in the harvest.

2. Music becomes Autonomous

During the last ESA conference in Prague, Mario Videira brought this issue to the fore in his contribution ‘Kant et la Pensée Musicale du Ro-

mantisme Allemand'. Videira claims that the key to understanding the value of music in the perception of the post-Kantian authors is to be found in the Kantian concepts of *genius* and *aesthetic idea*. Far from denying the significance of these concepts (many writings from the early 19th century testify to their importance), I believe this view underestimates the impact of the 'age of aesthetics', of the *Zeitgeist* of the period in which Kant's notions came to life, that is, were 'historicized'. Notions that were developed by Kant in an abstract, timeless manner, and moulded, so to speak, for the next generation of critical authors to turn them into cornerstones of the aesthetic revolution that was to take place in their lifetime. Notions such as *freedom*, *imagination*, *genius*, and *sublimity*.

A pivotal role in this process is played by a student of Kant's who followed his lectures at the University of his birthplace Königsberg in the early 90's, so in the period in which Kant had already written the three pillars of his critical enterprise: Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822). Hoffmann is credited with being 'the first to speak emphatically of music as a "structure",' (Kropfinger, quoted in Dahlhaus, 1989, p. 7) – in other words: to take the Kantian dictum seriously, that we appreciate the beautiful because of the purposiveness of its own, autonomous *form* – a demand that Kant himself was certainly not able to apply to music. Lydia Goehr devoted a study to the rise of the idea that music consists of *compositions*, 'works of art' to which we as listeners and performers owe a certain *Werktreue* (Goehr 2007); she mentions Hoffmann as the one who 'gave to this notion [of being true or faithful to a work] a prominence within the language of musical thought it had never before had' (Goehr 2007, p. 1). But before focusing on Hoffmann, I'd like to provide a somewhat richer context by reporting a few other attempts to fertilize the reflection on music with Kantian ideas.

3. The Romantic Revolution

Philosophical ideas have a tendency to develop gradually over time. But around 1800, the history of philosophy was accelerated. *Sturm und Drang* took over, and the new concept of *Romanticism* was quickly adopted as a characteristic of many of the new events and tendencies in all fields.

The French Revolution had materialized the insight that contemplations of freedom did not necessarily have to remain restricted to philosophical analysis, but could be fought for in combat.

Johann Gottfried Herder is probably the best-known philosopher (and theologian) to have personally attended Kant's lectures in Königsberg. He did this thirty years earlier than Hoffmann, and therefore got acquainted with a different, pre-critical Kant; he always remained sceptical about the direction which Kant's later philosophy took.

Herder was a prolific author, and we find quite a few fragments dealing with music spread over a multitude of works. These include a discussion on Mount Olympus, where the Muses try to decide which art form has a greater effect: painting or music (Herder 2006). Herder treats the matter in the style of a Renaissance *paragone*, with a surprising yet traditional outcome: painting reaches phantasy, and music reaches the heart; yet neither painting nor music, but *poetry* is the most effective art form, as it is the only one able to reach human *understanding*. Kant would have approved of this conclusion. But Herder's evaluation of music gains profundity, and in his 1793 essay devoted to 'Cäcilia' (who is in fact the Christian appearance of the Muse of music), he surmises that music calls for an attitude that Kant would never have thought of: 'devotion' (*Andacht*). In the context of 'Cäcilia' Herder still speaks of church music, but the appeal disseminates in much of the later literature, including his own: not the liturgical occasion, nor the religious context, but *music itself* demands a devoted attitude from us. We witness here the beginning of the attitude of adoration, characteristic of what the 19th century will come to call 'art religion' (*Kunstreligion*). Herder himself takes this step convincingly in *Kalligone* (1800), a text written in outright opposition towards Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. In his section 'On Music', he mocks Kant's reduction of music to a 'beautiful play of sensations', coming from outside. Yes, the impulse may be external, but what really occurs in listening to music happens inside. We feel moved, disturbed, and forced to comply with the tones *from within*:

Das empfindende Geschöpf fühlt sich *bewegt*, d.i. aus seiner Ruhe gebracht und dadurch veranlasst, durch eigne innere Kraft sich dieselbe wiederzugeben. (...) Der Compositeur fand Gänge der Töne, und zwingt sie uns mit sanfter Gewalt auf. Nicht 'von aussen werden die Empfindungen der Musik erzeugt,' sondern in uns, in uns (Herder 1955, pp. 145/6).

On the one hand, Herder intensifies the corporeal participation in our listening to music; in claiming that ‘experience shows that we almost listen with the whole of our body’, he offers us a very early announcement of Merleau-Ponty’s *corps-sujet*. On the other hand, he strengthens the autonomous force of music in that same process, in opposition to the idea that tone must never be separated from word or gesture in order to be meaningful. Music is on the way to realizing its own freedom, as if responding to Kant’s appeal in the ‘Answer to the question: what is enlightenment?’ Music is, so to speak, ‘emerging from her self-incurred dependency’:

Auch die Musik muss Freiheit haben, allein zu sprechen, wie ja die Zunge für sich spricht, und Gesang und Rede nicht völlig dieselben Werkzeuge gebrauchen. Ohne Worte, blos durch und an sich, hat sich die Musik zur Kunst *ibrer* Art gebildet. (...) Habt ihr also, ihr, die ihr die Musik der Töne als solche verachtet, und ihr nichts abgewinnen könnt, ohne Worte nichts mit ihr, so bleibet ihr fern (Herder 1955, p. 151).

Anyone who despises the music of tones in themselves, and in particular Herder’s beloved professor Immanuel Kant, is well advised to stay away from it: music has conquered its own domain.

These two aspects, both the *physical hearing of music* (rather than acoustic stimuli) and the *maturity of musical sovereignty*, are revolutionary. Herder’s role in the coming about of a paradigm that evaluates music as a power in itself, detached from any non-musical context, must not be underestimated. Moreover, Herder predicts what will effectively happen in the decades to come: even when putting aside all the mythological effects ascribed to music, the natural effects which the musical tones exert on human feeling will be enough reason to raise music from the lowest position, assigned to it by Kant, to the victory stand – ‘auch in Beziehung auf die Kultur der Menschheit’ (Herder 1955, p. 155). This is the process that will eventually culminate in Schopenhauer’s celebration of music as the highest form of art.

4. From Devotion to Epiphany

Around the same time in which Herder radicalized his thoughts of music being ‘culture rather than pleasure’, the first writings of two close friends

began to appear: Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. The latter seems of primary importance as far as their musical aesthetics is concerned, but he died young and the publication of his work came in the hands of Tieck. Already during Wackenroder's lifetime they used to edit publications together, so it is difficult to distinguish exactly who wrote what, for instance in the *Phantasies about Art* that were published in 1799, shortly after Wackenroder's death. What can be established on the basis of their correspondence is that Wackenroder, coming from a Pietist background, was more inclined to the sentimental approach of *Empfindsamkeit*, whereas Tieck felt more attracted to the grandeur of *Sturm und Drang* (Dahlhaus 1989, p. 59). Wackenroder's Pietist background is important in that it helps us to understand how his inclination toward the sentimental experience of music is also informed by a religious orientation that leads to a similar experience of the presence of an almighty God, something which is beyond us and seizes us from outside. We recognize the religious impulse when Wackenroder, in a fragment from the *Phantasies about Art* confesses how he withdraws from everyday life into the Land of Music 'as in the Land of Faith':

Wahrlich, es ist ein unschuldiges, rührendes Vergnügen, an Tönen, an reinen Tönen sich zu freuen! Eine kindliche Freude! – Wenn andre sich mit unruhiger Geschäftigkeit betäuben, und von verwirrten Gedanken, wie von einem Heer fremder Nachtvögel und böser Insekten, umschwirrt, endlich ohnmächtig zu Boden fallen; – oh, so tauch' ich mein Haupt in dem heiligen, kühlenden Quell der Töne unter, und die heilende Göttin flößt mir die Unschuld der Kindheit wieder ein, daß ich die Welt mit frischen Augen erblicke, und in allgemeine, freudige Versöhnung zerfließe. – Wenn andre über selbsterfundene Grillen zanken, oder ein verzweiflungsvolles Spiel des Witzes spielen, oder in der Einsamkeit mißgestaltete Ideen brüten, die, wie die geharnischten Männer der Fabel, verzweiflungsvoll sich selber verzehren; – oh, so schließ' ich mein Auge zu vor all dem Kriege der Welt, – und ziehe mich still in das Land der Musik, als in das Land des Glaubens, zurück (...) (Wackenroder 1799, pp. 148-150).

The identification of aesthetic exaltation with religious exaltation becomes more emphatic here than with Herder. Not devotion, but epiphany constitutes the parallel between the two fields: it is a crystal-clear example of *Kunstreligion*.

5. *Inexpressible Yearning*

Wackenroder's outpourings lead us right into the world of E.T.A. Hoffmann. In today's literature on music aesthetics, Hoffmann plays only a moderate role. He is sometimes used to introduce a subject (both Goehr and Videira offer cases in point), but is generally remembered more through the way in which others have made use of his works, than through these works themselves. We know *The tales of Hoffmann* better as an opera by Jacques Offenbach than as the tales by Hoffmann himself, and we hardly ever realize that one of the most successful pieces of the ballet repertoire, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, is based on one of these tales. Schumann's piano fantasies op. 16, called *Kreisleriana*, have been successful on stage in their own right, but they owe their name to the articles that Hoffmann wrote under the pseudonym of (Kapellmeister) Johannes Kreisler. But even under his own name he played many roles: he was a lawyer, a public servant, an author, an illustrator, a theatre intendant, a conductor, a composer and a music critic. It is in this latter role that he adopted the pseudonym of Kreisler, and in the articles published under that name we find his most important contributions to music aesthetics.

What Hoffmann does is connecting the 18th century concept of the *sublime* with the new concept that emerged on the brink of the 19th century: *romantic*. The sublime had been attributed its place in transcendental idealist aesthetics by opposing it to the smoother forms that attract our attention as being beautiful. The sublime is not beautiful, yet very attractive, and it owes this attraction to the way it challenges our cognitive and perceptive faculties. Kant had cunningly taken advantage of this challenge by assigning an edifying role to the sublime: confronted with the overpowering forces of nature, we realize how majestic our Reason is. The experience of the sublime in nature evokes ideas in us that go far beyond what nature itself could realize. However, for Kant it remains an experience in confrontation with nature only, not with art. Kant could never have imagined any work of art as a vehicle of the sublime.

Enter Hoffmann. He knows where to find the sensorial experience of the sublime: in music. Instrumental music, that is, undisturbed by any words that might impose a literal 'meaning' on the music. After centuries of subjection to the reason-controlled domination of the text, music

has gained independence, and leads the way; ‘music reveals to man an unknown realm, a world quite separate from the outer sensual world surrounding him, a world in which he leaves behind all precise feelings in order to embrace an inexpressible longing’ (Hoffmann 1989, pp. 96). The difference with Kant could not have been expressed more explicitly. No innocent ‘play of sensations’; the world that Hoffmann sketches has lost all connection with the everyday world of sensorial experience. *Unaussprechliche Sehnsucht* – it is impossible to come up to the exact affective value of these words in any attempt to translate them. Yet Hoffmann, like everybody else, remains obliged to Kant. In Goehr’s book, Hoffmann’s quote is followed by the remark that ‘disinterested contemplation, otherwise described as a free play (*Spiel*) of imagination or fancy, was increasingly described as isolated not only from our everyday concerns, but also from our rational faculties’ (Goehr 2007, pp. 169/170). Kant had done his utmost to grant a legitimate place to a disinterested kind of interest, as part and parcel of his all-encompassing conception of Reason; but it was already too late. In Hoffmann’s writings, we have definitely entered the age of Romanticism, where feelings grow stronger than reasons; and music, music alone, is the bearer of these extramundane affections. For music ‘is the most romantic of all the arts – one might almost say, the only genuinely romantic one – for its sole subject is the infinite’ (Hoffmann 1989, p. 96).

6. Beethoven as the Incarnation of the Sublime

A decisive difference between Hoffmann and Wackenroder is that Hoffmann does not only indulge in *romantische Schwärmerei*, but makes its object more concrete by pointing out the genius who has realized all these ideals with musical means: Ludwig van Beethoven. Hoffmann defines Beethoven as a ‘truly romantic composer’: ‘Beethoven’s music sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning (*Sehnsucht*) which is the essence of romanticism’ (Hoffmann 1989, p. 98).

But with hindsight, Haydn and Mozart are also included in the run up that leads to the triumph of romantic music. Haydn is still pictured as the composer who leads us out of our everyday world into the realm

of nature – an idealized nature, that is, painting life as a ‘world of love, of bliss, of eternal youth, as though before the fall’ (Hoffmann 1989, p. 97). Hoffmann does not explicitly mention Haydn’s *Creation* here, but his contemporaries will have understood the reference to Genesis: Haydn had been the first composer to express the moment of God’s creation of the world with powerful musical means. An indefinite suggestion of C minor paints the Spirit of God as it was hovering over the surface of the waters – until the moment in which God said: ‘Let there be light!’, which is when a very definite and fortissimo C major takes over.

Mozart leads us one step further from the face of the earth, according to Hoffmann: into the spirit realm (*Geisterreich*). As opposed to Haydn’s comprehensible love for human life, ‘Mozart takes more as his province the superhuman, magical quality residing in the inner self’ (Hoffmann 1989, p. 98). And after this preamble, it is left to Beethoven to complete the triumph of Romanticism in music, and be hailed as the most sublime of all composers.

In Hoffmann’s writings, it is only natural for the terms *romantic* and *sublime* to grow together. This happens clearly in the review he published of the Fifth Symphony, a shocking and incomprehensible concoction in the ears of many listeners in those days. It may be the single most influential review of a particular composition that was ever published. Hoffmann writes enthusiastically, but with a professional understanding of musical structures that were only globally hinted at by Herder. He speaks as a fellow-composer, and all the elements that were shocking for the public, are praised by him as being just the right notes at the right time. What Hoffmann emphasizes is the inevitability of all the combinations and contradictions that Beethoven confronts us with: ‘the way in which they succeed each other, all is directed towards a single point’ (Hoffmann 1989, p. 100). What Beethoven realizes is the climax of unity in variety: ‘It may well all sweep past many like an inspired rhapsody, but the heart of every sensitive listener is certain to be deeply stirred by one emotion, that of nameless, haunted yearning, and right to the very last chord, indeed for some moments after it, he will be unable to emerge from the magical spirit-realm where he has been surrounded by pain and pleasure in the form of sounds’ (*ibid.*).

It seems to me that ‘the sublime’ feels more at home in such reviews

by Hoffmann than in §§ 23-29 of the *Critique of Judgement*. Hoffmann's review of what even today may still be the best known of all symphonies has done a lot for Beethoven to be accepted and even appreciated by a wider audience. Hoffmann spoke not just as a supporter, but as an expert, whose opinion was valued by many professionals from the world of music.

Eventually, the news about Hoffmann's writings reached Beethoven himself. And his reaction showed how important Hoffmann's support was for him. He reacted with the following lines:

I seize this opportunity of approaching a man of your intellectual attainments. You have even written about my humble self, and our Herr _____ showed me in his album some lines of yours about me. I must assume, then, that you take a certain interest in me. Permit me to say that, from a man like yourself, gifted with such distinguished qualities, this is very gratifying to me. I wish you the best of everything and remain, sir, Your devoted and respectful Beethoven (Strunk 1965, p. 41n).

Devotion and respect were not always Beethoven's trademarks, so his gratitude must have been sincere.

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Transcendentality of Art in Kant's Third Critique

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ABSTRACT. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant provides a transcendental grounding for the judgment of the beautiful. Although Kant believes that beauty can be encountered in nature and art alike, it is commonly held that Kant gives priority to the natural beauty, and that fine art plays a rather insignificant role in *Critique's* argument. It is at times even doubted that Kant has a strong concept of art at all – one that would be compatible with most post-Hegelian aesthetic theories. To this view, Kant's concept of fine art – established as a sub-species of art in general (that is, human production as such) – is an empirical concept, external to Kant's conception of aesthetics as a transcendentially grounded autonomous realm. In this paper, I aim to show that, contrary to this common contention, fine art does have for Kant a transcendental status, which, as I argue, follows from the transcendental role "art in general" plays for the aesthetic judgment as such. My argument focuses on two moments in the *Critique*: deduction of the concept of fine art in § 43-45 and the placement of art in the tables of the faculties in the published and the unpublished Introductions.

1. Kant's Definition of Fine Art and its Interpretations

In § 43 Kant defines art in general as "production through freedom" (§:303, 182)¹ – that is, purpose-governed formation of material objects. From this definition Kant taxonomically proceeds towards the deduction of the concept of fine art, by first subdividing the category of "art in general" into

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¹ All references to *Critique of the Power of Judgment* will be given in parentheses: the volume and page number of the standard German edition of Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1900–). followed by the page number of the Cambridge edition (see References).

"mechanical art" (one that is governed by determinate concepts of usefulness, viz. equipment) and "aesthetic art" (one that has pleasure as its purpose), and then – by distinguishing within the latter category the art of the agreeable (entertainment, as we would call it today) and fine art (*schönen Kunst* – literally "beautiful art," as it was indeed rendered in Guyer and Matthwes' translation, which I shall sometimes keep, so as to articulate an ambiguity, central to my discussion, between beautiful art – as a distinct concept, and art that is beautiful). At the end of § 44, Kant arrives at the definition of fine art as the kind of art that "has the reflecting power of judgment ... as its standard" (5: 306, 185). (In what follows I'll refer to it as the "standard-definition").

There are two possible options of interpreting this definition, which I wish to outline, before I present my own. Both find support in Kant's text, but both – I believe – are inadequate. According to the first option, an influential version of which is found in Paul Guyer's *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (1997), this definition means that fine art is an empirical realm defined by a concept of intention to produce an experience of beauty – i.e. the exercise of the reflecting power of judgment. This interpretation is backed up by a common sense. I empirically know that sonnets are produced to be read by the standard of the reflecting power of judgment, and, thus, when I encounter a sonnet I know that it is a piece of fine art and is to be judged aesthetically. Needless to say, however, that not all of the sonnets I read, I judge to be actually beautiful. Thus, despite its seeming intuitivity, some may feel unease with this reading, inasmuch as in it being beautiful has absolutely no part in the concept of beautiful art.

According to another possible reading, the reflecting power of judgment is a standard for the very constitution of the phenomenon of fine art – beautiful art is art that is actually beautiful. Although implied in some modernist aesthetic theories that treat art as an essentially evaluative term, this reading is counterintuitive – for we do apprehend boring sonnets and ugly paintings as (unsuccessful) works of fine art.² Anyway,

² The theories I especially have in mind are, first, that of Michael Fried who claimed that "what modernism has meant is that the two questions – What constitutes the art of painting? And what constitutes *good* painting? – are no longer separable; the first disappears, or increasingly tends to disappear, into the second" (Fried, 1968: 124), and, second, that of Thierry de Duve, who interprets the judgment "This is art" – an empirical

without some significant elaboration, this reading does not further us towards a transcendental grounding of fine art, while denying it even the empirical particularity of an intention to please, granted to it by the first reading. It is an unsynthesized composition of two notions: the concept of art plus beauty, which indeed has the reflecting power of judgment as its standard, but has nothing specifically artistic about it.

The first reading, however – besides its unconformity to our modern sensitivities – has an internal problem, which Guyer famously terms "the paradox of art" (Guyer, 1997: 351-355). The two conceptual components of "beautiful art" are at odds with each other – as much as having a purpose is essential to art, so being without purpose is essential to the beautiful. So, it appears, to successfully pursue its aim to be beautiful, a piece of art must "suppress its artistic nature" – that is, appear as if a natural product. Guyer rightly thinks that this view is misleading as regards Kant's "real theory of art." I agree with this conclusion, but this is not because Kant, as Guyer thinks, expresses in the "paradox of art" a view, to which he is not committed, but because this view here is seriously misconstrued. The problem is that interpretation of the standard-definition in terms of intention is also inadequate after all.

2. The Chiasmus of the Beautiful

I want to propose an alternative interpretation of the famous passage in section § 45, of which Guyer's "paradox" is only one part: "Nature was beautiful, if at the same time it looked like art; and art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature." (§: 306, 185) Rightly interpreted, I argue, this passage – which instead the "paradox of art" I will call "the chiasmus of the beautiful" – provides an alternative understanding of the definition of fine art as having the reflecting power of judgment as a standard. Being "as if nature" is not a condition (or a technical prescription) for answering such a standard, but an analysis of what is claimed in its exercise (i.e. a judgment of beauty). The identification of beauty in art with its being "as if nature" can be understood only together with its counterpart – the identification of beauty in nature judgment in the usual reading of Kant – as an aesthetic judgment (De Duve, 1996: 304).

as being "as if art." Since, in the same section, Kant argues that the fundamental character of aesthetic response is the same with two kinds of objects, we may identify this character with what is actually the same in the two parts of the dictum: the "as if" articulated within the art/nature dichotomy. Being the common denominator of the two possible kinds of beauty, this "as if" – I wish to argue – is the constitutive principle of the Kantian aesthetic realm.

Now let us notice that the "as if" structure involves a particular conceptual awareness: to see X as if Y (rather than just "as Y") involves an awareness of both X and Y. This is why Kant says that to judge an artifact as beautiful – that is, as fulfilling the requirement of being "as if nature" – we *must* be aware of it as a piece of art. The same goes for the other side of the chiasmus: the awareness of the natural origin of the judged object is necessary not only for the intellectual interest in the beautiful, as Kant argues in section § 42, but also for the very appreciation of natural beauty. Indeed, the very "purposiveness without purpose," which defines the beautiful in the third Moment of the Analytic amounts to reflection of the "as if" relation between nature and art. Judging something to be without purpose is precisely judging it *not* to be art. If the art/nature dichotomy is, for Kant, not only exclusive, but also exhaustive, this means to say that, in this case, we must be aware of the object as a product of nature.

Now I think there is no doubt that for Kant the art/nature dichotomy is exhaustive. And so it is for our common sense. As much as an object cannot be both – an artifact and a product of nature – it cannot be neither as well. If awareness in terms of art/nature dichotomy is a necessary part of any conscious experience of an object, then the concepts of nature and art, as well as the distinction between them, may be said to have transcendental status: not bracketed or suppressed in the judgment of beauty, but quite to the contrary – constitutive thereof. Having an *idea* of nature and having an *idea* of art, I claim, is a necessary condition for having an aesthetic experience.³

³ This point, as though somehow differently, was made by Salim Kemal, who argued that "natural and artistic beauty are not identical but remain as the two conditions for making judgments of taste and experiencing beauty" (Kemal, 1992: 122). The difference between Kemal's position and the one I defend here, is that Kemal insists on natural and

My argument so far suffices only to claim that (the idea of) art – art in general – has a constitutive role for the aesthetic experience as understood in Kant. It doesn't suffice yet to clarify the relation of the idea to the concept of *fine art*. The question remains whether Kant's doctrine has a strong, transcendently grounded, concept of fine art, or does it signify an empirically constituted subspecies of art in general, art that aims – or happens – to be beautiful. As I will try to show in what follows, Kant's doctrine does provide fine art with a transcendental grounding – or at least it may be shown to do so by an explication of some latent or overlooked moments of this doctrine.

To provisionally convince you that such a speculative pursuit is not an act of interpretational violence, but rather a matter of clarification necessitated by the Kantian text itself, I wish to call your attention to two perplexing cases of confusion – or what seems to be a confusion – in this text. First, there is a strange phrasing of the section § 45 title, not accounted for, as far as I know, in the secondary literature. The title goes: "Beautiful art is an art to the extent that it seems at the same time to be nature."⁴ In the light of the suggested interpretation of the section, we would expect the proposition to sound "Beautiful art is *beautiful* to the extent it seems at the same time to be nature" (indeed, this is precisely what Kant says in the text of the section). Confusion it may be, but we may think it points at something deeper if we notice that in the taxonomical laying out of the concepts of art in sections § 43–44, to which I have earlier referred, seem to disclose a confusion akin to the peculiarity of section § 45 title. Strangely enough, in the last passages of section § 43, Kant ascribes to the definition of art in general the very features of pleasure and freedom of spirit (i.e. genius), by which he will specify the concepts of aesthetic and fine art respectively later on (§: 304, 183).

artistic beauty as two different phenomena and, contra most interpreters, argues that the third *Critique* provides support for the precedence of the latter over the former. Having no aim in this paper to discuss the question of precedence, I wish to claim only that art and nature are irreducible transcendental parameters of beauty – of art and nature alike – which is essentially the same in both cases.

⁴ Schöne Kunst ist eine Kunst, sofern sie zugleich Natur zu sein scheint. (§: 306)

3. Art in Tables of the Faculties in the Introductions

To clarify the relation between art in general and fine art and to pursue a possible transcendental grounding of the latter concept, I now turn to discuss the appearance of Art in the published and the unpublished Introductions to the *Critique*, where it proudly stands between Nature and Freedom in the tables of the faculties (20: 242, 45; 5: 198, 83), and signifies the transcendental realm of application of the power of judgment (see FIGURES 1 AND 2).

Faculty of the mind	Higher cognitive faculties	<i>A priori</i> principles	Products ^a
Faculty of cognition	Understanding	Lawfulness	Nature
Feeling of pleasure and displeasure	Power of judgment	Purposiveness	Art
Faculty of desire	Reason	Purposiveness that is at the same time law (Obligation)	Morals ^b

All the faculties of the mind	Faculty of cognition	<i>A priori</i> principles	Application to	5: 198
Faculty of cognition	Understanding	Lawfulness	Nature	
Feeling of pleasure and displeasure	Power of judgment	Purposiveness	Art	
Faculty of desire	Reason	Final end	Freedom	

FIGURES 1 AND 2.

This placing itself provides a strong support for my suggestion that for Kant art has the same conceptual status as the other two notions – namely, it is an idea of reason: a concept indemonstrable in experience, but constitutive of its necessary domain. The idea of nature signifies, as Kant's

explanations make clear, the totality of the domain governed by the *a priori* principle of lawfulness grounded on the faculty of understanding. The totality meant here, however, does not refer to the actual aggregation of appearances but to the realm of possibility governed by "natural causality." As such it is opposed to the "domain ... of the concept of freedom" (5: 197, 82), understood in Kant as an alternative mode of causality: unconditioned spontaneity governed by the laws of reason alone, and, in this sense, the hallmark of reason's autonomy. The domain of the concept of freedom, as the unpublished version of the table makes clear, is morals. The domain regulated by the principle of the final end is, as Kant puts it elsewhere, "the kingdom of ends": the totality of the *ought*, the existence of which is essentially supersensible. Thus, nature and freedom, signify the respective totalities of two ontologically incommensurable realms. Bridging the great chasm between the two, to use Kant's famous metaphor, is what the transcendental project of the third *Critique* aims to achieve by providing the power of judgment with an *a priori* principle of its own. Art, as we see, occupies in the tables the structural position of such a bridge.

But what does art mean in this context? Whatever the meaning of the term here would be, it could hardly be tantamount with the concept of art in general, operative in our previous discussion. Indeed, there are two notions of art involved in the model of the tables. Defined in § 43, as "production through freedom ... that grounds its action in reason," this concept does not explicitly appear in the tables, but belongs apparently to the freedom side of the model. When we speak of a product – a formed object – the opposition of nature and freedom comes about as the opposition of nature and art (to which we had earlier referred as art/nature dichotomy). In its explicit place in the tables, however, art is "the mediating concept between the concept of nature and the concept of freedom" (5: 196, 81). The content of this mediating concept is far less clear than that of the concepts it mediates. Sometimes Kant identifies art as the domain of application exquisite for the power of judgment; sometimes he identifies it with purposiveness of nature as the *a priori* regulative principle of this domain. In all cases, however, although granting it a privileged transcendental status, never explicitly granted to art in the first sense, Kant explains it by an analogy with the latter.

To understand the meaning of this strange concept, as well as its pe-

cular relation to the concept of art in general, we should say more about the project of transition from nature to freedom, in which it plays such a central role. What is precisely at stake in this project? What problems does it aim to solve? There are two distinct problems we can point at, corresponding to the two sides of the "chasm" to be bridged. Both are present in Kant and his commentators, although in somehow detached manner. Yet they have one and the same transcendental solution. On the nature side, there is the problem of amenability of nature to human cognition: systematicity of the laws of nature, necessary for scientific pursuit, is not ensured by the transcendental concepts of understanding, deduced in the first *Critique*. As the regulative principle of the power of judgment, purposiveness of nature is the *a priori* condition for the exercise of this power, rather than actual content that can be predicated in any determinate judgment about the objects of nature. It thus enables the sciences to explore natural phenomena in teleological rather than purely mechanical terms, without pursuing an impossible theoretical demonstration of their necessary presupposition.

On the side of morals, the problem is the amenability of nature to moral ends. Since the unconditioned causality of freedom, strictly speaking, is unconditioned only in the supersensible domain of the *ought*, the *a priori* principle of the final end does not itself ensure that the maxim deduced from it can be realized in the natural realm. Taken (in a weaker sense) as a possibility of free action (recognition of an action as free) or (in a stronger sense) of the possibility of actualization of the highest good, the amenability of nature to moral ends cannot be deduced from the concepts of freedom alone, but is rather something the purposiveness of nature enables us to hope for.

Purposiveness of nature thus is a notion that with an extent of generalization amounts to a notion of nature as a humanly meaningful realm – amenable to human cognition and action alike. As an *a priori* subjective principle it enables us – indeed, prescribes to us – to conceive of nature *as if* its objects were capable of having ends (rather than just mechanical causes) as their ground. This notion – phrased also as "technique of nature" – amounts, thus, to seeing nature as if art. "Nature seen as if art" is precisely what the term art, as the domain of the power of judgment, governed by the principle of the purposiveness of nature, signifies in the tables of

the faculties. This domain, however, does not constitute an autonomous realm in the sense freedom and nature do. For this realm is coextensive with the realm of nature – it is materially the very same realm, only seen *as if* art.

Throughout the introductions Kant states that first, this concept is totally distinct from the concept of art in its usual sense, but – on the other hand – must be understood by analogy with the latter. Indeed, as I've already mentioned, Kant never defines the art of the tables *otherwise* than by analogy with art in its proper sense. Art as the *a priori* concept of the power of judgment is unique among transcendental concepts, inasmuch as its proper (i.e. transcendental) meaning is an analogical one. In this sense, art might be taken to stand for the transcendental “as if” – the common feature of two horns of the chiasmus of the beautiful – which I have earlier suggested to view as constitutive of the aesthetic realm. Before we come back to develop this idea a bit further, I wish to point at another peculiar trait of art's unique conceptual standing. Although the subject case acquires its meaning from the analogous case, the possibility of the analogous case is grounded in the subject case: the possibility of empirical art is grounded in the transcendental concept of art.

To support this claim – that I expect to be raising an eyebrow – I propose the following consideration. As I've earlier suggested, the notion of art in general as purpose-governed formation of material objects is a derivative (aspect, if you like) of the idea of freedom. The production of artifacts is either informed by naturally conditioned ends (and then art – as production through freedom – collapses into nature, and is therefore not free after all) or else art shares the problem entailed by morality: inasmuch as this is not clear how the moral action (action through freedom) can be realized in the realm of material nature, so it is not clear, how a material object can be an adequate achievement of production through freedom: how can art (not just fine art, but any art) be possible at all? What I wish to say is that the possibility of art must be seen as part to the problem of the amenability of nature to human ends. This problem, as we have seen, is solved by positioning of the principle of the purposiveness of nature – that is of seeing nature as if art. The same goes, I argue, for the possibility of art – the *a priori* concept of purposiveness of nature is the transcendental principle that enables us to recognize an otherwise material natural

object as an artifact – that is, as an adequate bearer of human ends. For nature to be a bearer of *human* ends, it should be seen as being capable of bearing ends; for human art to be possible something like art should be already present in nature.

4. Purposiveness of Nature and Transcendentality of Fine Art

The transcendental concept of art (i.e. idea of nature "as if art"), as the *a priori* principle of purposiveness of nature, is discovered in aesthetic experience. As Kant puts it in section § 23, "the self-sufficient beauty of nature reveals to us a technique of nature," and expands our concept thereof "into the concept of nature as art" (5: 246-247, 129-130). But this holds for the beauty of nature and art alike for, as we have seen in § 45, "whether it is the beauty of nature or of art that is at issue: that is beautiful which pleases in the mere judging" (5: 306, 185). This is because pleasure to be found in the mere judging *is* the discovery of the principle of the purposiveness of nature – that is, nature seen as if art. Since this was posed in our discussion of the chiasmus as the definition of beauty in nature, the identification of this very definition with the principle informing aesthetic experience as such may be seen as a proof for the priority of natural over artistic beauty. The chiasmus is not symmetrical, it appears: "art as if nature" is derivative of "nature as if art." But this asymmetry is at least an ambiguous one, for the flip side of the alleged priority of natural beauty – which, unfortunately, usually remains overlooked – is the constitutive status of the idea of art in the principle that makes it a beauty in the first place. Although in many well-known passages Kant does, of course, prioritize natural beauty, the only priority that can be allotted to nature on the basis of the model we have outlined, is that the phenomenon of the beautiful – in nature or in art – claims something *about* nature. Art, however, is precisely *what* is claimed about it – and this is why it is this term that is posed in the tables as the exquisite aesthetic domain.

Moreover, on the basis of Kant's equivocation of the two kinds of beauty in the context of the chiasmus, we have earlier identified the genuine aesthetic principle with what is actually the same within its two sides – the transcendental "as if." I had then suggested that art's unique conceptual standing – the circular relation between the two meanings of the term

– makes the “as if” *the* transcendental content of this term. So what is the principle constitutive of the aesthetic experience as such – “nature as if art” or the “as if” which the transcendental concept of art signifies? The paradoxical answer (the paradoxicality of which stems from the matter at case) would be – both: “nature as if art” is the content of the aesthetic experience, while “as if” is the principle of its operation – its transcendental form, whose name is Art.

This principle of operation becomes evident if we look closer the chiasmus of the beautiful, so as to notice the endless circular movement in each of its sides. This consideration will also bring me to my last point – that is the transcendental grounding of fine art. Let’s begin with the art-side. In claiming that to be beautiful a piece of art must appear as if a product of nature, Kant can be hardly taken to mean nature as the realm of meaningless physical causality. Neither the beautiful artifact should appear as an organism – understood, for teleological judgment, as a “natural end.” As much as a beautiful natural object, a product of fine art should be judged as purposive without determinate purpose that could be represented as its cause – that is, “art as if nature” is actually “art as if nature as if art.” And the chain may – and *should* – be continued ad infinitum. For the nature side of the chiasmus implies an analogous loop. What kind of art is meant in the statement “nature was beautiful if at the same time it looked like art”? If it would appear to be a piece of handicraft or the art of the agreeable, then the pleasure produced by such a natural object would seem as if a result of a determinate purpose, and consequently won’t be the pleasure of the beautiful, which is defined as purposiveness without purpose. We must, therefore, conclude that that, as if which the beautiful nature is meant to be taken in this statement, is *beautiful* art – that is art as if nature as if art (etc.).

In its theoretical positioning as the *a priori* regulative principle of the power of judgment, purposiveness of nature – that is, nature taken by analogy with art – does not require a specification of the analogous concept beyond the general notion of production through ends. Indeed, in teleological judgment, which *applies* this principle, these ends would be conceptually defined. In the reflecting aesthetic judgment, however, which *discovers* or *claims* this principle by the means of non-conceptual, yet communicable, pleasure, these ends could not be represented as determinate.

This means that for “nature as if art” as discovered in the judgment of beauty, the general term of art could not serve as an adequate analogy without an aesthetic specification. Thus, not only does the concept of art play a constitutive role in the aesthetic realm, this role necessarily involves the specification of the concept as that of fine art.

So my conclusion is that, although Kant does not have a strong concept of fine art, constituting an ontologically distinctive set of phenomena, his aesthetic doctrine provides fine art with sufficient transcendental grounding. The interpretation of Kantian fine art as an empirical realm constituted by a principally contingent intention to aesthetically please – not only offends our modern sensitivities, but is also unfaithful to some latent, yet irreducible aspects of this doctrine. The fact that these aspects were probably latent for Kant himself accounts for the strange confusions we have pointed in his deduction of the concept. Fine art has reflective power of judgment as its standard inasmuch as reflecting power of judgment has the concept of fine art as an irreducible component of its transcendental principle. Whether Kant knew it or not, the discovery of purposiveness of nature as the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment – gives birth to the transcendental idea of art in the modern sense.

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Meaningful Exemplification — On Yvonne Rainer's 'Trio A'

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ABSTRACT. Exemplification, one of the most important symptoms for art in Nelson Goodman's aesthetics, is meaningful without denotation or expression. This paper shows how exemplification constitutes meaning of formal artworks. I illustrate on the example of *Trio A* by Yvonne Rainer how pure exemplification generates an intriguing meaning of *Trio A* as a constructionist dance. Given that exemplification is at the basis of representation and expression, my semantics in the tradition of Goodman can, and will, explain how *Trio A* might express ordinary everyday-life movement. However, any interpretation overriding (the network of) purely exemplifying aspects does not do justice to formal art.

I. Preliminaries

Dance, like the other arts, has a specific basic perceptual category, which is typically *dense*. I have argued in Soldati 2013 for the bodily movement and its dynamics to be this basic category. Most of dance's syntactic aspects are derived in one way or another from this basic *fundamental category*. I will call them, according to Goodman, *derivative* or *syncategorematic* aspects. In their entirety they constitute the broad variety of syntactic aspects of dance. The broadness of variety is what accounts for the *repleteness* of the art form in question. In analogy to the *pictorial* aspects of a painting presented in *Languages of Art* (Goodman, 1968, p. 42, pp. 226-229), I would like to outline such aspects specifically for dance. A dance piece is a single selection from the broad variety. *Languages of Art* calls these two features (density and repleteness) *symptoms* of the aesthetic. Any property an artwork has needs to be highlighted to count as syntactic. That is, to be semantically relevant. This is the function of *exemplification*, a further

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symptom, namely to show an artwork's property forth, to highlighten it (what should not prevent art to be subtle). Due to *exemplification*, Goodman's aesthetics provides semantics suitable for non-representational as well as non-expressive art. The present article shows on the dance piece *Trio A*, how this symbol-theoretic semantics is applicable to the interpretation of formal art.

2. Introduction to the Piece *Trio A* by Yvonne Rainer

Trio A is a dance piece by Yvonne Rainer, one of the artists collective of the Judson Church in New York. The piece premiered the January 10, 1966, performed by Steve Paxton, David Gordon, and Yvonne Rainer. Conceived as a solo, the three dancers performed it simultaneously but not in unison. The avant-garde artists of the sixties became famous for their experimental reflections on fundamental issues, like the format of performance, or "mediality and materiality" (Fischer-Lichte/Roselt, 2001, p. 238). I have chosen this dance piece to illustrate Goodman's aesthetics as it is a formal art work whose aspects are comparatively easy to access.¹ Second, *Trio-A* is known in non-dance circles and has entered philosophical debate. Third, for matters of reference, *Trio A* is available online in an historical version: performed by the choreographer Yvonne Rainer in the Merce Cunningham Studios in 1978.² Due to the piece's short length it is uploaded without any cuts, so I can refer for details to the seconds of the timeline.

Approximately five minutes in length, it is striking that the piece has *no* structural characteristics whatsoever. Besides its 'frame' – it finishes as it starts, in a relaxed pose turned away from the audience – the content lacks formal as well as dramaturgical structure: The ongoing movement sequences have no phrasing and no development, either in respect of a story, expressions or form.

¹ Formal dance pieces with interrelated ensemble work are more intricate (see Soldati 2014).

² Film recorded under the direction of Sally Banes the 14th August 1978 in the Merce Cunningham Studio (*Trio A*. 1978).

3. "Aboutness" of *Trio A*, a Philosophical Debate

A commonly held position claims that *Trio A* is about ordinary movement. I concentrate on those authors whose subsequent line of argument is in the tradition of Nelson Goodman. The philosopher and choreographer Jill Sigman suggests various options that differentiate the basic claim: "that ordinary movement could be beautiful or is the stuff of concert dance or is important and interesting in its own right." (Sigman, 2000, p.508) The claim seems so obvious to Sigman that she continues: "*Given* that *Trio A* is a work of art dance, and that it says something about ordinary movement, *how* does it do it?" (ibid., p. 502).

The answer follows Goodman's symbol theory, which has been refined over the course of time. By referring to a supplementary symptom of the aesthetic, the mediate and indirect reference Goodman worked out in *Re-conception* (Goodman/Elgin, 1988, p. 71), Sigman suggests a chain of reference:

(C1) And sometimes it is through these mechanisms of exemplification and expression that they [works of art] are able to represent what they represent. We're seeing something Goodman has always stressed – that works of art work through chains of reference. (Sigman, 2000, p. 521)

Sally Banes and Noël Carroll, based on the same claim, offer a similar line of reasoning, the following chain of reference:

(C2) For the postmoderns did not intend to be offering highly stylized representations of ordinary movement on stage, but rather, samples of it, that is, actual ordinary movement that, in turn, exemplifies the walking, running, and working that comprise everyday life. (Banes & Carroll, 2006, p.66)

Both chains of reference offered by Sigman, as well as by Banes and Carroll depend on the following assumption (A).

Assumption (A): There is "actual ordinary movement" in the piece.

If (A) is the case and ordinary movements are part of the piece, they can serve as samples.

Walking, running, and even carrying mattresses were common devices used in the performances of the avant-garde Judson Dance Theatre choreographer, Yvonne Rainer. That is why these dancers were called pedestrians in the art scene. However, I insist, we do not see these activities in *Trio A*. In fact, there is not one casual movement from head to toe, even for a second. There is a walk, though it is on the spot and without arms (47"). We find the accompanying arm (swings) two minutes later (2:47"). This time the legs are still. We mostly find *parts* of ordinary movement.

If it is not the case that *Trio A* has samples of ordinary-life-movements, then Sigman still has a suggestion of how the dance could signify ordinary movement:

(C3): „[...] *Trio A* signifies through chains of reference. In particular, it represents ordinary movement through the exemplification of *certain* properties we *associate* with ordinary movement." (Sigman, 2000, p. 524, my emphasis)

How exactly do we associate certain properties of *Trio A* with ordinary movement? What exactly is this association in a semantics based on the tradition of Goodman? I suggest, as Sigman is not very precise on it, the following answer.

Let us enumerate the properties which Sigman attributes to the piece: lumpy, sloppy (ibid. p. 512), monotonous, distracted averted gaze. I add some motoric or mechanical movement involved in the piece like dangling, fanning flies, and to wipe a surface. (We keep 'repleteness' in mind, that is: how varied the syntactical aspects may be). Subsequently we list all possible human activities, a *realm* in the sense of Languages of Art (Goodman, 1968, pp. 72-74), on a scale representing the involved dynamics, beginning by low energy to high energy activities. The scale begins with unconscious or sleep-like movements, then passes casual activities, followed by more ambitious (e.g. professional) tasks, then competitive ones such as can be found in sports, or actions linked to extreme feelings (fear/escape, aggression/attack etc.) The attributes mentioned by Sigman we all find instantiated in the scale segment where unconscious or casual movements are

situated. That is monotonous, sloppiness, distracted averted gaze etc. belong to the casual movements' *range*. We could therefore state that *Trio A* exemplifies a specific dynamic that it shares with (most) casual activities.³ Even if there are some "accents" or "staccato" movements in our ordinary everyday life, nevertheless we do not take them to be typical:

But unlike we thought at first, it [*Trio A*] doesn't exemplify ordinary movement *per se*; it exemplifies properties which we take to be properties of ordinary movement. These properties - like inflectedness, even pacing, lack of performative focus, and seeming lack of effort - are properties we associate with ordinary movement. [...] rightly or wrongly we take them to be properties typical of the sort of movement we commonly see. (Sigman, 2010, p. 521)

As I understand Goodman, instead of 'associate' he would say: *Trio A* does not literally exemplify ordinary movement but metaphorically. The structure of the original realm, namely to have ordinary movement listed among the low energy activities, is transferred to the artwork. A transfer of structure is how Goodman defined expression.

4. Constructionist Aspects of *Trio A*, an Alternative Approach

I will present in the following a counterproposal to the approach described above as 'aboutness'. I consider *Trio A* as a purely formal artwork, not being 'about', only exemplifying some of its features. My approach restrains from considering contextual features or art historical assumption as did Sigman, Banes, and Carroll, but above all Susan Leigh Foster in *Reading Dancing* (Foster, 1986, p. 188). Without taking aesthetic programmatic statements of the artists (like the No-manifesto)⁴ into account, my approach concentrates on pure movement analysis. I therefore follow a

³ Without going here into details, the term 'share' is to be understood as the term 'overlap' Goodman used in *Structure of Appearance*: "Instances of a color may be discrete in time or space or both, but they still have the color as a common part. The similarity of these instances to one another is thus construed as involving literal part identity, ie. overlapping." (Goodman, 1977, p. 169)

⁴ The so-called "No-manifesto" (Rainer, 1965, p. 178) rejects explicitly the performative, representative and expressive aspects of dance.

method of movement analysis which has recently been elaborated upon, the *movement inventory procedure* (MIP) by Claudia Jeschke (Jeschke, 1999). Its focus is on the motoric, mechanical process of the body in dance, and so on my basic category. It aims to collect movement aspects that can count as typical for a dance piece under investigation. This movement profile Jeschke calls motoric identity (Jeschke, 1999, p. 152). What MIP considers thus to be specific for a dance piece can safely count as syntactic, i.e. relevant for meaning, in my semantics, too.

I will proceed as follows: a) To describe the (triple) results of MIP applied to *Trio A* one by one. b) To argue for their emphatic status in order to justify why the respective aspects, the results, are exemplified rather than only instantiated. Having done so in the case of each of the three dominant formal aspects, I will subsequently present a subtle way of emphasis particular to artworks: the mutual emphasis through the interrelatedness of the syntactic aspects.

4.1. *Dominant Formal Aspects of a Constructionist Dance*

Having applied the MIP to *Trio A* it leads to the following – triple – results:⁵

1a) The dominant quality of the dance piece is, not surprisingly, its dynamics: it has a continuous low-energetic dynamics. The attributes of Sigman are therefore valid: “lumpy, sloppy quality”, MIP would add 'heavy' (in respect of weight use) without strain (in respect of applied force), and above all without any (visible) "regulating" or "modulation" (Jeschke, 1999, p. 57). In respect of the use of time and space, *Trio A*'s dynamics can be situated in the middle range of Laban's so-called Effort-cube (Laban, p. 24). It is neither minimal nor maximal in its (intentional) time or space use.

1b) The features which emphasize the specific dynamic is its continuous, perseverance and invariance. With the words of Goodman, the dance-piece's dynamics are 'small in size'. An analogy would be a monochrome picture that is small in size with regard to the colour category (see Goodman, 1977, p. 183). Goodman calls such aspects *derivative aspects*, i.e. derived from the basic category colour or dynamics. Interestingly, Goodman

⁵ *Trio A* is one of four case studies analysed by MIP in: Soldati 2014.

remarked that such derivative features are more striking than the underlying specific quality: "the pattern of qualia in a presentation is often noticed before the several qualia themselves" (Goodman, 1977, p. 189).

The missing modulation prohibits any evolution of a swing, *élan* and also of movement phrases. Without phrases the dance is left with small piecemeal-cut metronome-sized movement.⁶

We can agree that monotony is an undoubted mean of emphasis. But why should the specific middle-range dynamics be relevant? We could imagine the same piece danced with a strained muscular tonus. It would change the entire dance. We could imagine the same piece danced in an elevated manner (balletic-light), which would likewise contrast to *Trio A*. But to jump in a sloppy mode, as Rainer does, to carry out some balletic moves in a careless way is a distinct artistic choice specific to *Trio A*.

2a) The second dominant formal aspect MIP made an inventory of is the isolation of body parts (specifically whole limbs). There are numerous isolated limbs movements; we mentioned the walk on the spot, followed by dangling arms (without leg moves), only two minutes later. Another instance of isolation is the repeated circling of the head without any organic bodily involvement or previous motivation (57"-59").

2b) What renders exemplified isolation? On the one hand, isolation becomes apparent if a complementary movement-pair appears in separated parts and delayed. The delay makes us conscious of their 'belonging together', like puzzle-pieces. On the other hand, an inappropriate recombination makes their elements striking. I would call this phenomenon a *montage of mis-match*. The head rotations are an example hereof. The circling of the head at 57" of *Trio A* is similar to a warm up exercise before a sport event. Yet, paradoxically, the legs are already running. And they do this sideways. The coordination mis-match also affects dynamics. Or else, it would, if organic dynamics would be permitted. However, the evenness of dynamics is a paramount syntactic feature, and it is obtained at the expense of a dynamic suggesting itself organically (namely of a *swinging* head circle, e.g.). Yet, *not* to use dynamics here makes mis-matching matters worse. It is a challenging task to evenly rotate the head whilst the legs

⁶ Given that there is no music, the impression of metronome-guided sequencing of movement material is due in part to frequent repetitions in a row to a tacit beat of approximately 60b/s.

unevenly have to pass. A swinging head would help, as it could ease the uneven steps. But they may not. It would sacrifice the dominant feature of constant dynamics, and its implied rhythmless, even timing. Head and leg movements remain thus visibly isolated.

3a) A third dominant feature the MIP revealed is that entire body sectors often move autonomously.

Let me describe an example. *Rond-de-jambe* is, in dance, usually a half-circle of the leg on the floor or in the air. It may begin in the front (*endebors*) or back (*endedans*). Yvonne Rainer shows in 1:21" three *endedans* (alternating the legs each time) and finishes by an *endebors*. In ballet, where arms accompany the legs, they always adapt the musical phrasing to the legs. Most commonly, legs and arms end in a coordinated pose, which is then maintained for a moment. In *Trio A* quite the opposite happens: the arms, which have already been paddling for a while (since 1:18"), are joined by the *ronds-de-jambe* later (see FIGURE 1). And the arms would happily continue to paddle if only the legs didn't kneel down and hit the floor. The circling arm has a different timing and a different direction to the leg circles. The legs 'decide' to kneel, so the arms have to 'give in'.

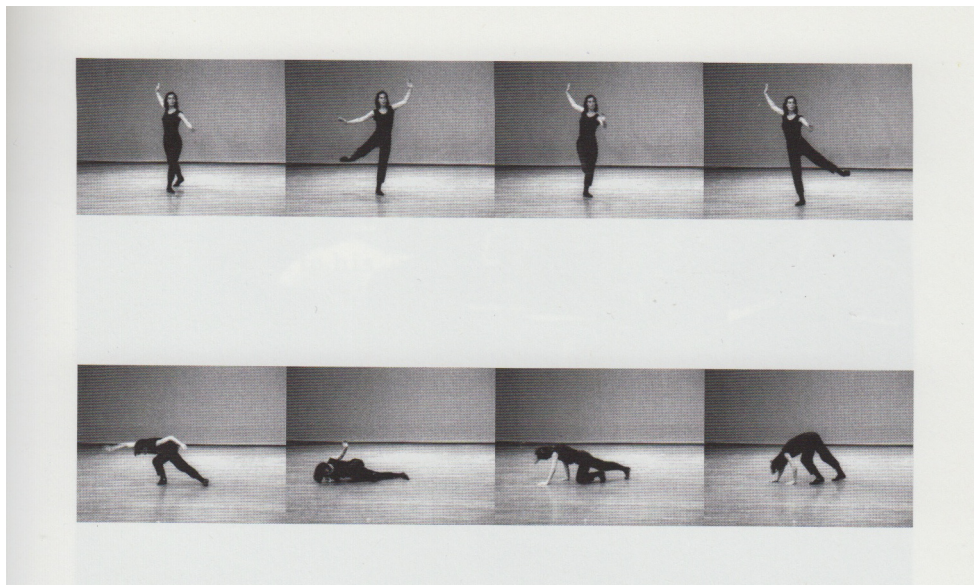


FIGURE 1. Wood, 2007, p53.

3b) The legitimate question in this third case of dominant syntactic aspects, is what lets the autonomy be an exemplified feature rather than instantiated? The answer is twofold: first, both parts of the body are autonomous in the use of time, which strikes as a lack of coordination. Second, the resulting mutual hindrance and incompatibility makes the autonomy conspicuous. You have 8 arm moves against 3 for the legs. This arithmetic is no less of a challenge for the body. In addition, we see the incompatibility of circle directions, particularly when the legs change (from *endedans* to *endebors*), the arms however continue. As a conclusion, in case 2 as in case 3, the emphasis comes from a striking mis-match. Mis-match combinations prove the formal features to be used in a constructionist way. The import of the mis-match combinations, emphasising dominant features, prove construction itself to be significant. We can therefore subsume the dance *Trio A* under the label 'constructionist dance'.⁷

4.2. *Mutual Emphasis Through Interrelations*

My thesis is that in general the necessary emphasis on instantiated features (in order to become an exemplification) can originate in a mutual 'resonance'. However in the present dance the features in question are already proved to be exemplified.

How do the three dominant aspects emphasize one another?

a) Let us consider first the mutual emphasis on the dynamics and the isolations.

The monotony and metronome-guided time span emphasizes an ongoing exchange of gestures, and isolated complements (walks, dangling arms) of movement-pairs, appearing one by one. It yields the impression of perpetuity. Vice-versa, repetitions-in-a-row of some such puzzle-pieces emphasize the meter of monotony. Moreover, they *constitute* the metronomic timing in the first place – instead of the music.

b) Let us consider the mutual emphasis on dynamics and autonomous body sectors. The monotony and metronome-powered timings first interrupt the autonomous sectorial movements from time to time, yet through

⁷ A position sustaining my claim can be found in (Clark, 2010, p. 127): "It could readily be claimed that the identity of the work is in the detail of the discrete actions which accumulate to form the continuing illogical sequence of events".

the succession of *new* sectorial moves, monotony then emphasizes the perseverance of autonomy.

By overcoming the interruptions (there are no pauses in the movements) the persistent autonomy emphasizes on its turn the monotonous succession. Combined with the mentioned distracted gaze, another isolated 'body part', autonomy emphasizes the low energy, an uncommitted *coolness*, in the dynamics.

4.3. Conclusion of my Constructionist Account

I presented three dominant, formal features of *Trio A*. I argued why they may be considered as exemplified rather than instantiated. Striking, mismatched combinations played an eminent role in this. The inclusion of such combinations proves the piece to be constructionist. Seeing the three dominant features as interrelated, an additional mutual emphasis on them could be observed. The interrelations strengthen the importance of the three exemplified aspects, but show dynamics to be the paramount feature of the piece.

The appreciation of this interrelated form is meaning enough. In Susanne Langer's words, with regard to understanding meaning of arts: « But in a broader sense any appreciation of form, any awareness of patterns in experience, is 'reason' » (Langer, 1953, p. 29). Yet understanding of form does not preclude in principle expression or representation. I insist, however, if there are any in *Trio A*, they are secondary.

5. How does *Trio A* Signify Ordinary Movement?

If we are willing to suspect *tasks* behind the on-going exchange of puzzle-pieces and the autonomously moving limbs – even though obscure to us – then the whole piece is very task-driven. Or to use a more visceral term: *buzzy*. What is exemplified throughout is busy-ness. A hustle and bustle. In this sense we can admit, *Trio A* shares with every-day life what we take to be typical for it, (besides the mentioned sloppy dynamics) its on-going task-likeness. As no complicated gestures are involved, we can say: *Trio A* expresses (see chapt. 3. 'Aboutness') "busy with ordinary life (activities)".

6. Conclusion

I did not turn away from the option that *Trio A* could mean something concerning ordinary movement as commonly held in dance science and philosophical debate. But only as one layer of meaning.

The point of my alternative is that there are more pertinent and intriguing properties, namely the constructionist features of *Trio A*, that constitute a network of meaning through their mutual emphasis.

Thus, an interpretation taking only the piece's presumed representation into account, disregarding the construction of the syntactical features, is incomplete. It is not appropriate for formal art. To prove that ordinary movement "is the stuff of concert dance or that it is important and interesting in its own right" (see Sigman, 2000, p. 508) or as in the case of Banes and Carroll to prove the integrationist theory according to which the post-modernists overcome the boundaries between art and non-art, is not all the dance was about.

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Kant's Multiplicity

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ABSTRACT. Because of the transcendental emphasis of his critical works, Immanuel Kant has been criticised for not being able to accommodate the notion of multiplicity. This paper outlines a complex argument designed as a means to the rescue of Kant from this repudiation. To this end, the paper proposes a new, strong reading of the doctrine of aesthetic ideas that unveils the idiosyncratic play of the mental powers, constituted of two separate acts, that equips one to intuit an unnameable mark that evades both empirical apprehension and logical comprehension. By analogy with the two types of cognition, stipulated in the *Stufenleiter* (and elsewhere), I shall suggest that the two distinct kinds of a feeling of pleasure, stirred up by the generation of an aesthetic idea, add an overlooked, aesthetic element that renders Kant a philosopher of multiplicity.

‘... philosophy consists precisely in knowing its bounds ...’
(Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 727/B 755)

1. Introduction

It would not be misleading to say that the vexing reality of the problem of multiplicity has its Ancient roots in the writings of Plato. Incidentally, the problematic, metaphysical hierarchy thereby postulated – that one between sensible objects, the intelligible Forms, the eidetic numbers, and, lastly, the two principles, the One and the indeterminate Dyad – has laid a foundation for the further, fruitful criticisms; including, most notably, an almost “immediate” attack in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and, much later, Descartes’ developments, followed by radical Cartesian manoeuvres

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in Spinoza's *Ethics*.¹ The characteristic, enduring (and substantially simplified) questions of this period are as follows: how can the two principles, the One (being) and the Dyad (non-being), account for the multiplicity of material objects as well as the Forms (Plato's genera)? How can the sole, Aristotelian principle "being has many senses" account for multiplicity of individual, independent substances and their corresponding attributes? Does Descartes warrant the multiple, independent substances to share one of the principal attributes, i.e. extension or thinking? Or perhaps there is only one substance – Spinoza's God – and attributes only allow for a difference between objects?

These historical foundations aside, in the recent decades, the concept of multiplicity has become a widely debated topic in philosophical literature, in both traditions. As far as I can determine, this revived, surging interest, at least in the continental tradition, can be attributed to Deleuze's 'rediscovery' of Bergson and the subsequent appropriation of his prime concept, later picked up by Badiou. Hitherto the recent scholarship has diagnosed a variation of multiplicity in the works of some major thinkers, including, apart from the above, figures such as Husserl and Hegel, of course, but also, less expectedly, Sartre and Wittgenstein of the early 30's.² For purposes of this paper I only note that the classical, metaphysical and ontological questions pertaining to this matter have been lucratively appropriated and incarnated in considerably varying rationales, conditional on a particular, philosophical agenda. On closer inspection, insignificant thought it may seem, Kant occasionally figures in this debate, but, crucially, as a scapegoat.

The critiques of Kant, the ultimate origin of which can be tracked down to Maimon's *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*, have various colourings; yet it may be remarked with justice that a key accusation targets

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See Aristotle (1928), esp. book B. Among the contemporary pieces that discuss some striking connections between Plato's metaphysics and Aristotle's see: Reale (1990), esp. pp. 259-293; and Berti (2001), esp. pp. 201-07. For a lucid analysis of Spinoza's "the multiple" in *Ethics*, see Lord (2010), esp. pp. 17-27, 40, 60-62.

² Apart from the obvious texts by Deleuze, Bergson and Badiou, see: Haas (2000); Blank (2011); Elwin (2012); in the strictly analytical tradition see: Nolan (2006) and Streven (2012).

the very grounds of his philosophy: the conditions of all human experience. Customarily, he is rebuked for subsuming nature's infinite multiplicity of appearances, to have an interconnected experience and, as a consequence, gain systematic knowledge, under his labyrinthine world of the mind, which inexorably splinters this multiplicity into manifolds of intuition, concepts that rest on the categories, transcendental apperception and, at bottom, on the principles of reason. To take a few examples: Bergson, pointing out Kant's alleged dismissal of the power of the sensible, writes in *Creative Evolution*: 'I mean that he [Kant] took for granted the idea of a science that is one, capable of bridging with the same force [the mind] all the parts of what is given, and coordinating them into one system ... There is, for him, only one experience, and the intellect covers its whole ground' (Bergson 1911, p. 359); or Deleuze, again highlighting the limits of Kant's inner world with respect to actual human experience, instantiates: 'But this broadening out [the human condition], or even this going beyond does not consist in going beyond experience toward concepts. For concepts only define, in the Kantian manner, the conditions of all possible experience in general' (Deleuze 1991, p.28). Interestingly (and perhaps even lamentably), these attacks on Kant draw exclusively from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and, therefore, it is unsurprising that on account of the first *Critique* he is deemed a philosopher of the conditions of experience rather than a philosopher of experience, in all its multiplicity. To put this more perspicuously, Kant's transcendental emphasis, allegedly, negates the very possibility of accounting for multiplicity in his philosophy. Let me now add that Kant's critical works constitute a multifarious and intertwined architectonic, and, to salvage Kant from the said repudiation, I suggest a systematic reading of his *Critiques*, focusing here on the first and the third.

To this end, in the first part, I shall glimpse at the critical works to see if these contain any vestiges of the notion of multiplicity. Then, the second part will gloss over the two kinds of cognitions, intuitions and concepts, and their characteristics, so as to delineate the bounds that curtail multiplicity. In the third section, after reiterating some key characteristics of aesthetic ideas, I shall propose a new reading so as to suggest that these creatures of productive imagination can have an intimate bearing on cognition. As a corollary, in the fourth section, I shall unveil an idiosyncratic

play of the mental powers that transpires during the creation of aesthetic ideas; this will enable me to divulge the two distinct kinds of a feeling of pleasure pertaining to our interrogation of multiplicity. Finally, in the concluding section, I shall adduce an instance of a captured multiplicity and suggest, albeit only problematically (due the complexity of the task and the limits of this paper), a resolution that contests Kant's condemnation.

2. Manifold and Multiplicity (Mannigfaltigkeit and Vielheit)

In the first *Critique*, Kant uses the term Vielheit (Multiplicity, Plurality) on several occasions, the most potent of which is found in the list of the Categories of Quantity, that is, the logical requirements of our cognition: Unity – Plurality (Vielheit) – Totality (KrV, B 106, 110).³ This invocation of Vielheit is instrumental for the purposes of my paper, since Kant expounds therein 'the production of the entire concept' that serves for logical cognition (KrV, B 115). Specifically, the category of Vielheit, in forming a concept, denotes 'truth in respect of the consequences ... from a given concept' or, more specifically, an accuracy of the application of '*the marks* that belong to a concept as a common ground' for a unity of a manifold (Mannigfaltigkeit), that is, determination of its parts, and explanation of thereby experienced phenomena (KrV, B 114-115).⁴ I shall return to this salient point at the end of this paper. To my knowledge, Rudolf Makkreel is the only scholar who has espied a subtle difference between Kant's use of terms Mannigfaltigkeit (Manifold) and Vielheit in the third *Critique* (Makkreel 1990, p.75). Vielheit makes another appearance, now in Kant's treatment of the mathematically sublime (KuD, § 24, 5: 248, §

³ All References Kant's first *Critique* (KrV) are to the section number and A and B pagination of the first and second editions (A/B): Immanuel Kant (1998), *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. All references to the third *Critique* (KuD) are from: Immanuel Kant (2002), *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. All references to the *Anthropology* are from the following edition: Immanuel Kant (2006), *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden, New York: Cambridge University Press. All references to his *Logic* are from: Immanuel Kant (1819), *Logic*, trans. John Richardson, London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall.

⁴ My italics.

27, 5: 259).⁵ As observed by Makkreel, the relationship between plurality and unity in this case differs from logical comprehension, since we attempt to cognise an object that deters conceptualization, i.e. an absolutely great object, the marks (or corresponding features) of which cannot be expressed by a concept. To be sure, it hardly seems accidental that Kant remarks that this process involves 'the comprehension of multiplicity in the unity ... of intuition'. Note Kant replaces Mannigfaltigkeit (manifold) with Vielheit (multiplicity), a lapidary, conceptual artifice that unveils a divide between logical and aesthetic comprehension. We can sum up this gloss so far by the taking heed of the following Makkreel's observation (and here our goals branch off):

In logical or mathematical comprehension the content of sense is regarded as a manifold, i.e., a complex of temporally determined parts. In aesthetic comprehension, by contrast, the content of sense is regarded as a multiplicity of *indeterminate* parts of a whole (Guyer 1990, p.75).

As presented here, Kant's critical works do indeed contain a peculiar form of multiplicity that, at this point, can be expressed as an indeterminate content of perception that somehow evades conceptualization, but can be comprehended by means of aesthetic reflection. To arrive at a more perspicuous account, we shall take a careful look at Kant's two intermingled types of cognition from the first *Critique* and then at aesthetic ideas, from the third *Critique*, that, as I shall maintain, intimate another peculiar cognitive mode that I shall employ to back up Kant from the afore-mentioned attacks.

3. Manifold of Intuition, Limits of Concepts, Bounds of Multiplicity

In the famous *Stufenleiter* (KrV, A 320/B 376-77), Kant sets out to entangle intuitions and concepts:

⁵ Translated as 'multitude' in Guyer's translation.

... an objective perception is a cognition (*cognitio*). The latter is either an intuition or a concept (*intuitus vel conceptus*). The former is immediately related to the object and is singular; the latter is mediate, by means of a mark which can be common to several things.

Indeed, this relationship, particularly when aided with the dictum 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (KrV, A 51/B 75), is one of the most widely discussed Kantian paradoxes, recently revitalized by McDowell's conceptually laden intuitions. It would be foolish to try to deal with this knot within the limits of this paper, so we shall focus only on the basic characteristics of intuitions and concepts so as to make sense of a cognitive status of aesthetic ideas. On the surface, the *Stufenleiter* suggests: first, that both intuitions and concepts are cognitions, in fact the only cognitions available for humans (KrV, A 68/B 93); second, intuitions are singular representations and related to objects 'immediately' (or directly), known in the literature as the 'singularity' and 'immediacy' conditions, not comprehensively addressed by Kant; and, third, concepts are general representations and related to objects indirectly.

On a closer inspection, Kant suffuses his works with various remarks to illuminate (and nonetheless muddle) the contrast between the above characteristics of the two cognitions, which we shall look at to attempt to disambiguate this puzzling relationship. First and foremost, the origin of intuitions is sensibility, which accounts for the immediacy of their relation to objects; the origin of concepts is the mind (more specifically, the faculty of understanding), and thus the latter cognitions are mediate. The 'singularity' criterion denotes that only intuitions can fully determine single things or individuals. To be sure, Hintikka, in the first influential discussion of this divide, observed that intuitions are particular rather than general representations (concepts) in that they relate to the object in virtue of a mark, encompassing the object's parts, which is not general, but unique (Hintikka 1969, p.42). A concept, on the other hand, contains features that a given object shares with others.⁶ Further, it must be noted that objects are given to us in virtue of intuitions that thus directly depend on an object's presence (KrV, A 19/B 33; A 54/B74) – this is the crux

⁶ Note herein lies a quarry for subsequent criticisms of Kant.

of the 'immediacy' criterion. To be sure, by means of intuitions, via sense perception, the reproductive imagination engages with the world around us, and without the aid of the intellect, we can engage with it immediately; Kant calls this mode of cognition apprehension. Incidentally, all empirical concepts 'have corresponding intuitions' (KrV, B 129); that is, they require intuitions to exemplify them, for otherwise concepts are empty cognitions, 'mere forms of thought without objective reality' (KrV, B 148; KuD, § 59, 5: 352). With that being the case, to become intelligible or distinct (i.e. not 'blind'), intuitions need to fall under concepts that, after the transcendental synthesis of the imagination is performed, unite the corresponding manifold of intuition, a mode of cognition Kant entitles comprehension, performed by the determining judgement.

It should already be clear that what constitutes generality (or universality) of concepts is their field applicability, and Kant talks extensively about their limits, the limits that – as Kant's critics postulate – curtail multiplicity. Since the highest, most general concept or genus, e.g. animal, contains marks within itself that are common to different things, it requires lower species (concepts) to be more determinate, but the latter likewise contain what is common to many things and thus no complete logical determination of an individual is ever possible (KrV, A 655-6/B 683-4; *Logic*, 7-9). As we shall see in a moment – and I would like to emphasise this – Kant is well aware of the bounds of conceptions: the following excerpt from the first *Critique* articulates the rationale for the logical horizon of concepts:

One can regard every concept as a point, which as the stand point of an observer, has its horizon, i.e., a multiplicity [Menge] of things that can be represented and surveyed, as it were, from it. Within this horizon a multiplicity [Menge] of points must be able to be given to infinity, each of which in turn has its narrower field of view; i.e., every species contains subspecies ... and the logical horizon consists only of small horizons (subspecies), but not of points that have no domain (individuals) (KrV, A 658/B 686).⁷

In other words, each given concept has a logical horizon that is potent to emanate further, endless discovery in spades (by altering or adding or re-

⁷ Here Kant uses the German 'Menge' that is normally translated as a large quantity.

moving a predicate or a mark); yet each, more refined logical horizon is still a domain that contains marks that unite a group of objects subsumed under the higher concept. By contrast, intuitions apprehend points (marks) of the individual object – one from the infinity – that has no domain; no logical horizon can be narrow enough to detect the individual object's unique marks. To anticipate: Kant here addresses the logical horizon of concepts, the domain he is at pains to eschew in the third *Critique*.

We could reiterate our analysis of intuitions and concepts so far by noting that: sensibility, affected by an object, gives rise to intuitions that are immediately related to one singular object, the unique marks of which thereby are apprehended by reproductive imagination, but in an unintelligible fashion, for we need the rules of the understanding, concepts, which are doomed to be universally applicable, to distinguish between this object and others, as Kant would say, 'through a detour' necessarily performed by the determining judgment (KrV, A 19/B 33). This is precisely what Kant has been reviled for: there is seemingly no room for a multiplicity of things because of the blindness of intuitions, on one hand, and the logical horizon of concepts, on the other, that, seeking to illuminate, i.e. unite a manifold of intuition, inescapably, impose bounds on it and thus on our perceptual experience.

This is indeed the picture we discover in the first *Critique*. Yet, in the third *Critique*, to cater for the aesthetic reflecting judgment, Kant in effect suspends one mode of cognition, namely comprehension – so concepts, and objectivity that accompanies them, are left out from the perceiver's engagement with the world of objects. Famously this enables the productive imagination to operate in free conformity with the faculty of understanding in general and, as a consequence, aesthetic judgments are founded not on concepts, as in the case with determining judgments, but on the subjective feeling of pleasure, the bewildering origin of which is adduced in the *Key* (§ 9) that has received a lot of attention in the literature. In my intended sense, the transition from the determining to the reflecting judgment performed by Kant in the third *Critique* (and ignored by Kant's critics), can bring us closer to the Kantian multiplicity, insofar as we take a further detour via aesthetic ideas. This is an audacious notion we shall flirt with in due course.

4. Aesthetic Ideas: A New Reading

Up to this point, we have suspended any invocation of aesthetic ideas, several insights about which Kant scatters around the last chapters of the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*; it is now pertinent to take a look at this notion. An aesthetic idea is defined by Kant as 'representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e. concept, to be adequate to it ...' (KuD, § 49, 5: 314). Upon closer inspection, an aesthetic idea is akin to an empirical intuition in that it is the imagination's representation; but, while empirical intuitions, as the products of reproductive imagination, are contingent on the understanding to become intelligible, aesthetic ideas, as the creatures of productive imagination, render any conceptual attempt, that is, any act of comprehension, frustrated; '... the understanding ...' Kant remarks 'never attains to the complete inner intuition' of productive imagination, i.e. an aesthetic idea (KdU, § 57, 5: 344). Therefore, it is not too outlandish to suppose there might be a connection between empirical intuitions and aesthetic ideas, blocked by the understanding's concepts that are both inadequate to fully determine an object of empirical intuition and cocoon an aesthetic idea. I would like to call your attention to the striking fact that Kant never posits that no empirical intuition is adequate to aesthetic ideas; indeed, he contrasts ideas of reason with aesthetic ideas, calling them pendants, pointing out that only ideas of reason have no corresponding empirical intuitions (KuD, § 49, 5: 314; § 58, 5: 351).⁸ Aesthetic ideas, to be sure, are potent to express completeness that any object of experience fails to abide by – yet Kant never champions a view that no objects of experience can fall under aesthetic ideas. Thus, we shall pro-

⁸ As pointed out by Sassen 'the peculiar conjunction of aesthetic and idea suggests that aesthetic ideas provide the intuitive counterpart and content of intellectual ideas. By calling such ideas "aesthetic," Kant makes it quite clear that whatever else they are, they constitute an *intuited* manifold' (Sassen 2003, p.173). This reading thus suggests a link between a manifold of intuition and an aesthetic idea, however, as other commentators, Sassen fails to pursue the implications of this link, conventionally noting that the function of aesthetic ideas is 'to make supersensible ideas sensible, and ... [to] provide intuitive material for abstract ideas that similarly cannot be grasped by any one concept'. In fact, Sassen remarks that both rational and aesthetic ideas 'fall outside the realm of ordinary experience' (p.174).

visionally assume that aesthetic ideas can have adequate (which is not say perfectly matching) intuitions falling under them.⁹ Unbeknownst to me, this link, except for an acute analysis in a recent article¹⁰, is ignored in the literature on the topic, which only focuses on the relation between aesthetic ideas and the ideas of reason, perhaps enticed by Kant's further emphasis on aesthetic ideas' capacity to 'to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason' (KuD, § 49, 5: 314).¹¹ If I am right, however, aesthetic ideas, when linked with the objects of experience, by transgressing the bounds of concepts, can unveil a niche for the Kantian multiplicity.

How aesthetic ideas are linked with concepts? We know that an empirical concept is constituted of logical attributes or predicates that mark features of a corresponding object of perception, an act performed by the determining judgment. Let me now remark that for Kant aesthetic ideas likewise 'belong to the concept of the object', a salient characteristic – and I would like to stress this – that brings us back to the intuition of the object (KuD, § 49, 5: 314-15).¹² Yet, while a concept contains logical attributes,

⁹ We see a confirmation of this point in Kant's analysis of normal aesthetic ideas found in the section of the third *Critique* entitled *On the Ideal of Beauty* that precedes a thorough account of aesthetic ideas in his treatment of genius (KuD, § 49, 5: 314ff.). We can learn from this passage that productive imagination requires specific objects of experience to yield an aesthetic idea that serves to represent 'the universal standard for the aesthetic judging of every' specific organic being 'belonging to a particular species of an animal'. Crucially, a creation of an aesthetic idea necessarily involves 'a model image', a remark, which, at least on the face of it, alludes to the art of schematism. Kant elaborates on this procedure as follows: drawing from experiential cognition, productive imagination, by superimposing homogeneous instances (in the form of images), i.e. 'by means of a dynamic effect, which arises from the repeated apprehension of such figures on the organ of inner sense' arrives 'at a mean that can serve them all as a common measure', i.e. 'correctness in the presentation of the species', that no individual can embody. To put it slightly differently, an aesthetic idea expresses a totality never exhibited by an object of experience (KuD, § 49, 5: 314).

¹⁰ See Samantha Matherne (2013). She contrasts purely rational aesthetic ideas, e.g. kingdom of the blessed with the 'experience category', e.g. death, love, she defends in the article. She notes that a discussion of a similar position is found in Rudolf Lütke (1984) and Anthony Savile (1987, pp. 169-71).

¹¹ Among others, Guyer, for example, argues that they can present only moral concepts (1997, p.359ff.). Allison (2001), Chignell (2007) and Rogerson (2008), however, argue that aesthetic ideas can present reason's concepts not limited to the moral arena.

¹² Another compelling textual proof of a link between aesthetic ideas and empirical

a creation of an aesthetic idea involves the act of combining of aesthetic attributes, 'which do not constitute the presentation of a given concept itself, but, as supplementary representations of the imagination, express only the implications connected with it and its affinity with others'; this creative process gives the productive imagination a 'cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations' (KuD, § 49, 5: 315). In the course of combining aesthetic attributes, the imagination, as it were, traverses the aesthetic horizon of a given concept, 'an immeasurable field of related representations' that allows for 'the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable' (KuD, § 49, 5: 316). Correspondingly, the injection of aesthetic attributes enlarges 'the concept in an unbounded way' (KuD, § 49, 5: 315). Otherwise expressed, this is an act of unique, subjective creation that over and above animates the cognitive faculties in play and stimulates reason, since its goal, i.e. completeness, is emulated (KuD, § 49, 5: 314).¹³ On my interpretation then, an aesthetic idea belongs to the corresponding concept (that always fails to fully determine a manifold of intuition) in virtue expressing aesthetic attributes buried in the fabric of that concept. Equally important, this expression exceeds the logical capacity of a given concept, and, in the gap between the logical horizon and aesthetic horizon of the concept, we have found, using Kant's term, the 'unnameable'.

intuition is found at (KdU, § 49, 5: 317) 'genius ... presupposes a determinate concept of the product, as an end, hence understanding, but also a representation (even if indeterminate) of the material, i.e., of the intuition, for the presentation of this concept, hence a relation of the imagination to the understanding'. Matherne, in the above article, notes that the concept an aesthetic idea aims to present could be construed as an intention – 'an end', the production of an aesthetic idea is guided by. For Matherne, the examples of the concepts aesthetic ideas can present are 'modern love' or 'joy' (2013, pp. 24f.). I can only briefly note our views depart here: my construal of this end is more akin to the impulse toward relentless refinement of concepts, i.e. although the production is guided by a determinate concept and is drawn to it as the habitual mode of cognition, the free play occurring during the creation exposes the concept's limitations and, by analogy with judgements of taste, extends itself. Over and above, Matherne's article deals with the objects in arts, while I am concerned with the objects of science.

¹³ I cannot pursue this point here, but I would like to briefly note that the author's skill and talent, i.e. the understanding's 'archive' and the productive imagination's cultivated power, are manifest in the process of creation of aesthetic ideas. I believe this reading gives Kant's exclusive account of genius a more inclusive spin.

Next, Kant insists that the same cognitive powers are at play in both determining and aesthetic judgments: imagination and understanding. In their objective relation, 'the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept' (KuD, § 49, 5: 317). An aesthetic relation that takes place in the course of creation of an aesthetic idea, on the other hand, entails a spontaneous use of the imagination, since, as Kant notes, it is 'free to provide, *beyond that concord with the concept*, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept' (KuD, § 49, 5: 317), i.e. the material that evades logical comprehension.¹⁴ On closer inspection, this implies that by uprooting aesthetic attributes of an object, buried in the concept, and uniting them in an aesthetic idea, the poet (or perhaps a poet-scientist) entertains the marks of the object that the faculty of the understanding cannot determine. If this is so, then we must inquire into an aesthetic idea's potency to affect cognition, and, if there is any, what are its characteristics? To assist us, Kant makes a fleeting and puzzling observation: the understanding employs aesthetic material 'not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, for the animation of the cognitive powers, and thus also indirectly to cognitions' (KuD, § 49, 5: 317).¹⁵

¹⁴ My italics.

¹⁵ The following accounts have addressed this possibility. Lüthe argues that aesthetic ideas can help us expand the sensible associations we make with concepts related to the objects of experience (1984, pp.72–4). Savile, who makes a suggestive, but not fully developed claim that many aesthetic ideas provide us 'with a deeper and more extensive comprehension (intellectual and surely affective too) of the (rational) ideas which [the artist] takes as his theme' (1987, p. 171). And the most developed version is found in Matherne's paper (2013): 'Kant thinks that this free exercise [of the productive imagination yielding aesthetic ideas] results in an enlarged, more developed imagination, which can subsequently be useful in cognition. To be sure, this does not mean that the aesthetic use of the imagination can ground any particular theoretical cognition; rather, it means that if we develop our imaginative capacities in aesthetic experience, then they will become more effective in their cognitive use ...Thanks to the expansion of my imagination, I am perhaps able to apprehend more or draw finer distinctions in a single manifold, make more associations, form new or more thorough images, or develop new schemata for new concepts: all of which enhances my theoretical cognition of the world. It is here that we find the cognitive benefit of an enlarged imagination' (pp.35f.). This quote thus advocates that the production of aesthetic ideas develops productive imagination, its car-

However, despite this promising appeal, Kant adds that an aesthetic idea as the representation related to the corresponding object 'can nevertheless never become a cognition of that object ... because it is an intuition (of the imagination) for which a concept can never be found adequate' (KuD, § 57, 5: 342). My message is that if we understand what Kant implies by indicating that aesthetic ideas are indirectly linked to cognitions and that their application is 'not so much' objective, but rather subjective, we will decode an aesthetic idea's capacity to aid the elucidation of the corresponding object. To put all these loose pieces together, we shall look at the free play of the faculties taking place in the course of the creation of an aesthetic idea.

5. The Imagination's Swing

We are now in a position to roughly delineate an arena within which the creation of aesthetic ideas takes place. Here is a sketch of the general topography: empirical intuitions are apprehended by reproductive imagination and united by the understanding's concepts; then, the effect of the concept is suspended, while the productive imagination generates an aesthetic idea that animates the mind and stimulates reason, by simultaneously maintaining the understanding's lawfulness.¹⁶

What I shall elucidate in this section is a process of the imagination's oscillating between the lawfulness of the understanding and the bounds of reason. The discerning Kantian reader will take notice of some striking parallels between this act of creation and the notorious free play of the

capacity to indirectly amplify cognition in general. Matherne, however, has not considered the implications of this for thinking in science, and this is precisely my concern here. As a consequence of this divide, Matherne argues that aesthetic ideas cannot 'ground any particular theoretical judgement' (p.37).

¹⁶ See (KdU, § 49, 5: 315): 'the imagination ... sets the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) in motion, that is, at the instigation of a representation it gives more to think about than can be grasped [by understanding] and made distinct in it (although it does, to be sure, belong to the concept of the object)'. It follows that productive imagination performs a swing between the understanding (in free conformity to a corresponding concept) and the bounds of reason. We remember that Kant locates the faculty of judgement between understanding and reason (KdU, Published Introduction, ix: 5: 198).

mental powers most elaborately stipulated by Kant in the *Key to the Critique of Taste*, to which multiple texts have been devoted.¹⁷ A traditional reading (henceforth: a common free play) looks at the consciousness of the free play of the faculties, imagination and understanding, in relation to an object and the feeling of pleasure originating within this process. The identification of these parallels would make a grandiose task, so I shall reserve this profitable enterprise for another occasion and, for brevity, outline what Kant has to say about the free play in creation of an aesthetic

¹⁷ A key knot is a relationship between the harmony and pleasure in a judgement of taste, i.e. whether it is causal or intentional. Paul Guyer singlehandedly defends the causal view in the seminal *Kant and Claims of Taste* and elsewhere (Guyer 1997, pp. 133-141). In a nutshell, he argues that there are two judgements taking place: first is a reflection upon an object which arouses a free play that entails a feeling of pleasure; second, a consciousness of the feeling of pleasure resulting from the free play, which allows for attribution of this state to all perceivers. The influence of this reading is manifest in a number of other readings of the *Key* that critique Guyer's account. First, Burgess (1989) argues that Guyer's error consists in treating both acts of reflection as proceeding successfully rather than simultaneously, which is a view defended in this article. Then, Allison argues that the causal view is too narrow and that the faculty of feeling is indeed active, i.e. 'the feeling of pleasure is not simply the effect of such a harmony (though it is that); it is also the very means through which one becomes aware of this harmony' (Allison 2001, p. 54). For Allison, Guyer's 'causal' reading, by treating the feeling as a 'mere receptivity', implies that one needs to infer from the feeling of pleasure – it is the evidence of – the harmony of the faculties, and, by attributing to the constituents of judgements of taste a causal relationship, Guyer contradicts the very aesthetic nature of the said judgements (pp. 69-70). Further, Hannah Ginsborg suggests the 'self-inferential' reading of the act of reflective judgement in the free play in (Ginsborg, 1991 and 2003). The first paper offers a 'phenomenological reading' that advocates for an intentional reading of pleasure: "The pleasure, as Kant puts it, is 'consequent' on the universal validity of my mental state [which is a feeling of pleasure] in the sense that it is the consciousness or awareness of my mental state as universally valid ... when I make a judgement, I am in effect ... claiming universal validity for a feeling of pleasure ... [which is felt] in virtue of the very act of judgement through which it is taken to be universally valid' (Ginsborg 1991, p.74). The second paper is preoccupied with unmasking the tensions in Allison's account; Ginsborg argues that, while Allison is correct to attribute intentionality to pleasure, he is wrong to separate the feeling and the act of judgement (Ginsborg 2003, p. 169ff). Lastly, in a moderately recent and very elaborate paper, Linda Palmer has suggested another reading of the *Key*. She, glossing over the readings above and Kant's multiple passages addressing the salient ideas in question, focuses on the comparison between the apprehended form of an object and 'the entire representational power' to account for universality of judgements of taste (Palmer 2008, esp. pp. 27-30).

idea (henceforth: an idiosyncratic free play).

Since, as we remember, Kant argues that an aesthetic idea belongs to the corresponding concept by simultaneously being beyond the concord with it, it can be deduced that in this act the understanding exercises lawfulness analogous to that in pure judgements of taste in the original sense; otherwise put, the process of creation of the beautiful presentation of a concept is referred to cognition in general.¹⁸ ¹⁹ Now, I have identified two distinct acts in the idiosyncratic free play. The first act (which is not yet harmonious) between the understanding and the productive imagination commences with the latter's apprehension of a 'multitude of related representations' drawn from the affinities between the 'donor' concept and others. In the process of creation of an aesthetic idea, 'much that is unnameable' (henceforth: an unnameable property), in virtue of combining aesthetic attributes, is added to the concept of the understanding which is now, as we remember, indeterminate (KdU, § 49, 5: 316). This opens up for the mind 'an immeasurable field of related representations', and, through the feeling of pleasure based on the mind's awareness of the imagination's subjective purposiveness to intuit the unnameable (not yet expressed), the mind is animated, stimulating reason, as its goal has been emulated (KdU, § 49, 5: 315-16). Correspondingly, imagination by providing 'unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding' strengthens the latter as it is at pains to make sense of the activity (KdU § 49, 5: 316-17).²⁰ The second act proceeds as follows. The first act has left us with profound material that now must be united into an idea by 'apprehending the rapidly passing play of the imagination' so as to express 'what is unnameable in

¹⁸ Several commentators, e.g. Debord (2012) and Sassen (2003), have observed that, although reflective judgement proceeds without direct reference to a concept on which an aesthetic idea is based, while productive imagination orders representations, reflective judgement operates according to a normative rule, i.e. 'there ought to exist some concept under which the manifold can be comprehended' (Debord 2012, p.181). And it is the task of taste to allow for this 'internal coherence' (Sassen 2003, p.174).

¹⁹ This is buttressed by Kant when he notes at (KdU, § 49, 5: 313) that, in creation of aesthetic ideas, the powers are set 'into motion, i.e. into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end'. This account of the free play of the faculties runs parallel with a number of expositions of the common free play; for example (KdU, § 12, 5: 222).

²⁰ I have drawn inspiration on this aspect from Burgess (1989).

the mental state ... and to make it universally communicable' (KdU, § 49, 5: 317). Insofar as the agent can express the unnameable property in an aesthetic idea, 'the subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced, as an accompaniment of a concept, can be communicated to others' (KdU, § 49, 5: 317). As far as I can determine, by analogy with the readings of the common free play championing the intentionality of pleasure, what Kant means by 'the subjective disposition of the mind' here is the awareness of the pleasure that occasions a harmonious interplay between the mental powers; yet in the present case, the pleasure is occasioned by the expression of the aesthetic idea, a *beautiful* presentation of the concept.²¹ And this aesthetic idea, by prompting the harmony between the faculties, can likewise be universally approved.²²

What I would like emphasise here is that the first act involves both the original feeling of pleasure (henceforth: the first-order feeling) and the subsequent animation of the mind, while the second act another feeling of pleasure (henceforth: the second-order feeling), which stirs up the harmonious interplay of the faculties. In my eyes, the former can only be experienced by the author, while the latter both by the author and those who likewise employ this aesthetic idea. Accordingly, only the original author can experience the expression of the unnameable property in full, i.e. in both acts.²³ ²⁴ My contention is that both acts constitute a judgement

²¹ This is confirmed by Rogerson (2008, p.23), who argues that expression of aesthetic ideas is pivotal for both free harmony and the very possibility of beauty.

²² To my judgement Kant, unlike in the *Key*, here, at (KdU, § 49, 5: 317) is more unequivocal about the origin of universal approval: it is the harmonious interplay of the faculties that allows for it to be universally communicated. The question (I shall leave unsettled), of course, persists: the status of pleasure in respect to the harmony and universal validity.

²³ This is indirectly supported by Kant when he outlines the creation of normal aesthetic ideas; he says that 'the greatest purposiveness in the construction of the figure ... lies merely in the idea of the one who does the judging' (KdU, § 17, 5: 233).

²⁴ Kant defines the feeling pleasure in many of his works (KdU, § 10, 5: 220; *Anthropology*, § 60, 7: 231), and, in general, it can be defined as the mind's awareness of a particular representation's causality to maintain itself in the given mental state. Pleasure, for Kant, preserves itself in the mental state for the amplification of the mental powers. This account can be applied to both feelings I have detected above. Nevertheless, as far as I have been able to determine, the literature on aesthetic ideas has not been able to demarcate between the two orders of feelings defended above. Only the second-order feeling has been taken notice of. This oversight is exemplified by Zuidervaat's obser-

of taste.²⁵

6. A Concluding Instance of Multiplicity

An example of the above reflections, that is, an instance of captured multiplicity would depend on one's goal. The trajectories are countless. Since I am concerned with the objects of nature in this paper, here is a merely satisfactory example (which, nevertheless, illustrates my message).

There have been several far-reaching developments in philosophy of science and biology that, in the light of the recent discoveries of the unobservable, causal powers (henceforth: the property of permeability) operating in nature, have disclosed that at bottom nature is very complex, even vague, since its joints are entangled in myriad ways. Boyd observes that natural objects, on account of constant change, are endowed with

vation that 'Through an inner sense the mind intuits its own state as this is affected by the mind's own operations. Inner sense is the same as "the faculty of feeling," the capacity for sensory but non-cognitive self-awareness of mental states. Felt self-awareness would seem to explain both the internal character and the conceptual indeterminacy of aesthetic ideas. As internal intuitions they are feelings of self-awareness ... Unlike any other representation generated by the human mind, an aesthetic idea has bound up with it a free but natural feeling of an inconceivable but communicable state of mental harmony' (2003, p. 203). This lucid and helpful exposition evidently conflates both feelings. According to my reading, the first-order feeling is aroused by the mind's awareness of the subjective purposiveness of imagination to intuit the unnameable. Whereas, the second-order feeling, which sets our mental powers in a harmonious interplay, is aroused by a generated aesthetic idea. Evidently, this demarcation is in need of further clarification I cannot pursue in this paper.

²⁵ I am aware that the judgement in question can turn out to be an impure judgement of taste or a judgement of adherent beauty, since the construction of an aesthetic idea presupposes an end. I can only remark here that this possibility will be interrogated in the light of the two feelings defended here. Intriguingly, it might turn out that the first-order feeling will divulge a pure judgement of taste, since the agent abstracts herself from the concept (§ 16, 5: 229–31), while the second as an impure, since she looks back 'to the end of the object'. Equally, I can impute, albeit provisionally two characteristics to the first-order feeling: a) it is founded on the recognition of subjective purposiveness of productive imagination; b) it cannot be universally communicated. The second-order feeling is akin to the feeling we witness in the common free play yet with one significant distinction: it is aroused by the beautiful presentation of a concept, an aesthetic idea. I will elaborate on this peculiar relationship in another paper.

'irremediable indeterminacy' (1993, pp.484, 510). That is, a living nature is a kingdom of natural kinds, i.e., genes, bacteria, viruses, and, as a main vehicle of the preceding, organisms, that causally interact with smaller and larger systems and that have been diagnosed with the multiple, fluid processes, e.g. niche construction, that suffuse them. This view has recently been advocated by the champion of a pluralist approach to science, John Dupré, who professes that multi-dimensional natural kinds, being interlocked with smaller and larger systems, pose a conceptual problem of 'inconceivable complexity' (2006, p.46). Therefore a conceptual abstraction always falls short of the specificity required for their determination, as we know from the characteristics Kant assigns to conceptions.

Kant's reflections on relentless refinement of concepts stem from his scientific concerns, since concepts are powerful and enduring inasmuch as they are true, that is, as remarked by Rothbard, insofar as they are effective in problem solving (1984, p.610). Aesthetic ideas, on this particular reading, are not designed to illuminate epistemological errors, but to capture the unnameable property (that of permeability) that evades conceptual aesthetics. An accurate, rather than true, aesthetic idea, by determining the unnameable property, shall instantiate Kant's multiplicity.

The following excerpt from Tomas Tranströmer's poem *Prelude* (2006, p. 3) obscurely illustrates what I have proposed so far:

Waking up is a parachute jump from dreams.
 Free of the suffocating turbulence the traveler
 sinks toward the green zone of morning.
 Things flare up. From the viewpoint of the quivering lark
 He is aware of the huge root-systems of the trees,
 their swaying underground lamps. But above ground
 there is greenery – a tropical flood of it – with
 lifted arms, listening to the beat of an invisible pump. And he
 sinks towards summer, is lowered in its dazzling crater, down
 through shafts of green damp ages
 trembling under the sun's turbine ...

However presumptuous this sounds: had Tranströmer, back in 1954, had my agenda, while yielding this piece, perhaps we would witness a more accurate account of multiplicity. At any rate, we skip the first act and the first-order feeling (and thus leave an investigation of them for another occasion), since we can only 're-apply' the piece. As far as the second act is concerned, although there is much to be said about the insights found below, the logical determination of the perceived tree(s) is transformed in virtue of infusing into a number of interconnected, visible and invisible parts causally connected with it – 'the huge root-systems', 'greenery', the limbs, the sun – some aesthetic attributes resulting in 'swaying underground lamps' of 'the huge root systems', 'a tropical flood' of 'greenery', 'the sun's turbine'. The logically determined manifold of intuition, i.e. the determinate parts of the whole, have thereby become 'the multiplicity of indeterminate parts' of the indeterminate concept (of the tree). Insofar as this has resulted in the communication of the unnameable property in question, i.e. that of permeability, the aesthetic idea, a beautiful presentation of the concept, arouses a feeling of pleasure, the awareness of which prompts the harmonious interplay between the mental powers – and this seals its universal approval. For brevity, what needs to be emphasised is that the feeling of pleasure divulges a mark (or a property) that cannot be otherwise captured, neither by empirical intuitions nor by concepts. It follows that, by analogy with the two types of cognitions specified above, aesthetic ideas are indeed potent to relate to objects in virtue of intuiting a mark by means of productive imagination's 'complete inner intuitions' originating in the inner sense.²⁶ And this indeed, following a specification of Vielheit at (KrV, B 114-115), peculiarly qualifies as a determination of a mark that aids to the elucidation of the object in question; the more accurate is an aesthetic idea, the more accurately is determined a multiplicity in question. We can now understand why Kant is reluctant to attribute

²⁶ I believe my claim indirectly finds support in Smit's interpretation of empirical intuitions and concepts: for him, an intuition of an object stands for the reproductive imagination's detection of intuitive (i.e. singular and direct) marks belonging to the said object of perception, while a corresponding concept contains discursive (i.e. general and indirect) marks belonging to this and other homogeneous objects (2000, p. 259). Insofar as an aesthetic idea is capable of intuiting an unnameable mark, it can be considered as a counterpart of these two cognitions, albeit a peculiar one.

to aesthetic ideas a cognitive function: a mark is captured in virtue of a mental feeling as opposed to an empirical intuition or a concept.

All the above taken together can be concisely summed up as follows: in virtue of an aesthetic idea, the object is apprehended by productive imagination, breaking away from the laws of understanding, not as a manifold, but as a multiplicity. Correspondingly, in the first place, I would like to suggest that aesthetic ideas are evidently indirect as far as their elusive cognitive impact is concerned; and, in the second place, I would like to suggest *merely as a problem* that aesthetic ideas can be both singular and general: to be sure, the author, insofar as she is directly affected by an object, yielding an aesthetic idea, by experiencing the first-order feeling in capturing a unique mark, intuits the object's singularity (of a peculiar nature), while the readers, experiencing the second-order feeling, have only a general access to the object *qua* multiplicity.

As presented in this paper, my interrogation of the relevant parts of the two *Critiques* has divulged two kinds of the thoroughly disguised mental feelings that, I submit, counterbalance Bergson's remark that Kant undermines the sensible and that, for him, there is only one – logical – experience. Equally, one can go far as to suggest that this is, inverting Deleuze's criticism, Kant's pioneering way of broadening out the human condition by 'going beyond experience', not toward concepts, but 'beyond the concord with the concept' – toward aesthetic ideas (KuD, § 49, 5: 317). Indeed, Kant almost obviates our discussion by noting that aesthetic ideas 'strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience' (KuD, § 49, 5: 314), that is to say, conceptual experience professed in the first *Critique*. To conclude, inasmuch as one gives credence to the vast terrain of the defended here aesthetic experience, she would be able to concede that perhaps Kant has been wrongfully condemned.

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Las Meninas, Alois Riegl, and the 'Problem' of Group Portraiture

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ABSTRACT. Velázquez's *Las Meninas* is often discussed by philosophers as some kind of puzzle to be solved. This can obscure its more straightforward status as a group portrait. This paper reconsiders the painting within the remit of what Alois Riegl terms the 'problem' of group portraiture: that is, how to unify a group as a pictorial composition without introducing too strong a narrative element that would ultimately distract from its function as portrait. Indeed, this is a painting that reflects upon the very nature of portraiture in all its guises. I will argue that *Las Meninas*, like Rembrandt's *The Syndics*, uses the novel device of the 'interruption' to solve this inherent problem of group portraiture by founding its internal coherence of the presence of an implied beholder; moreover, this a solution that can accommodate many of the painting's apparent ambiguities. But in so doing, the paper will contrast the communicative commonality of Rembrandt's great group portrait with Velázquez's aristocratic work, a private painting destined primarily for an audience of one.

I.

Since Michel Foucault's account of *Las Meninas* in *The Order of Things* (1974, pp. 3-16), Velázquez's painting [Figure 1] has maintained a pre-eminence in philosophical debates on representation and spectatorship. Indeed, this pre-eminence is such that it is now almost obligatory to offer some kind of apology for adding to the already substantial literature on this single work. As James Elkins notes in his book *Why are our Pictures Puzzles?* the literature on *Las Meninas* continues 'to spiral, with readings building on counter-readings' (1999, p. 40). Elkins offers few answers to the question he raises, other than to suggest that 'we are inescapably attracted to

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pictures that appear as puzzles, and unaccountably uninterested in clear meanings and manifest solutions' (p. 258).¹



FIGURE 1. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656.
Museo del Prado, Madrid

This emphasis on the enigmatic or puzzling status of *Las Meninas* has largely obscured the more straightforward fact that it is a group portrait, at

¹ In a cautionary note, Elkins suggests that prior to Foucault the painting 'had to do with the Spanish court, with decorum and etiquette, and with transcendental technique: now, it has to do with cat's cradles of inferred lines, relative positions, possible viewers, and the many logical forms that follow from them' (1999, p. 42).

the centre of which is the Infanta Margarita, attended by two maids of honour (the *meninas* of the work's title). In this paper, I want to emphasise Velázquez's extraordinary contribution to the rethinking of the group portrait. While not referred to by Alois Riegl in his definitive *The Group Portraiture of Holland* (1999),² Margaret Iversen likewise observes that *Las Meninas* 'could be regarded as a demonstration piece of his principles of co-ordination and external coherence' (Iversen 1993, p. 142). These are principles that I will set out later. I want to flesh out Iversen's observation, and to argue that – like Rembrandt's *The Syndics* [Figure 2] – *Las Meninas* uses the novel device of the 'interruption' to solve an inherent problem of group portraiture: a solution that can accommodate many of the painting's apparent ambiguities. But in so doing, the paper will also contrast the communicative commonality of Rembrandt's great group portrait (so admired by Riegl) with Velázquez's aristocratic work, a private painting (despite its current location in the Prado) destined for an audience of one – namely its 'absent' subject, Philip IV.



FIGURE 2. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Syndics of the Draper's Guild*, 1662.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

² Not published in book form until 1931, 26 years after his death, Riegl's 'Das holländische Gruppenporträt' was first published in 1902 in *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 23: 71–278.

2.

In Foucault's terms, *Las Meninas* is a 'representation as it were, of Classical representation' (1974, p. 16). Velázquez has placed himself prominently within the picture, poised, with loaded brush, in the very act of painting. Foucault's account famously emphasises that in 'the definition of the space it opens up to us' there is an essential void: 'The very subject ... has been elided' (p. 16). Put simply, there is an absence of the very figures the group have (at least in terms of the fictional scenario) ostensibly been gathered for. The royal couple, Philip IV and María Ana, appear only as a blurred presence [Figure 3] in the reflection within the mirror placed centrally on the shadowy rear wall, a reflection revealing what the figures in the foreground are looking at. As such, the mirror refers back to the device of Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding*, a work Velázquez would certainly have been familiar with, given that it then formed part of the Spanish royal collection. This again reveals two witnesses, framed by an open door [Figure 4].



FIGURE 3. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (detail), 1656.



FIGURE 4. Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Wedding* (detail), 1434.
National Gallery, London.

However, as Foucault notes, and unlike its precedent, the mirror ‘shows us nothing of what is represented in the picture itself’ (p. 7): it has a strange detachment, while nevertheless being central to the composition, and to the work’s meaning. It is, of course, ‘the reverse of the great canvas represented on the left’, displaying ‘in full face what the canvas, by its position, is hiding from us’ (p. 10).³ Placed symmetrically around the painting’s central axis, it is mirrored by that other rectangle of light within the gloom, the open doorway ‘which forms an opening, like the mirror itself, in the far wall of the room’ (p. 10). This introduces a further complexity, in that the doorway contains a visitor, silhouetted against the bright light, poised

³ John Searle this canvas to be none other than Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* rather than the fictive portrait of the royal couple (1980, p. 485). John Moffitt effectively dismisses this claim, on the grounds that the dimensions do not match (1983, pp. 286-287). More pertinently, given Moffitt’s meticulous reconstruction of the room, it would have been impossible to place a mirror within the room in such a way that the painter could have seen the scene reflected as it appears from the scene’s implicit point of view.

'like a pendulum' between coming and going, unregistered by any of the painting's protagonists (p. 11).

Foucault intriguingly suggests that the work presents surrogates, either side of the mirror, for further absences that he maintains are fundamental to the picture, that of the artist and spectator:

That space where the King and his wife hold sway belongs equally well to the artist and to the spectator: in the depths of the mirror there could also appear – there ought to appear – the anonymous face of the passer-by and that of Velázquez. For the function of that reflection is to draw into the interior of the picture what is intimately foreign to it: the gaze which has organized it and the gaze for which it is displayed. But because they are present within the picture, to the right and left, the artist and visitor cannot be given a place in the mirror. (p. 15)

Iversen suggests that for Foucault 'these absences are a structural part of the classical episteme', in that 'the subject who classifies and orders representations cannot be amongst the represented things: man is not a possible object of knowledge. For Foucault, *Las Meninas* allegorizes this situation' (1993, p. 144). As such, Iversen suggests that:

Far from being a painting that acknowledges the spectator/artist's constitutive function, then, Foucault's *Las Meninas* actually short-circuits consideration of that position. It is painting's equivalent of Benveniste's historical utterance. Yet it must be significant that Foucault should have chosen this painting that poses so insistently the question of the viewing subject. (p. 144)

For Iversen, by painting himself into a composition that shows its subject only indirectly, Velázquez achieves a precarious 'sleight of hand', an allegorical equivalent of a 'classical episteme conjuring trick' (p. 145). As Foucault states, it is with the elided subject that 'representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its pure form' (1974, p. 16).

Not unsympathetic to Foucault's argument, John Searle focuses his account of the painting in his essay '*Las Meninas* and the Paradoxes of Pictorial Representation' (1980) more narrowly on the status of the mirror

with respect to the displaced artist and spectator. Searle interprets these absences as an unsolvable paradox, in that 'the problem with *Las Meninas* is that it has all the eyemarks of classical illusionist painting but it cannot be made consistent with these axioms' (p. 483). Thus Searle maintains that the work is unprecedented in that 'we see the picture not from the point of view of the artist but from that of another spectator who also happens to be one of the subjects of the picture' (p. 483). Now it is clear that van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding*, in offering us the view of one or other of the painted witnesses to the marriage, also does just this. But, more importantly, is the claim that the painting presents a paradox well founded?

In an attempt to rule out just such a paradox, Snyder and Cohen, in their essay 'Reflexions on *Las Meninas*: Paradox Lost' (1980), point out a mistake common to both Foucault and Searle's accounts, in their assumption that the work's vanishing point corresponds to the mirror position. It is in fact located within the open doorway, therefore making it impossible for the mirror to reflect the royal couple from the work's implicit point of view (Snyder and Cohen 1980, pp. 434-436). Rather, the authors claim that 'the reflection must originate roughly from the central region of the canvas upon which Velázquez shows himself at work' (p. 441), the implication being that the mirror thus reflects a section of the royal double portrait [Figure 5].⁴ In arguing that the reflection is that of the unseen painting, Snyder (in a later paper) suggests that the mirror is in fact 'the mirror of majesty': an ideal or 'exemplary image of Philip IV and María Ana, an image whose counterpart *cannot* be seen in the persons of the king and queen' (1985, p. 559). Snyder claims this as a visual trope that would have been immediately recognized by Philip himself. While the work is undoubtedly a representation *about* representation, its central paradox is therefore lost. And if, as Alpers's claims in her account of the painting, 'ambiguity re-

⁴ The sizes of the reflected figures are in fact too large, given the dimensions of the room, to be a direct reflection of the living royal couple. With Snyder and Cohen's argument, the problem is somewhat alleviated as the viewing distance is reduced. George Kubler (1985) claims that the mirror is in fact 'a painted image of the King and Queen, painted on a small canvas as if seen in a mirror' (p. 316). This, however, would not explain its strange 'glow' relative to the other paintings on the rear wall. That Velázquez is not averse to manipulating a reflection is borne out by Velázquez's *Venus and Cupid*, the so-called '*Rokeby Venus*' – a painting that in order to engage the viewer manipulates the angle of the mirror and the size of the reflected image.

mains' (1983, p. 42, n. 10), then this misses the point in that 'ambiguity is not a condition of paradox' (Snyder 1985, p. 567, n. 11). Searle's paradox, as Snyder rightly notes, is not a mere oddity, but a 'logical closure', and hence 'self-referential' (p. 546). According to Searle, the artist and spectator *cannot* occupy the work's point of view because it is already occupied by Philip IV and María Ana: the painting presents the king and queen's particular perspective, not that of Velázquez or the viewer. By removing this supposed logical impossibility, Snyder and Cohen claim to remove the paradox.

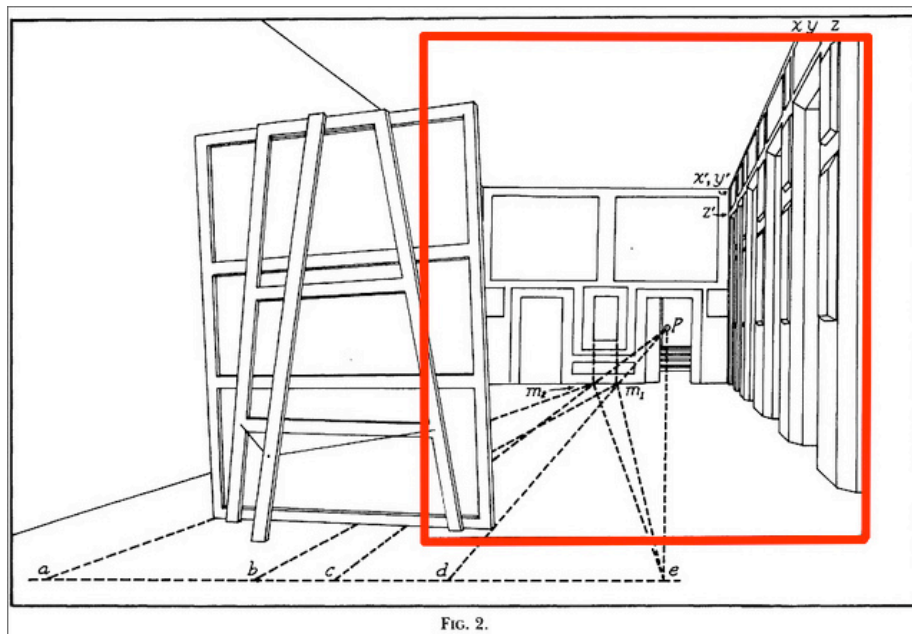


FIGURE 5. Joel Snyder, *Diagram of the Perspective Construction in Velázquez's 'Las Meninas'* (Snyder 1985, p. 549, fig. 2).

3.

Now, I want to argue that all three philosophical accounts discussed so far are flawed in their consideration of the 'prior' occupation of the scene's point of view. Foucault's own thesis, while suggesting that the 'outward'

gazes forces the spectator 'to enter the picture, assign him a place at once privileged and inescapable', also states that 'in the depths of the mirror there could also appear – there ought to appear – the anonymous face of the passer-by and that of Velázquez' (1974, p. 15). This conflates the virtual and real worlds of the painting and beholder. The logic of Searle's position (putting aside his perspectival error) accepts Foucault's notion of a prefigured internal presence, but then seems to go on to suggest that *all* implied spectators are thus, by definition, paradoxical. Yet the implied internal spectator, as Richard Wollheim has shown, occupies an unrepresented extension of the fictional world of the painting. By contrast, Velázquez (that is the painter of *Las Meninas*, not the depicted royal portraitist) stands (or rather stood) in his adopted studio; the spectator *of* the picture now stands within the gallery space of the Prado (though as we shall see, this was not always the case). Snyder and Cohen do not challenge the erroneous assumption underlying this confusion of internal and external spectators, but merely seek to rule out a non-existent paradox by challenging the correct placement of the work's vanishing point.

Given the above, one might expect the painting to be claimed as an exemplar for Wollheim's theory of the spectator *in* the picture. However, in an endnote to *Painting as an Art*, taking his cue from Velázquez scholar Jonathon Brown, Wollheim rules out 'Foucault's thesis that the royal pair constitute spectators in the picture' on grounds of prevailing decorum, deeming it unthinkable to imagine occupying the position of either Philip IV or María Ana (Wollheim 1987, p. 363). But this contradicts Brown's later insistence that this was, in fact, a private painting: as we shall see, a claim founded upon contemporary accounts that suggest that *Las Meninas* was originally painted to be hung in the 'executive office' of Philip IV (1986, pp. 259-260).

This has an immediate bearing on three questions Snyder raises somewhat sceptically in relation to Foucault and Searle's assumption that there is something unorthodox about the perspectival structure of *Las Meninas*: (i) 'Does [perspective] function in some way that it is essential to our understanding of the painting?'; (ii) 'Must an interpreter of the painting address the particular point of view that establishes it?'; (iii) 'More to the point, must an interpreter be concerned with the consequences of the work's perspective structure?' (Snyder 1985, p. 543). For Snyder, Fou-

cault and Searle's error in locating the vanishing point invalidates their arguments, and renders these questions largely superfluous to the work's meaning. And yet we can accept Snyder and Cohen's correction while maintaining an affirmative answer to all three questions. Indeed, Indeed, I believe Velázquez is perfectly well aware of the significance of his own perspectival sleight of hand, as is acknowledged by Snyder and Cohen, who do not dispute the possibility that Velázquez might have indeed intended it to initially appear that the mirror reflected the king and queen directly. They also accept the proposition that the painting indicates '*the presence of the king and queen, in person, in the area just before the picture plane*' (1980, p. 443), arguing that the royal presence is still the most plausible explanation for the outward glances.

In fact, the importance of the perspective is arguably more of an issue in Snyder and Cohen's account than it is in Searle's and Foucault's. The relative freedom of position we have in front of a physical work, relative to the work's implicit point of view, might explain the deliberate confusion with the mirror; and Snyder here makes a perceptive point when he notes how Velázquez paints the reverse of the slanted canvas in a way that obscures the left wall: 'Had Velázquez provided even a small part of the wall on the left, it would have been immediately obvious that the viewpoint of the picture is well to the right of the mirror' (Snyder 1985, p. 553). The resulting discrepancy, while not constituting a paradox as such, is deliberately calculated. As Damisch notes:

In this sense [of Foucault's metaphorical use of perspective] Foucault is perfectly right to see the mirror as the painting's 'center,' though ... its *imaginary* center ... If there is any representation in painting, the configuration of *Las Meninas* reveals it to consist of a calculated discrepancy between a painting's geometric organization and its imaginary structure. It is this that Foucault's critics have failed to see, as a result of their having adhered to a strictly optical, conventional definition of the perspective paradigm. (1994, p. 438)

That ambiguity is built into the work's imaginary structure reminds us that the work is not a puzzle to be 'solved' through detective work, but to be experienced in its very ambiguities. In fact, as Leo Steinberg suggests, there are three centres, or *imaginary* centres, which keep shifting: the Infanta,

marking the midline of the painting, the vanishing point located in the far doorway, and the mirror, placed on the room's central axis: 'the canvas as a physical object, the perspectival geometry, and the depicted chamber' (1981, p. 51).

4.

Before returning to this perspectival geometry, and to the painting's original location, I want now to make the claim that *Las Meninas* should be considered within the remit of group portraiture, and as such be recognised as a novel solution to an inherent problem of the group portrait. Portraiture, after all, not only won Velázquez's position within the court, but constituted his primary responsibility as a painter in his final years. *Las Meninas* reflects upon (and raises the status of) the very nature of portraiture in all its guises: a *group portrait* configured on the pretext of a fictional staging of a royal *double portrait*, such that Velázquez's own *self-portrait* is conspicuously portrayed as part of the inner circle of the royal family. Moreover, *Las Meninas* might be seen to address a problem at the very heart of the engagement afforded group portraiture. Not its characteristic 'theatricality', a charge levelled against portraiture by Michael Fried (after Diderot),⁵ and defended by Riegl.⁶ Rather, the problem of unifying the group as a pictorial composition without introducing too strong a narrative element that would ultimately distract from its function as portrait, all the while operating within the strict conventions of portraiture that dictated figures must be facing forward, depicted at least in three-quarter profile. Here we need to return to Riegl's decisive distinction between inner and outer unity, internal and external coherence.

According to Riegl, paintings described as having a 'closed internal coherence' are founded on the reciprocity of pictorial elements contained *within* the picture, a self-sufficient reciprocity of interacting glances and gestures of figures engaged in a single action requiring no connection to the beholder (1999, 220-221). For Riegl, this kind of coherence, founded

⁵ See, for instance, Fried (1988).

⁶ See Olin (1989), where she recounts Riegl's attempts to defend 'the participation of the beholder in certain artistic practices against those who would dismiss it as "theatricality"' (p. 286).

upon subordination, is typical of late Italian Renaissance painting. While Italian works can accommodate single, or even double, portraits, the Italians faced a particular problem with the group portrait in that Riegl claims 'Italian artists felt compelled to create unity through a subordinate arrangement' (p. 80), one that tended to separate the autonomous work from the beholder in such a way as not to acknowledge his or her existence. Now while Riegl undoubtedly overplays national characteristics, Renaissance works do indeed tend to proceed from the kind of direct address of Masaccio's Mary in his *in-situ* fresco *Trinity* to the autonomous subordination of figures in a work such as Titian's *Pesaro Altarpiece*, where only a peripheral intermediary now intervenes on our behalf.

By contrast, works described as having an 'external coherence' are completed only by the presence of a spectator, and establish a rapport with the viewer based on 'attentiveness' – an ethical term that introduces a specifically psychological element into Riegl's analysis. Here subordination is replaced by coordination. The latter, however, can result in works where the gestures can look clumsy and forced, where the viewer must impose an external coherence; the result can feel like a cramped collection of individual portraits rather than a coherent or natural looking group located in free space.



FIGURE 6. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632. Mauritshuis, The Hague.

Rembrandt's novel approach to the group portrait, in his few attempts at the genre, was to attempt to found his external coherence on a fully resolved inner unity, dependent upon subordination. Nevertheless, this faced certain drawbacks. Despite the 'greater degree of individuality in their psychological connection (that is, attentiveness)', and the much greater sense of free space and unity, Riegl regards the animated physical gestures of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp* [Figure 6] as introducing too strong a sense of 'the psychological expressions of will and emotion' for the demands of a group portrait (p. 258). He is particularly thinking of the leaning forward of certain figures introducing a pathos that reveals an inner struggle. Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, where an unprecedented internal coherence is provided by the subordination of figures to the captain, can only (in Riegl's terms) be truly considered a double portrait in that 'the subordinating effect of the spoken work (in this case the command [to move forward]) operates directly on a psychological level only for one figure (the lieutenant); for all of the others, it takes the form of physical activity' (p. 267) – something fundamentally at odds with the group portrait [Figure 7].



FIGURE 7. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Night Watch*, 1642.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

However, with Rembrandt's *The Staalmeesters* (better known as *The Syndics*) (1661-62), like the *Night Watch* now in the Rijksmuseum, the solution to the problem of group portraiture has, for Riegl, been found, in that 'the figures charged with establishing internal coherence are the same ones responsible for external coherence, which is now perfectly specific in time and space' (p. 285). The painting depicts a single moment of time that is instigated by the implied viewer's arrival at the scene, now conceived as an 'interruption'. With *The Syndics*, Rembrandt extends what Riegl would describe as a commonality to include the viewer as an implied presence drawn into the inner logic of the work. It depicts a single moment of time that appears to be instigated by the viewer's physical arrival at the scene (the anticipated spectator's psychological repertoire is determined, at least in part, by the specificity of the original context - the Staalhof, where the Staalmeesters of the Clothmaker's Guild met). Indeed, that Riegl fails to explicitly distinguish between internal and external beholders is perhaps a feature of his exclusive focus on such commissioned group portraits, painted for specific sites and predicted audiences - where roles of internal and external spectators tend to merge.

Margaret Olin has argued that *The Syndics*:

[I]s a performance in which the beholder takes part. In Riegl's opinion the most fully resolved 'coordination' of internal and external coherence, the painting motivates the beholder's presence dramatically. One officer of the guild speaks to the others. They heed his words and try to gauge their effect on an unseen party, located in the same place as the beholder. Their attention to the speaker establishes internal coherence, and their attention to the beholder creates external coherence; i.e., it draws the viewer into a relationship. As the focus of so much concentrated attention, he is transfixed before the canvas, while their self-awareness keeps the relationship in balance. The beholder and the 'party' exchange places so often in the analysis that it is difficult to distinguish between them. (1989, p. 287)

5.

Las Meninas likewise has an institutionally anticipated audience, and utili-

ses a similar 'interruption'. The 'staging' of the royal double portrait not only provides the necessary internal coherence through subordination, but engages the implicit beholder in such a way that their presence – an interruption – is directly responsible for the pattern of responses within the scene. While consistent with Wollheim's arguments for a spectator *in* the picture, both works thus draw something of our sense of physical arrival into the imaginative encounter with the painting. As portraits, however, they perform fundamentally different functions: the communicative communality of one in sharp contrast to the private (though courtly) contemplation of the other.

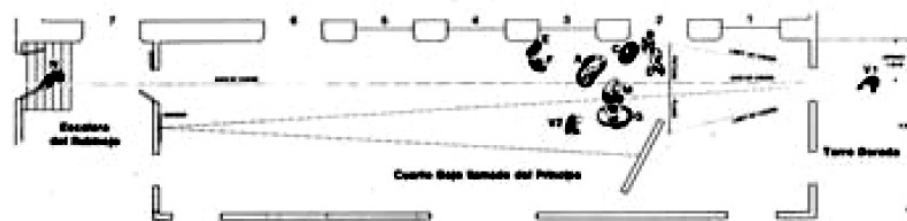


FIGURE 8. John Moffitt, *Reconstruction of Velázquez's 'Las Meninas'*, (1983, p. 283, fig. 3; diagram and calculations by Terry L. Fox, BFA).

Here it is worth noting the institutional context where *Las Meninas* was painted and first hung. The room in which *Las Meninas* is staged, while destroyed by fire in 1734, can be identified with some certainty from ground plans and from contemporary accounts. John Moffitt's reconstructions of the ground plan in the Alcázar Palace (1983) reveal two significant facts [Figure 8]. Firstly, the overwhelming likelihood is that the royal couple stood (of course, in terms of the fiction) directly opposite the work's vanishing point, as both Foucault and Searle assume for mistaken reasons. Secondly, the viewpoint of *Las Meninas*, Velázquez's point of conception, lies *outside* of the main space, suggesting that the view was framed by an open doorway. The likelihood is that, fictionally, the king and queen stood at the threshold of, or somewhat behind this opening, a clue of which is offered in the reflected red curtain in the mirror (an echo of the curtain pulled back by the figure standing on the stairs). More importantly,

both Brown and Moffitt reveal that *Las Meninas* was originally painted to be hung in the executive office of the king (the *Pieza del Despacho de Verano*), a room in the *Torre Dorada* immediately above the room in which it was painted (Brown 1986, p. 259; Moffitt 1983, p. 286). This floor replicated the spatial arrangement of that below, so that standing looking at the painting in its original location, it would have been possible to then turn 180 degrees to look at almost the same spatial arrangement as depicted by the work itself [Figure 9]. As Brown suggests, 'despite its size, *Las Meninas* was regarded at the time of its creation as a private picture addressed to an audience of one, Philip IV' (p. 259). The *internal* spectator correlates with the principal audience.

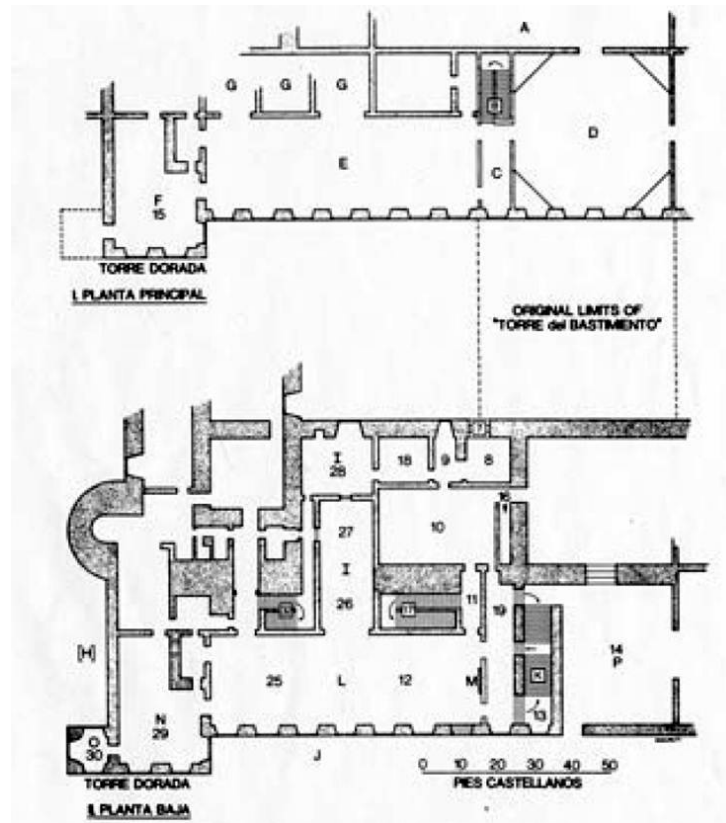


FIGURE 9. John Moffitt, *Reconstruction of the Ground Plan of the Alcázar Palace* (1983, p. 277, fig. 2; drawn by Maria Marchetti, BFA).⁷

⁷ The upper plan shows the first floor, with the *Pieza del Despacho de Verano* (F), where

If, as I suspect, the notion of interruption is key, then the proposition that these figures eagerly await an arrival in the guise of either the king or queen is made more feasible by the adjacent room theory, in that the royal couple can now appear from the beholder's side of the painting, framed by the doorway. This would be consistent with either of the competing interpretations of the maid Isobel's posture: as a 'curtsey' (Steinberg 1981, p. 53); or as a 'leaning over to reduce parallax', the better to see the arrival of the king and queen (Searle 1980, p. 484). It is also consistent with the fact that as yet not all the protagonists have noticed the royal presence. Moreover, Brown's claim that the anticipated audience was none other than the king himself avoids the not insubstantial issues of decorum. As Brown notes:

If this conclusion is correct, then it follows that the focal point of the picture was the king who 'interrupted' the figures in *Las Meninas* whenever he entered his summer office. The implicit assumption of his presence is recorded not only in the poses and expressions of the characters in the picture, but also in the mirror reflection. Some diagrams of the perspective locate the source of the reflection outside the picture while others identify it with the large canvas standing before the artist. This discrepancy can probably be attributed to the fact that Velázquez' instinctive use of perspective deliberately accommodates both possibilities. The purpose of the mirror is to insinuate the presence of the king (and queen) in the atelier. If the king were present in person before the picture, he could see, as it were, his own reflection in the mirror. If absent, the picture would be understood as a portrait of the infanta and her retinue, while the mirror-image would be attributed to the reflection from the easel ... In either case, the presence of the king proved once and for all that painting was the noblest of arts. (1986, pp. 259-260)

That the reflection is a section of the unseen canvas, however, means the work can potentially accommodate alternative implied beholders to identify with. This proposal is founded upon the premise, suggested but

the work was originally hung. The lower plan shows the ground floor, including the *Pieza Principal* (L), the room in which *Las Meninas* is staged, and the adjacent room in the *Torre Dorada* (N), where it was painted from.

not fully elucidated by Brown's account above, that there is no reason to assume that in the fictional scene presented by *Las Meninas* the royal couple need be present at the moment the painting depicts. However, it still seeks to explain the work as an interruption.

Whose view, if any, is thus presented? As Steinberg states, we certainly do not *feel* excluded; but are we still, as he suggests, 'part of the family, party to the event' (1981, p. 48)? Well, Steinberg's speculation as to whether we have 'just walked in to interrupt them' (p. 50) is alternatively explained if we identify ourselves *not* with the remote and distant royal couple, but with the palace steward who would surely have preceded them, in order to announce their imminent arrival. This possibility would directly 'mirror', along an axis from viewpoint to vanishing point, the presence and actions of the figure in the far doorway, who we know to be *another* Velázquez, don José Nieto, steward to the Queen. One of his roles was precisely to open the doors for the king and queen. Perhaps in this identification with a corresponding figure unambiguously *within* the work, we likewise pull back a curtain to announce Philip IV and María Ana's eagerly awaited arrival. This would provide an internal spectator entirely consistent with the fiction presented, meeting any objection about prevailing decorum. Paralleling the otherwise curious presence of the figure in the far doorway, it offers a considerably less onerous psychological repertoire for viewers *other* than the king to identify with.

But perhaps we can also identify with a spectator internal to the *other* painting: not the fictional painting of the royal portrait, which we see only in the mirror as the *reverse* (in two senses) of the depicted canvas, but to the group portrait that confronts us, posed and organized by Velázquez. If the painted 'visitor', located at the work's vanishing point, mirrors a steward arriving, he might also be said to mirror Velázquez himself. Not only do they share a name, but as Damisch notes this figure also seems to mimic the very posture of an artist (1994, p. 436). Intriguingly, each of Foucault's absences - king and queen, artist and spectator - would thus be provided a possible place, through spectatorships internal to the *two* respective works presented: that of the painting of the royal portrait and that of the staging of *Las Meninas* itself as group portrait. And here it is worth noting that, regardless of competing interpretations, these identifications are given added psychological charge by the viewer's own *physical* sense of arrival and

engagement in front of the work (the same device used by Rembrandt's *The Syndics*). As Steinberg suggests, it presents an encounter where we experience:

A kind of reciprocity, then: as if we on this side of the canvas and the nine characters in it were too closely engaged with each other to be segregated by the divide of the picture plane. Something we bring to the picture – the very effectiveness of our presence – ricochets from the picture, provokes an immediate response, a reflex of mutual fixation evident in the glances exchanged, the glances we receive and return. (1981, p. 50)

It is an encounter that has direct parallels to the masterpieces of Dutch group portraiture, as described by Riegl, where an external coherence is founded upon a fully resolved internal coherence, instantiated by an identification with an implied beholder that interrupts the scene.

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Art and Magic, or, The Affective Power of Images

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ABSTRACT. Art and magic are often associated with one another in people's minds, when people talk about, for example, the power that art has to 'conjure' our emotions, or of being put under the 'spell' of an artwork. By examining the way in which we regularly emotionally respond to images of people we love, I will explore in this paper one way in which art and magic can be understood as sharing an important connection. First, I will introduce the notion of sympathetic magic and the 'law of similarity', according to which, "the image equals the object itself". Second, drawing on psychological studies conducted by Paul Rozin and his colleagues, I will show how the way we regularly respond to images of loved ones is consistent with the law of similarity. Third, I will use Tamar Szabó Gendler's recent account of 'alief' in order to help understand the mental processes involved in this 'magical-affective' (as I call it) level of response. And finally, with reference to Wittgenstein, I will draw out some implications of this in terms of our understanding both of the magical practices of tradition cultures, and of the function of images in contemporary Western societies, drawing parallels between the two.

1. Introduction

Art and magic are often associated with each other in people's minds. Often people use the language of magic and ritual—if only metaphorically—when talking about art: when talking about, for example, the power that art has to 'conjure' the emotions, of being put under the 'spell' of an artwork, of works in the genre of 'magical realism', or of the 'magical' illusory qualities of certain representational media, such as the 'magic' of cinema.

In this paper I want to explore one way in which art and magic can be understood as sharing an important connection. I am not interested

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here so much in artworks that engage magic in either style or content. Rather, I want to explore a deeper sense in which magic can be found in art—a sense in which magic can be found *hidden* in our engagement with and appreciation of art objects, whether or not those objects appear, on the surface at least, to have anything to do with magic. The central claim that I want to explore in this paper is that magic constitutes an important aspect of the way in which we, as humans, regularly engage with visual representations.

Before I go any further, I need to clarify a couple of things; namely, what I mean when I say ‘art’ and what I mean when I say ‘magic’. This is especially pressing given the diversity of uses to which each of the two terms may be put. I can skip over the question about art fairly quickly: for the purposes of this paper, I use the term ‘art’ liberally to include vernacular images drawn from visual culture which need not have been produced by someone who we would typically call an ‘artist’. Indeed, I will take as my primary case study photographs of the kind that may be found in a family album. If you find this use of the term ‘art’ too inclusive, then feel free to substitute it for something like depiction or visual representation instead. In contrast, the question about the use of the term ‘magic’ requires significantly more attention.

2. Sympathetic Magic and the Law of Similarity

First of all, I am not interested in magic in the sense that it might pertain to popular entertainers who perform stunts or illusions. The kind of magic I am interested in here is of the sort that pertains to the ritual practices of traditional cultures, and which typically involves belief in some supernatural or spiritual agency. Our modern, Western understanding of this kind of magic can largely be traced back to the work of several key anthropologists working in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; notably, Edward Tylor, James Frazer, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Marcel Mauss. Not all of these figures, however, saw magic in the same way. The first major works on the subject, those of Tylor and Frazer, took an intellectualist approach which denigrated magic as a failed science. As Tylor vehemently put it, “one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind” (Tylor, 1871, p. 101).

Tylor and Frazer both saw magic as originating from a misapplication of a mental faculty common to humans, that of the association of ideas. The misapplication involves seeing entities or events that are associated in the mind as sharing a causal connection in reality, such that they have the power to act upon each other at a distance. The possibility that objects or events have this power to act upon each other, beyond the laws of physical causality, presupposes two things. First, some kind of imperceptible energy, power, or shared essence, often called 'manna', which is capable of transferring between the separate entities. And second, a route along which this energy, essence, or 'manna' can pass, and which binds the separate entities together in what is called a 'secret sympathy'. Frazer proposed two 'laws of sympathetic magic' to explain how objects or events may be connected in this way: the *law of similarity* and the *law of contagion* (Frazer, 1985). For the purposes of this paper, I am only interested in the first of these, the law of similarity, so I will simply put the law of contagion aside.

According to the law of similarity, entities share a secret sympathy with one another by means of resemblance. A magical rite which operates according to the law of similarity that aims at some practical end will typically involve an imitation of the end which is desired, hence why Frazer describes such practices as 'homeopathic' or 'imitative' magic. Adopting Frazer's schema, Mauss expressed the principles underpinning the law of similarity as such: "like produces like", "like acts upon like", "the image produces the object itself" (Mauss, 2001, p. 15, 84). Two examples drawn from Frazer will help clarify the way these principles may operate in practice. One example, doubtless familiar to us all, is of inflicting damage to an effigy of a person, such as a voodoo doll, as a means of inflicting corresponding harm to the person which it represents (Frazer, 1985, p. 14). Another example, this time one with a positive goal, involves a woman adopting a child by pushing the child through her clothes in an imitation of childbirth, after which the child becomes a legitimate heir (Frazer, 1985, p. 17).

By interpreting such rituals through the paradigm of science, Tylor and Frazer saw magical acts as founded on false beliefs: a spurious attempt to master the world around them. This approach has, however, come under attack from a number of prominent thinkers who have since aimed to re-evaluate and come to a better understanding of magic as something more

than just a “pernicious delusion”. These thinkers have aimed to show that magic can serve positive functions both on an individual and societal level, and that magic has its roots in a shared commonality of human experience.

3. Feeling Towards Images

Before elaborating this alternative approach, however, I first want to lay out two case studies which will form the nucleus of this paper, the examination of which will help make sense of this alternative and, in my view, better understanding of magic. The first is drawn from the work of the psychologist Paul Rozin and his colleagues who, since the 1980s, have conducted a series of empirical studies exploring manifestations of magical thinking in educated, adult Westerners. Drawing on the work of the aforementioned anthropologists, Rozin and his colleague Carol Nemeroff summarise their working definition of magic in the following way:

Magic is a cognitive intuition or belief in the existence of imperceptible forces or essences that transcend the usual boundary between the mental/symbolic and physical/material realities, in a way that (1) diverges from the received wisdom from the technocratic elite, (2) serves important functions, and (3) follows the principles of similarity and contagion (Nemeroff and Rozin, 2000, p. 5).

In light of the substantial body of evidence that has been amassed supporting the existence of magical thinking in educated, adult Westerners, Rozin and Nemeroff have come to the view that “magical thinking is universal in adults”, and that “although the specific content is filled in by one’s culture, the general forms are characteristic of the human mind” (Nemeroff and Rozin, 2000, p. 19). One experiment exploring the law of similarity—the one that provides the impetus for this paper—involved measuring the way subjects respond to and interact with photographs of people. When asked to throw darts at photographs of people’s faces, aimed at a point marked between the eyes, subjects were consistently less accurate at throwing darts at an image of someone they liked than at an image of someone they either disliked or did not know (Rozin, Millman, and Nemeroff, 1986, pp. 702–12). The comparison here to the use of a

voodoo doll as part of a magical ritual is obvious. But before examining the implications of this comparison, I want you to consider, by way of a thought experiment, a scenario which will, I think, demonstrate the same kind of result as the dart experiment.

Imagine that I hand to you a photocopy of a photograph of someone you love, such as a family member or close friend; preferably a photograph which you know well and treasure. Now imagine that I ask you to tear it up and throw it away. Or simply that I ask you to throw it away. I expect that, although you may be willing—imaginatively—to throw out or even tear up the image, you will also have felt some level of aversion or reluctance to the thought of doing so. In one of their publications on magical thinking, Rozin and Nemeroff note that “it is common knowledge, which we have confirmed in unpublished studies in our laboratory, that people are reluctant to throw out or tear up duplicate photographs of loved ones” (Rozin and Nemeroff, 2002, p. 205). Notwithstanding individual differences, I take this to be a fact of shared human experience. If it seems fairly obvious to you, then all the better. If this is in fact the case, then the interesting question is: why do we feel this aversion?

Let us examine the photograph cases more closely in order to pick out what is interesting about the way subjects respond in the way they do. The salient aspects of the subject’s response can be broken down in the following way. First, the subject sees the image and recognises the person depicted in it. Second, recognition of the depicted person elicits feelings for that person depicted. If, for example, the photograph depicts a loved one, then it triggers the subject’s feelings of love for that person. So far, this probably all seems fairly trivial. But third—and this is, I think, what is crucial for establishing the connection to magic—the feelings elicited for the person depicted by the image are directed not only towards that person, but also, in part at least, towards the image itself. Upon seeing a photograph of a loved one, directing feelings of love towards the beloved is one thing, but directing feelings of love also towards the *image* of the beloved—even where the image is a worthless photocopy—is, from a purely rational perspective, much less to be expected. The fact that the subject’s feelings are directed, at least in part, towards the image itself is evident in the felt aversion to damaging or throwing away the image. Moreover, these feelings manifest in subjects’ behaviour. If, for example,

you were imaginatively willing to throw out a duplicate photograph of a loved one, perhaps you would not be willing to throw darts at it. And even if you would be, then, as Rozin's experiments indicate, the chances are that you would, without consciously intending it, be less accurate throwing darts at an image of a loved one than you would at an image of someone you either dislike or do not know.

So how does all of this map onto the notion of magic? According to the law of similarity, entities share a secret sympathy with one another by means of their resemblance. What the photograph cases show is that, at the subject's affective level of response, this law holds true: the subject responds to and behaves towards the image *as if* it shared some such a 'secret sympathy' with the depicted person. At this affective level of engagement, "like produces like", "the image produces the object itself". Not only does the image elicit certain emotions in the subject, but the subject automatically *behaves towards* and *interacts with* the image in a way which is expressive of those emotions. In other words, the subject treats the image as something more than just a photocopy, as something that shares a deeper connection with its depicted content than that of its mere surface resemblance—a connection that may be described in terms of some shared energy, essence, or 'manna'. The mental association of the image and its depicted content spills over into what is experienced as a real connection between those two separate entities: at this purely subjective, experiential level, there is a meaningful sense in which the image *is* the person, and the person *is* the image.

What all of this points to is a discrepancy between two different levels of the subject's response. At one rational level, the subject knows that the image is just an image, and that damaging the image—throwing darts at it, tearing it up, or discarding it—will have no consequences in the real world beyond that of the immediate action done to the image. In other words, none of us would expect, having thrown darts at an image of someone, to then find that the depicted person had concurrently suffered some grievous facial injury. At another level, however, the level that I have been characterising which points towards magic, the subject responds to the image as if it were something more than just an image, as if it had some deeper connection with its depicted content. The obvious question now is: how to explain this discrepancy? Or, more specifically, at what level of

the mind does the image acquire this deeper, magical connection with its depicted content beyond that of its merely apparent resemblance?

4. Explaining the Two Levels of Response

Rozin and Nemeroff interpret their results in terms of belief. I quote:

Magic is defined in terms of belief or a set of related beliefs, and... these beliefs may be held at different levels of explicitness, ranging from spontaneous, vague, “as if” feelings, all the way to explicit, culturally thought beliefs (Nemeroff and Rozin, 2000, p. 5).

According to this model, the subject simultaneously holds two separate, contradictory beliefs pertaining to the image. One explicit, rational belief which takes the form of a judgement that the image is just an image; and another, irrational belief, manifest as a vague ‘as if’ feeling, which determines the image to carry some deeper connection to its depicted content. Now, for many philosophers, such a broad notion of belief would be untenable. After all, none of the subjects would *say* that they believed damaging an image of someone might somehow inflict harm on that person. Moreover, if subjects held any kind of belief (at whatever level of ‘explicitness’) that damaging an image of a person would harm the depicted person, it would be reasonable to expect that most if not all would simply refuse to damage the image. The obvious answer to this difficulty is to distinguish between the two different mental states or processes which are each responsible for each of the subject’s divergent responses. There are, in fact, a number of broadly compatible existing accounts which allow us to do exactly that. I will discuss just one of these here—one that is, I think, especially suited to explain the cases in question.

In order to help understand a range of different kinds of phenomena, including those that Rozin and his colleagues have studied under the rubric of magical thinking, the philosopher Tamar Szabó Gendler has recently proposed, as a counterpart to belief, a new category of mental state which she calls ‘alief’. According to Gendler’s account, an alief is “an innate or habitual propensity to respond to an apparent stimulus in a particular way” (Gendler, 2010, p. 284). Aliefs are so-called because they are

“associative, automatic, arrational ... affect-laden and action-generating” (Gendler, 2010, p. 287). The category of alief serves to explain cases where a subject feels and behaves in a way that cannot readily be attributed to their beliefs. Unlike belief, alief does not require acceptance on the subject’s part; in other words, alief does not imply the subject’s commitment to the truth of something. As such, Gendler describes alief as a mental *state* rather than a mental *attitude*. A consequence of this is that alief responds to the world as it appears, and not necessarily to how it really is; alief operates at a sub-rational level of the mind, to a large degree independently of what the subject knows. Although a subject’s beliefs and aliefs often broadly coincide with one another, it is thus also possible—as with the cases I have outlined—that they can come apart. In such cases where there is a mismatch between what the subject believes and how the subject feels and behaves, the subject is said to have a “belief-discordant alief” (Gendler, 2010, p. 262).

Gendler characterises alief as containing three associatively linked components which are typically co-activated—a representational, affective, and behavioural component (Gendler, 2010, p. 263). This cluster of contents neatly maps onto the photograph cases I have discussed. First, the visual representation of the person depicted; second, the elicitation of affect; and third, the activation of a behavioural repertoire preventing harm being done to the person/image. Note here that the behavioural repertoire need only be activated and need not be fulfilled. Crucially, the fact that the image *is not* the person depicted by the image—the belief of which the subject at no point ceases to maintain—does not prevent the activation of the alief which responds to the image *as if it were* the person depicted.

Gendler’s notion of alief is especially apt for the present purposes because it provides a way of distinguishing the two different mental states or levels which give rise to the two different ways in which the subject responds to the image: what I will call the ‘rational-doxastic’ level, and the ‘magical-affective’ level; one attributed to belief, the other to alief. Moreover, it provides a way of neatly schematising the key components of the subject’s magical-affective level of response: an associatively linked cluster of contents which are automatically co-activated and comprise a visual representation of the depicted person, elicitation of affect, and ac-

tivation of a behavioural repertoire.

Although alief is especially useful for explaining not only the cases I am interested in here but a whole range of commonplace human and animal behaviours, Gendler's account is also controversial, and ultimately it remains to be seen whether or not it will find purchase in contemporary philosophy of mind. But whether or not we do accept Gendler's account of alief is, for the present purposes, less important than what it draws attention to and serves to explain; namely, the salient features of the subject's response which I have just outlined. There are, indeed, other accounts which are broadly compatible with Gendler's that might also be used to explain these features, such as the various dual-processing accounts developed by psychologists which describe cognitive heuristics and biases. Even if we just use folk-psychological terms such as intuition or feeling—rough-hewn as these are in comparison—they may, on a practical level, serve to pick out the same kind of subjective phenomena that I am dealing with here.

5. Art and Magic

At this point, I want to turn back to the question of magic; specifically, to the question about how we should best approach and understand the magical practices of traditional cultures described by anthropologists such as Tylor and Frazer. At the point of introducing Rozin's dart experiment earlier on, I noted the obvious comparison that may be drawn to the magical archetype of sticking needles into a voodoo doll. I am now in a better position to deal with the implications of this comparison. If we adopt Frazer and Tylor's intellectualist approach which sees magic as a failed science founded on a false belief system, then a fundamental difference arises between, on the one hand, Rozin's test subjects throwing darts at an image, and, on the other hand, someone who uses a voodoo doll as part of an 'authentic' magical practice. The difference being that the latter holds a belief that the former does not: unlike the former, the latter believes that damaging an image of a person will *actually* harm that person. From this perspective, it could easily be concluded that the use the term magic in the case of Rozin's test subjects is a misnomer. As we have seen,

Rozin and his colleagues circumvented this challenge by attributing their test results to a level of belief in their subjects. But I have rejected using the category of belief in such a broad way. So how do I meet this objection? Is it right to apply the term magic to the cases I have outlined? The answer to this, I argue, is that the Tylor/Frazer approach to magic is largely misguided: that it is wrong to equate magic with science, and wrong to see magic as founded on a false belief system. In order to help elucidate and support this position, I will refer to the work of two influential figures: Malinowski, an anthropologist who I mentioned earlier; and Ludwig Wittgenstein, who left a body of notes detailing his response to Frazer's classic text, *The Golden Bough*.

Working from the early- to mid-twentieth century, several decades later than Tylor and Frazer, Malinowski pioneered a new, functionalist perspective in social anthropology which saw certain activities that might otherwise seem irrational as entirely reasonable and valuable to the extent that they serve either the psychological needs of the individual or the social needs of the group. Moreover, Malinowski sharply distinguished between magic and science, attributing these to two separate modes of engaging with reality, one sacred and the other profane (Tambiah, 2006, pp. 65-84). Separating these two modes of activity opened up the possibility of seeing magic, not as a failed attempt to master nature, but as a meaningful performance which serves to express and consolidate the emotions of the participants in beneficial ways.

At the same time that Malinowski was working, we also have a record of the notes that Wittgenstein made upon reading Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. At the core of Wittgenstein's response to the text is a rejection of Frazer's intellectualist approach which interpreted magical rites on a level of belief. "I believe", Wittgenstein wrote, "that the characteristic feature of primitive man is that he does not act from *opinions* (contrary to Frazer)" (Wittgenstein, 1993, p. 137). "An error only arises", he noted, "when magic is interpreted scientifically" (Wittgenstein, 1993, p. 125). To support this position, Wittgenstein highlighted the dual modes of activity identified by Malinowski. As he put it:

The same savage, who stabs the picture of his enemy apparently in order to kill him, really builds his hut out of wood and carves his

arrow skilfully and not in effigy (Wittgenstein, 1993, p. 125).

The point here, of course, is that if Frazer is correct and magic represents a failed attempt to understand and master the laws of nature, then how can it be that so-called primitive peoples demonstrate relatively sophisticated understanding of these laws in some arenas, such as building huts or hunting, but also be so naively mistaken about the same laws in other arenas, such as those involved in magical rites?

Rather than interpret magic as a failed and naive attempt to master the world around them, Wittgenstein suggested that we approach magic in relation to the capacities that we, as humans, all share. I quote:

Burning in effigy. Kissing the picture of one's beloved. That is obviously not based on the belief that it will have some specific effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at satisfaction and also obtains it. Or rather: it aims at nothing at all; we just behave this way and then we feel satisfied (Wittgenstein, 1993, p. 123).

"Such actions", Wittgenstein explained, "may be called Instinct-actions" (Wittgenstein, 1993, p. 137).

The use of the word 'instinct' here is significant, for it picks out the kind of cognitive state or level which I elucidated earlier using Gendler's account of alief: a sub-rational cognitive state that operates in parallel with, and to a large degree independently of, belief, and which guides our emotions and behaviours in ways which are automatic and often non-conscious.

Tylor and Frazer's approach saw magic, religion, and science existing on a linear, evolutionary plane, such that religion supersedes magic, and science supersedes religion in the development of human civilisation. Counter to this, Malinowski drew a distinction between two different, co-existent modes of engaging with reality—one scientific, the other magical. This is also compatible with Wittgenstein's suggestion that unlike certain practical activities such as hunting or building huts which take place on a rational level, magical practices should be understood as taking place on an instinctual level. The cases I have examined in this paper point to the way these two parallel modes of engaging with reality coexist in the mind, and not, that is, just in the mind of so-called primitive humans—that two

cognitive states or levels operate in the mind to co-determine the way we respond to and engage with the world around us. Moreover, what the cases of the photographs show is that the magical, instinctual, or intuitive level of the mind—however you want to characterise it—gives rise to something valuable and important. For without this mode of engaging with reality, we simply would not cherish the photographs of people we love in the same way: they would not carry the same meaning and emotional import in our lives.

Malinowski and Wittgenstein's perspectives on magic provide, I think, compared to those of Tylor and Frazer, a much better understanding of magic as practiced in traditional cultures. Doubtless there have been, and probably still are, cases of magical rites being practiced with a firm belief in the practical efficacy of those rites. (Indeed, the theoretical account I have applied here can be used to explain the existence of such beliefs.) But in a sense, that is beside the point. Rather, what is at stake here is a deeper understanding—or misunderstanding—of magic as a whole. If we are really to understand magic, we must understand the basic human conditions of which it is an expression. As Wittgenstein put it:

the principle according to which these practices are arranged is a much more general one than in Frazer's explanation and it is present in our own minds, so we ourselves could think up all the possibilities (Wittgenstein, 1993, p. 127).

The best way to approach and understand magic, I contend, is to do exactly that. And that is what I have aimed to do in this paper by examining a simple aspect of human experience that we can all share in—the way we feel and behave towards an image of a person we love. In doing so, I have aimed both a deeper understanding of magic, and a deeper understanding of the way we regularly engage with and respond to images.

In this paper, I have chosen, for the sake of argument, to focus on a very limited subset of images. By no means, however, do I think that the mental processes which I have been describing are restricted to these examples. By way of closing, I will suggest some related examples where the analysis I have applied here might also be especially illuminating.

It is, in fact, not hard to identify instances in visual culture where an image of a person acquires a kind of power which is not explicable in ra-

tional terms, and which clearly serves important psychological or social functions. The use of religious icons as part of worship is one obvious example. But the same processes can be seen in secular contexts as well. Iconic images of political leaders can become either powerful agents of oppression and social control, or of hope and change. Moreover, the defacing of those images can become powerful acts of resistance and liberation.

To conclude, unless we understand the capacity that we have as humans have to respond to aspects of the world around us in ways which are not explicable in terms of rationality or belief, unless, that is, we recognise and embrace magic as an important part of our lives, neither will we properly understand the magical practices of traditional cultures, nor will we properly understand the power that images have of affecting us, and the meaning and value that we attach to them.

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Does “Great” Art Exist? A Critique of the Axiological Foundations of the Artistic Canon

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ABSTRACT. My paper explores critical objections to the concept of the artistic canon, conceived as a summary of works with an objective aesthetic value that have stood the test of time. To begin with, the objections of feminist and postcolonial criticism are discussed and examined. However, the sociological objection questioning the axiological foundation of the canon, i.e. the possibility of generally applicable aesthetic judgment, has been identified as the most crucial. My paper proceeds to discuss the theory of ideal perception as a solution to the problem of justifying aesthetic judgments. My aim is to prove that from the axiological perspective, the theory of the ideal critic gets tangled in the never-ending regress of a logical circle, or it eventually finds its justification through a particular social practice. This theory is also problematic in the erroneous assumption of logical independence of the descriptive and evaluating components of aesthetic concepts. The inability to separate the evaluating attitude from the conditions of the use of aesthetical concepts refers to the relative applicability of the aesthetic value and artistic canon, depending on the “personal economy” of the evaluating subject.

1. The Artistic Canon, the Test of Time and the Aesthetic Value

Numerous art lovers, along with some art theorists, believe that any given culture will sooner or later recognise quality art works (see Hume 1987, 226–249; Savile 1982; Crowther 2004). They are convinced that truly valuable works dispose of a permanent ability to please attentive audiences in various geographical regions and time periods. These pleasures are guaranteed by the existence of a natural connection between the qualities of the

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work and our aesthetic response. Time distance allows the recognition of works that go beyond the passing trends of the period, providing a valuable aesthetic experience. The existence of the canon of artistic works (i.e. the selected chain of the most important and best art works of their kind) and the top film charts of all time, such as *Rotten Tomatoes* or *ČSFD*, indicate that the test of time is effective. Based on this assumption, some art theorists have come to the conclusion that art works have their intrinsic value, which is objective in the sense that there is a natural connection between certain non-aesthetic qualities of an object and our aesthetic evaluative response. This natural connection then forms the basis of a correct, or generally applicable, aesthetic judgment (see Hume 1987; Hinderer 1969; Levinson 2002). In other words, aesthetic judgments can be attributed a truth value depending on whether they are able to grasp the aesthetic qualities objectively possessed by the object in question. One of the first thinkers to explicitly articulate the theory of the test of time was David Hume, who, in his essay, *Of the Standard of Taste*, says:

"The same Homer, who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago, is still admired at Paris and at London. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory. Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with" (Hume 1987, 233).

And yet, are these axiological assumptions, from which the concept of the artistic canon stems, justified? Is the test of time a truly reliable mechanism for identifying art works of aesthetic quality? What information value does the test of time provide, besides from being given credit by art critics or being popular with audiences even after a long time? And, if the test of time cannot serve to legitimise the aesthetic value of canonical works, are there any other methods for its justification?

The artistic canon is criticised primarily from the position of representatives of gender and postcolonial studies. I will attempt to prove that

even though the objections of the critics of the canon are in a certain respect justified, they do not constitute any principal problem for the concept of the artistic canon. This problem does not appear until sociological criticism touches upon the axiological foundations of the artistic canon, i.e. the faith in the objectiveness of aesthetic values, and thus also in the general applicability of aesthetic judgments.¹ The advocates of the canon face this criticism and contest the theory of ideal conditions of aesthetic perception and evaluation. This theory will be subjected to a detailed examination, followed by conclusions drawn from the discussion between the advocates and critics of the artistic canon in terms of aesthetic axiology.

2. The Test of Time: Feminist and Postcolonial Critique of the Artistic Canon

Let the phenomenon of the test of time be our primary concern. Does the fact that in the course of the past decades, centuries and millennia, certain works actually became a part of the cultural canon prove the exceptional aesthetic values of these works? What if their choice was motivated by other factors than solely aesthetic criteria? Feminist and postcolonial critics of the canon question the impartiality of the selective process, according to which works of art are integrated in the corpus of canonical works. They believe that works do not obtain their canonical status exclusively on the basis of aesthetic criteria, but based on whether they serve to affirm the cultural authority of the dominant social groups, thus retroactively reinforcing their outstanding position:

¹ Given the fact that the pivotal term proposed in the text is the term "aesthetic value", its definition needs to be formulated. "Aesthetic value" therefore, stands for the final evaluation attributed to a certain object based on the perception of its intrinsic properties which a certain community or culture considers worthy of attention. The concept of perception is seen in the broadest sense as encompassing reflection, remembering and imagination relating to the given object. This definition (as opposed to the usage in the following text) does not use the term "intrinsic properties" in its ontological sense, i.e. as "something inherently present in something else", but in the epistemological sense, i.e. as the quality of the object, whose identification requires perception of the relevant object.

"[S]ince those with cultural power tend to be members of socially, economically, and politically established classes (or to serve them and identify their own interests with theirs), the texts that survive will tend to be those that appear to reflect and reinforce establishment ideologies" (Smith 1988, 51).

In other words, the aesthetic evaluation of canonical works is subjected to non-aesthetic factors, e.g. the dominant ideology, as in the case of socialist realism or the Great Exhibition of German Art initiated in 1937 by Adolf Hitler. However, social ideologies do not need to reduce themselves to a mere political dimension; they may include unconscious racial, religious or gender prejudices. In the second half of the last century, this criticism of the artistic canon inspired numerous art-history case studies, causing the subversion of the cultural canon (cf. Berger 1972, 45–64), its division into several parallel and different art traditions (cf. Ickstadt 2002) and the revision, i.e. the inclusion of the formerly neglected artists (cf. Chadwick 1990; Pollock 1999; Pachmanová 2004), art genres (e.g. new realisms in Czech visual art of the 1920s and 30s), styles² and creative activities (e.g. culinary art, knitting, embroidery and pottery) into the canon.

However, the question suggests itself, whether the statement about the political, or power-related dimension for the criteria of selecting canonical works is not exaggerated. If the selection criteria were only the reflection of power interests of the ruling social classes, then only apolitical, conservative or ideologically conforming works would be recognised. However, a mere glance at the history of the artistic canon questions the identification of aesthetic value with political value, as asserted by the dominant social ideology. Many works of the Western cultural canon (Nabokov's *Lolita*, Goya's provocative *Los Caprichos*, Manet's *Olympia*, songs by the German industrial band *Einstürzende Neubauten*, Havel's *Garden Party*, etc.) are epitomised by their radical social criticism, their breach of social conventions and their violation of the morals of the times.

The theory regarding the political dimension of the criteria for selecting canonical works has recently been subjected to an empirical test per-

² For example, jazz music became a part of the canon of artistic forms, only in relation to its symbolic value as a protest against the slavery and discrimination of Afro-Americans, as attributed by European intellectuals and musicians.

formed by Willie van Peer (see Van Peer 1996). Van Peer compared two literary works (Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and the novel in verse, *The Tragicall History of Romeus and Juliet*, by Arthur Brooke) focusing on a similar topic, and yet taking a different attitude to the prevailing social ideology in England in the 16th century.³ Peer shows that although Brooke's work is highly moralistic, uncritical and urges citizens to conform to the social order (as opposed to Shakespeare's play, which presents a utopian vision of unconditional love transcending social constraints and norms), it did not have the slightest chance of becoming a part of the canon due to its inferior literary qualities.

The above-provided example disproves the generalised proposition that the ideological dimension of the criteria affects the way in which certain works are granted canonical status. Hence, there is a reason to doubt the assumption that the formation of the canon was motivated by the ideological exclusion of works produced by members of marginalised social groups (women, labour class, national and ethnic minorities) due to their social identity. Although the number of canonical works, whose authors are members of a social minority, is not a representative sample, proportional to the representation of marginalised social groups in society, it does not imply that the criteria for the selection of canonical works takes into account the social identity of their authors.⁴ For example, the reason for the poor representation of women in the literary tradition does not lie in the fact that they were gender-discriminated, but in the histor-

³ Arthur Brooke was an English poet whose epic poem *The Tragicall History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) is considered the main source of inspiration for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

⁴ The criticism of the problematic assumption of the correlation between the artist's inclusion in a certain social group and the experience he or she renders through the artistic medium is left aside. For example, the term "women's literature" does not automatically assume that the author of the given work is a woman. Women's writing represents a certain cultural skill, which can also be commanded by men. A well-known analogical example is the appraised novel *Bílej kůň, žlutěj drak* (*White Horse, Yellow Dragon*) with autobiographical features, dealing with racism and the life of the Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic, which, in fact was not written by a young Vietnamese girl, as initially believed by the public and literary critics, including the publisher, but by Jan Cempírek, a male writer from České Budějovice. For more on the issue of correlation between the author's social identity and the content of the work (see Guillory 1995, 3–12).

ical fact that women – with few exceptions – did not have institutional access to literary education before 1800 and could not publish in established literary genres (cf. Nochlin 1971, 22–39, 67–71). The exclusion of marginalised social groups therefore did not concern their representation in the artistic canon, but their access to the means of cultural production. In other words, although the categories of gender, race and class can explain why forgotten artists are being discovered under a policy of equality and democratic representation, they do not clarify why they had been forgotten in the first place.

The above-mentioned facts prove that aesthetic reasons are the only possible systematic explanation of the artistic failure of the vast majority of forgotten works, including those, whose authors belong to marginalised groups (Guillory 1995, 13–16; Olsen 2001, 261–278). This, however, is not supposed to disprove the fact that some quality works had been neglected for ideological or political reasons, had fallen into oblivion and have now been rehabilitated based on their aesthetic qualities and included in the canon. An example is Běla Kolářová, whose visual works have recently been purchased by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. However, the explanation that ideological reasons account for the ignorance of these works is not theoretically relevant, as they cannot be generalised in the context of the vast majority of forgotten works. It has become obvious that the ideological criticism of the cultural canon can only serve to remedy particular errors and omissions in the history of art, yet, it cannot question the concept of the cultural canon as it is. The general obligatory character of the canon is radically questioned only when contemplating the epistemic status of the aesthetic judgment that is the key criterion for granting, or refusing the canonical status.

3. A Critique of the Artistic Canon as the Critique of the Objectiveness of the Aesthetic Value

The most elaborate critique of the artistic canon, questioning its axiological foundation, i.e. the faith in the existence of a generally applicable aesthetic judgment, was presented by Barbara Smith in her publication, *Contingencies of Value* (Smith 1988). In the book's opening, Smith describes

the history of changeable opinions regarding the aesthetic value of Shakespeare's sonnets both as part of literary criticism and on the basis of her own experience with Shakespeare's poetic work. She notes that literary reviews have oscillated between the exalting admiration of Shakespeare's poetic feats (Samuel Johnson, Helen Vendler, Don Paterson) on the one hand and their strict rejection (Henry Hallam, Samuel Coleridge, William Wordsworth, George Gordon Byron, etc.) on the other. Her own opinion on the aesthetic value of Shakespeare's poems has undergone a similarly radical transformation:

"With only little exaggeration I can say that there is perhaps not a single Shakespeare's sonnet that would not, at a given moment, be a source of the most cultivated and most intense type of literary experience I am capable of; at the same time I have not found a single sonnet that I would not, at a given moment, find clumsy, unnaturally artificial, silly, insipid or bland. Some of those that are now (this week or previous day) among my favourites, would have been (last week or ten years ago) considered obscure, ridiculous or unsophisticated; and some, originally considered kneejerk, superficial or dull, were subsequently found sophisticated and thoughtful" (ibid., 6).

A radical turn in the assessment of Shakespeare's sonnets cannot be explained by the gradual accumulation of facts and corrections of critical conclusions. Smith is convinced that the aforementioned example illustrates the fact that the aesthetic evaluation of a given work always represents a function of our values, interests, expectations, needs, previous experience and knowledge. Smith calls this sum of psychosocial factors the "overall economy of our personality". The transformation of this personal economy also brings about a transformation in our judgment. The evaluation of art works represents a function of our needs and interests, or of what we take interest in at a given moment and what we expect from the reception of the work.

Hence, the changeability of the aesthetic judgment poses the first explanation difficulty for advocates of the artistic canon as a sum of the "best that has ever been thought or expressed" (Arnold 1993, 85). If our aesthetic judgment changes depending on our needs and expectations, how can we be certain that it will not change in the case of art works that have thus far

been appraised? And what tells us which of the different judgments (subject to our current interests, needs and experience) of one and the same work is the correct aesthetic judgment? Which of the above-stated contradictory opinions regarding the aesthetic quality of Shakespeare's sonnets should determine the canonical status of the work? If no such criterion is available, then the idea of a canon as the sum of works with an objectively existing aesthetic value appears to be untenable. At the same time, this shatters the faith in the test of time as a reliable means of selecting works with a generally applicable aesthetic value. The fact that, over decades, certain works have come to be generally recognised only serves as proof that in a given culture, a certain set of works meets the needs and expectations of a certain group of people (e.g. art critics).

Advocates of the artistic canon also have to face the fact that despite the general agreement regarding aesthetic judgments about certain works not only within a certain culture, but also across cultures and historic periods, there are individuals and groups (especially members of socially marginalised groups such as the young, migrants, national minorities and members of protest subcultures) who are in no way impressed by canonical works, or consider them aesthetically inferior or bereft of value. For example, an internet blogger named Phil shares his opinion on *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare in a blog entitled "Shakespeare Is Overrated Tosh in my Opinion":

"I watched a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* who some say is a tragedy about two star struck lovers, but that is so far from the truth in my opinion. In fact it's more like a stupid story about a serial killer called Romeo and his untimely demise. [...] Oh, the sheer tedium of it all and having to sit with an audience full of overblown stuck up snobs made the event almost too much to bear. If you're planning to watch one of these plays for the first time, FORGET IT. Go visit the movies instead – even *Titanic* was a cut above this rubbish!"⁵

How can we be certain that our positive aesthetic judgment of Shakespeare's piece is more justified than Phil's condemnation? Indeed, what is our belief founded on?

⁵ <http://www.weeklygripe.co.uk/a319.asp>.

The above-specified doubts (radical changeability of the aesthetic judgment, aesthetic disputes over the canonical status of a particular work) overturn the axiological foundations underpinning the belief in the cultural canon, and pose a question regarding the epistemological status of aesthetic judgment or the criteria of correct aesthetic evaluation. In this respect, it is useless for advocates of the canon to invoke the test of time, because this test assumes (and does not prove) the possibility of correct aesthetic judgment. Had they proposed that the test of time justifies the accuracy of aesthetic choice, then their reasoning would have become circular (i.e. the validity of both propositions would be interdependent). The fact that certain works have been recognised over the course of centuries does not have to imply that this recognition is justified and generally applicable. What if canonical works only represent specific interests and needs of art critics and similarly socialised individuals? In that case, a homological process of mutual verification would be established between the art critic and the canonical work. But what if a list compiled by me or you comprising the most aesthetically appealing works was completely different from official film charts or literature curricula? Do we have to accept the theory of pluralist aesthetics postulating the equality of values of a number of different canons that are changeable in individual and cultural terms?

4. The Ideal Observer Theory

In view of the fact that our aesthetic judgments are made based on our experience and not on logical reasoning, advocates of the artistic canon are well aware of the absence of generally applicable rules regarding the induction or deduction rationale of aesthetic judgment;⁶ thus, the criterion of a correct aesthetic choice is believed to be dependent on ideal perception conditions.⁷ Incongruent or differing judgments regarding the aesthetic

⁶ For further explication on logical justification of aesthetic judgments see Sibley 1959; Mothersill 1984.

⁷ For each general rule (such as the Golden Ratio principle or Beardsley's general principles of aesthetic value consisting in unity, complexity and intensity of the observed object), there is a number of counterexamples refuting its general applicability, i.e. examples of works that are aesthetically recognised, despite the fact that they do not meet

value of canonical works are accounted for with reference to the incompetent or insufficient aesthetic perception of those who pronounce them:

"Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely, the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty. The organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect as to allow the general principles their full play, and produce a feeling correspondent to those principles. They either labour under some defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment, which may be pronounced erroneous" (Hume 1987, 241).

Ideal perception conditions providing the foundation for the formulation of an aesthetic judgment are considered the criteria of a correct judgment. What is then characteristic of these conditions required for ideal perception? How do we identify the ideal recipient, or the ideal art critic?

According to Jerrold Levinson, the ideal critic can be identified based on his or her ability to evaluate works by the "Old Masters," works that have already passed the test of time (Levinson 2002). If the given critic is able to sort out the wheat from the chaff and appreciate aesthetic gems, the contemporary works recommended by this critic will probably provide a reservoir of rich aesthetic experience. Here, the test of time represents an indicator of aesthetic value, which Levinson considers independent of the opinion of the ideal critic. Levinson uses this argument to avoid the circular reasoning objection.⁸ Nevertheless, he cannot avoid the logical problem of infinite regress. A specific work only becomes a part of the canon by recommendation of an art critic, but never automatically. If the institutional reproduction and conservation of selected works is motivated by recommendations of recognised critics, the question is what makes the privileged position of these critics in the "art world" legitimate. According to Levinson's formula, it is the fact that these critics were able to recognise paradigmatic art works, whose privileged status is again based on the

the aforementioned rule, or works which, despite conforming to the rule, are not considered fine in aesthetic terms.

⁸ In terms of Hume's traditional concept of aesthetic criticism, the theory of the ideal critic encounters the problem that the identification of characteristic features of an ideal critic (at least partially) presupposes the knowledge of works of high aesthetic quality. However, as part of this theory, the ideal critic should serve as an independent arbiter for the identification of works of aesthetic quality.

aesthetic judgment of previous critics. As a result, Levinson's solution becomes ensnared in a chain of propositions that has the form of infinite regress, as it can never provide a satisfactory justification of the validity of aesthetic judgments.

It has become clear that in epistemological terms, the legitimacy of an ideal critic's aesthetic judgment has to be based on factors that are entirely independent of this assessment. This type of solution is also provided by David Hume. In his essay, Hume enumerates five characteristics of a good critic, whose aesthetic judgment is considered reliable (Hume 1987, 234–241). Hume believes that these individuals are endowed with delicate sentiment, strong sense, freedom from prejudice, knowledge of works and practical experience with the evaluation and comparison of various types of art works and aesthetic objects. Supposing that the theory of the ideal observer as a solution to the axiological problem of aesthetics needs to avoid a logical circle, (at least some) abilities of the observer have to be defined independently of the aesthetic value of the given object, i.e. independently of the relationship to canonical works, because the role of the ideal critic is to identify these works in the first place. In other words, the knowledge of the aesthetic value must not be a criterion for the selection of the ideal observer (i.e. it must not be implied as one of his or her identification features), because in that case, these features cannot serve as the source of legitimacy of aesthetic judgments pronounced by this observer. Three of the five listed characteristics of the ideal critic comply with the above-stipulated condition (cf. Kivy 1967). The delicacy of taste can be defined on the strength of above-average perceptive abilities, lack of prejudice thanks to the ability of impartial moral judgment and good judgment based on a sharp mind.

The normative force of an aesthetic judgment pronounced by the ideal critic could be justified by the fact that the validity of some judgments is higher because they have been pronounced on account of a superior, more detailed perception of the qualities of the observed object. In this case, the following rule would apply: if someone perceives the same non-aesthetic qualities of an object as me and is also able to see qualities that I am not aware of, it holds that this individual's ability of perception of the given object is better than mine (Shelley 1998, 34). In other words, the differences on the level of perception constitute a hierarchical difference

on the level of the aesthetic response to the observed object. This explication is apparently also implicitly advocated by Hume in his essay, using an anecdote on the evaluation of the quality of wine kept in a cask with a key on a leather strap on the bottom. Town citizens agreed with the objections of wine connoisseurs only when they found out that the tasters were able to identify qualities (when tasting wine, the first detected the smack of leather, whereas the second was left with an aftertaste of iron) they themselves were unable to detect. Moreover, our perceptive ability is enhanced by additional characteristics of the ideal critic, as suggested by Hume. For example, the freedom from prejudice prevents the critic from projecting feelings of pleasure or displeasure caused by irrelevant external factors (fever, drug intoxication, racist prejudices) onto the properties of the work concerned, thus distorting its real aesthetic value.

However, the attempt to tie the normativity of the aesthetic judgment to the better perception skills of the ideal critic encounters numerous counterexamples. Better perception skills do not necessarily mean better aesthetic perception. Although, for example, the fact that a decorator has a better ability to recognise and name varied colour tones than the author of this article, does not imply that he has a better aesthetic sense for room decoration. Moreover, the ability for detailed perception of sensual properties might not always contribute to more intense aesthetic experience and, in some cases, it even disturbs or impairs this experience. For example, a person who sensitively responds to colour stimuli can see paintings by the abstract expressionist, Barnett Newman, as having disintegrated colours, whereas others will see them as homogenous. Similarly, oversensitivity to sound stimuli can cause an inability to pronounce a judgment on a heavy metal song or a rock concert. In addition, some works (e.g. the huge urban mirrors of Anish Kapoor) require a holistic approach, disregarding individual details and concentrating on their overall impression.

Another problematic situation may be encountered when founding the normativity of the aesthetic response on superior sensory perception capabilities in the situation when two critics with the same well-developed level of sensory abilities, or perceiving the same non-aesthetic properties of the same object (as proven by their verbal description) will differ in their aesthetic evaluation of a given object. This situation is not only a

hypothetical thought experiment; I will illustrate this with a simple example from my own experience. My colleague had one wall of her living room decorated red. Although we both can see the same colour, our aesthetic judgments differ. I find the tone of red tasteless and aggressive (and I do not like red in general), but my colleague loves it. However, should not the perception of the same non-aesthetic qualities lead to an identical aesthetic judgment? After all, Hume and the advocates of the artistic canon draw on the assumption that there is a natural connection between certain (not further specified) non-aesthetic properties and our aesthetic response, which the ideal critic is able to recognise and which guarantees that a work of high aesthetic quality can withstand the test of time.⁹

However, Hume is aware of the deviations in aesthetic judgment, which are not caused by a lack of attention or insufficiently developed perception abilities and which he saw as an inevitable consequence of the operation of different cultural and biographical factors.¹⁰ This might be the reason why the normativity of an aesthetic judgment does not result from the judgment of only one (random) ideal critic, but on the general consensus of critics: "[T]he joint verdict of such [critics], wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty" (*ibid.*, 241). The consensus of critics guarantees that a natural connection between non-aesthetic qualities of the object and our aesthetic judgment has been disclosed, that it is not distorted by any cultural effects or individual propensities, and that it will be arrived at by all those whose perception ability is sufficiently developed and who are able to perceive the given work under appropriate conditions. Consequently, the normativity of the aesthetic judgment is based on an agreement among ideal critics. By the way,

⁹ For example, Hume claims: "Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings" (Hume 1987, 235).

¹⁰ Hume says: "But notwithstanding all our endeavours to fix a standard of taste, and reconcile the discordant apprehensions of men, there still remain two sources of variation, which are not sufficient indeed to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity, but will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbation or blame. The one is the different humours of particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country" (*ibid.*, 243).

this is the same method used to ensure that our perception of colours of surrounding objects is correct. Agreement with other people, in terms of the colour properties of a specific object, is a guarantee that our judgments regarding colours are pronounced on the basis of a correctly functioning sense organ and under conditions appropriate for perception (sufficient lighting, etc.).

However, the analogy between aesthetic verdicts and recognition of colours falters. While our congenital visual ability is sufficient for the correct identification of spectral colours, correct assessment of aesthetic qualities requires the application of the programme of aesthetic education, as proposed by Hume, composed of the five above-specified criteria for an ideal observer. On the one hand, Hume claims that a critic "must preserve his mind free from all *prejudice*, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration but the very object which is submitted to his examination" (ibid., 239). The requirements demanded of the ideal critic are, on the other hand, in stark contrast with this statement. A critic should be the one who is versed in the practice of appraising and comparing works of art. In addition, in the conclusion to his essay, Hume recognises the role of cultural prejudices in aesthetic judgment when he asks for a critic "of a different age or nation" to place himself in the "same situation as the [original] audience" (ibid., 239). This implies that a critic should abandon the prejudices of his or her times and accept the prejudices of the audience for which the work had once been produced. Moreover, the very ability to ignore one's own cultural prejudices (knowledge, norms, values and habits) is an ability that can be acquired through long-term training, and it presupposes the possibility of taking a step back from one's own life experience: "A man of learning and reflection can make allowance for these peculiarities of manners; but a common audience can never divest themselves so far of their usual ideas and sentiments, as to relish pictures which nowise resemble them" (ibid., 245). The aforementioned requirements represent cultural skills that go beyond the immediate perception of the work and that determine the way in which cultural artefacts should be correctly perceived and judged. Consequentially, Hume's ideal critic is not someone who can free himself or herself from prejudice, but someone who has the "right" prejudices, considered natural and correct in the context of his culture and tradition of aesthetic appraisal (cf. Shusterman 1989, 217).

However, this finding undermines the normative justification of aesthetic judgment on the basis of perception abilities of the ideal critic, which should guarantee that his or her aesthetic response is natural, thus being the correct response to non-aesthetic properties of the object concerned. The consensus in the aesthetic judgment, based on which, certain works are considered of a superior quality in paradigmatic terms, is the result of a certain cultivation of taste and aesthetic education. However, this aesthetic programme can also have a different form.¹¹ Agreement in aesthetic judgment based on Hume's aesthetic programme thus cannot claim higher relevance than an agreement on other aesthetic qualities of the same objects, which is founded on another aesthetic programme. The original contradictions between different aesthetic responses, which Hume is aware of, have thus become a matter of dispute between different aesthetic educational programmes, which are conditional on a consensus in aesthetic judgments. Hence, the crucial problem with Hume's solution to the axiological problem lies in the fact that the offered criteria of correct aesthetic judgment are arbitrary, and therefore, their exclusive epistemological position in relation to other possible criteria or aesthetic programmes cannot be defended (Ribeiro 2007).

The effort to justify the relevance of a correct aesthetic judgment becomes trapped in a logical circle, a never-ending regress, or eventually finds its justification through a particular social practice. Although the original axiological problem stems from the question of why some aesthetic judgments are more relevant than others, or of how to justify the validity of certain aesthetic judgments, Hume (together with the advocates of the theory of the ideal observer) resolves this issue by stating that some of these judgments (at least based on a consensus of a majority of experts) are practically considered by a given culture and society as decisive. How-

¹¹ For example, the neo-formalists Lamarque and Olsen (1994) consider the relevant factors of a narrative work in addition to its formal properties also its content to be aesthetically relevant, albeit only in terms of the narrative structure and not its reference function. The members of the African Baule tribe have an entirely different idea of aesthetically relevant properties. In their view, visually valued properties of fine arts include elements representing an cultural ideal promoted by civilised village inhabitants, such as health, cleanliness, fertility, diligence, sense of community and honesty (see Van Damme 1996, 232–233).

ever, these arguments will hardly persuade those who cannot take them on their own merits and who do not find the recommended paradigmatic works of the given cultural canon in any way appealing.

5. Facts and Values

In addition to the epistemological justification of an aesthetic judgment, the theory of the ideal observer encounters another problem. This theory automatically presumes that the use of aesthetic concepts cannot be reduced to a mere emotional response, e.g. "I (dis)like it," as it would otherwise be pointless to justify higher relevance of certain judgments by reference to a perfect observation ability of the ideal critic. All people have the capacity for emotional introspection, which can hardly be further perfected. The perfection of a perception ability assumes that the application of aesthetic concepts stems from non-aesthetic sensory-perceptible properties, i.e. that the application of aesthetic concepts (elegance, plainness, bombast) carries a descriptive component that can be identified independently of the observer's emotional response. In the opposite case, the solution to the aforementioned axiological problem would get bogged down in subjective relativism and the aesthetic response of the ideal observer could hardly be justified. In such a case, the theory of the ideal observer would become pointless.

Another basic premise of the theory of the ideal observer is the assumption that there are two aspects to aesthetic judgments – a factual and evaluative one. As mentioned above, if the theory of the ideal observer as a solution to the axiological problem of aesthetics is to avoid the logical circle, the abilities of the observer have to be defined independently of the aesthetic value of the given object. If delicacy of perception is considered one of the characteristic features of an ideal observer, then, for the aforementioned reason, this perception must be related to sensory-perceptible properties that are free of any evaluative components. In other words, it must be possible to perceive a painting as "plain," or a song as "moving," purely on the basis of the descriptive properties of the observed works, without taking any evaluative approach. The aesthetic value provides a kind of added value, attributed to these non-aesthetic properties based

on the emotional responses they evoke. If it is impossible to distinguish the descriptive element of the aesthetic concept (or a set of non-aesthetic properties, which, in this particular case entitles us to ascribe an aesthetic property to an object) from its evaluative element, then the advocates of the theory of the ideal observer would have to face the objection of the logical circle.

However, the assumption of logical independence of the descriptive component from the evaluative component of aesthetic concepts can hardly be defended. In the majority of aesthetic concepts, the value and the fact form a homogenous unity. This type of concept is known as a "thick concept," in contradiction to a "thin concept," which has either a purely descriptive or evaluative function (Williams 1985, 128–130). For the first time, the theory of "thick concepts" was elaborated on in analytical ethics. Some philosophers who follow the ideas of late Wittgenstein noticed that in the case of ethical evaluative terms, such as "courageous" or "violent," there is no clear line between their descriptive (identification criteria of a certain phenomenon) and evaluative (evaluative approach of the speaker to the specific phenomenon) components. The enumeration of descriptive conditions that are required to describe someone's behaviour as courageous (for example, the person concerned is able to reach a certain goal in spite of personal danger) may not suffice for the use of the term, "courage". There are cases when human behaviour meets the above-specified criteria of courageous behaviour, and yet the one who acts with courage can be called an improvident fool. The agreement regarding the use of the term "courageous" in these cases depends not only on the conditions of its use but also on the congruous evaluative approach of the speakers. If, for example, our approach to the person concerned is negative and we see him or her as ambitious, conceited and power-greedy, then his or her behaviour (e.g. open criticism of a new department manager) can be called "wounded vanity," rather than an expression of courage. The use of the term "courage" is thus conditional on both facts and values that are indivisible; even our way of noticing and interpreting non-aesthetic properties of an object is affected by our evaluative approach.

Roman Bonzon believes that the evaluative and factual components of the majority of aesthetic concepts cannot be separated (Bonzon 1999). The term "elegance" may serve as a good example. Our conclusion that

any garment is elegant is, in fact, not because we identify its non-aesthetic properties, which give rise to its elegance, which, in turn, evoke our liking. Its elegance not only stems from its non-aesthetic properties (which can differ case-by-case), but primarily from our evaluative approach (taste, aesthetic preferences and non-aesthetic values), or from our form of life. What impresses someone as elegant may seem plain to someone else. The inseparability of the fact from the value in the case of aesthetic concepts is also supported by the fact that even recognised critics who meet the condition of the "delicacy of taste" cannot agree on the aesthetic quality of a work. The advocates of the theory of the ideal observer do not know how to resolve this problem, or they, like David Hume, partially acknowledge the agency of idiosyncratic personality or cultural factors. On the other hand, the theory that considers the perception of aesthetic qualities to be inseparable from our individual and socially changeable evaluative approach offers a systematic explanation of this disagreement.

6. Final Summary

The aim of my paper was, first, to prove that the concept of the artistic canon, which derives its legitimacy from the test of time, is not sustainable. In fact, the test of time is not an unbiased mechanism for the identification of permanent and objectively existing aesthetic values of works, but the result of convergent evaluative judgments expressing the prevailing approach to the aesthetic value, which is socially contingent and thus also necessarily selective. The idea of the artistic canon as an objectively applicable aesthetic norm cannot be supported, even by the theory of the ideal critic, because this theory – in addition to stemming from the unsustainable assumption of divisibility of the descriptive and evaluative components of aesthetic concepts – cannot consequently justify why certain criteria of aesthetic value should apply as generally binding and correct. It is, therefore, necessary to refuse the concept of aesthetic value as an intrinsic and objectively existing property of a given object. The functionalist concept of the aesthetic value seems to be much more convincing, since it accepts the changeable character of the value; both dependent on the culturally conditioned idea of properties of objects that are aesthetically relevant, and also on our individually changeable interests, needs, life

experiences and expectations.¹² This radically contingent concept of the aesthetic value also offers an explanation of two fundamental intuitions concerning the artistic canon – its relative stability on the one hand, and its disproof of opinions on the aesthetic quality of canonical works on the other – without having to use questionable means of argumentation, such as the test of time or the theory of the ideal critic.

Different opinions on the aesthetic value of canonical works originate from the different interests and needs of the evaluating subjects, whose different social experiences can produce a different idea regarding the true function of artistic works or the essence of the aesthetic function of an object. In the first place, the permanent nature of the canon can thus be explained by the dominant position of a certain concept of aesthetic value in society. A consensus on the evaluation of canonical works is then viewed as the interaction between the function of the object, cultural institutions, and the needs and expectations of the audience formed through educational and cultural institutions; hence, characterised by certain permanence and stability. Secondly, the stability of the cultural canon is guaranteed by the very fact that an artefact is attributed the status of a canonical work. With some exaggeration, we could say that it is an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Throughout the course of cultural history, cultural artefacts have been venerated by society as shining examples of their kind, and have a much higher chance of “survival”, because they are culturally reproduced, i.e. more often displayed, cited, copied, disseminated, referenced, etc. It is therefore likely that these objects, rather than others, will fulfil the expectations and needs of the following – similarly acculturated – generation of recipients, or they may start fulfilling new functions for future generations. Nothing contributes more to the exclusive position of a certain work than its permanent presence, or circulation in a culture. Moreover, canonical works gain further specific cultural functions that ensure that they are required and in demand: they fulfil a historical function, become a part of the national tradition, bear testimony to the consistent continuation of values of a particular community and serve as an exemplary model for further artistic development. Neither explicit (verbal) nor implicit evaluative acts (such as the exposure or referencing of a particular

¹² For more regarding this issue see Smith 1988.

work) serve to disclose the objective value of a work; they merely work to co-create it.

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Artifactualism and Authorial Creation

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ABSTRACT. Artifactualism about fictional characters, positing Harry Potter as an abstract artifact created by J. K. Rowling, has been criticized on the grounds that the idea of creating such objects is mysterious and problematic. In the light of such qualms, it is worth homing in on an argument in favor of artifactualism, showing that it is the best way to include the likes of Harry Potter in our ontology precisely because it incorporates authorial creation. To that end, I will be exploring Kripke's fleeting remarks in his "Naming and Necessity" lectures (1972, 156–7) about expressions like 'unicorn' and 'Harry Potter'. Elsewhere, Kripke motivates artifactualism by suggesting that incorporating authorial creation (as artifactualism does) is a move that is intuitive and natural; but beyond this, he doesn't provide any arguments in favor of such a move. My purpose in this paper is to construct such an argument based on considerations about Kripke's general view about proper names, in particular, his seminal causal-historical chain account of reference determination.

I.

Why insist that authors *create* fictional characters? It does seem natural to say (1):

(1) Harry Potter was created by J. K. Rowling.

Artifactualism about fictional characters, positing Harry Potter as an abstract artifact created by J. K. Rowling, takes (1) at face value.¹ Like other forms of *realism* about fictional characters, artifactualism posits an ontology that

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¹ For brevity's sake, I'll suppress the qualification 'about fictional characters' and will simply talk of realism, irrealism, Meinongianism, nonactualism, artifactualism, Platonism. Whenever these labels appear unqualified, they are shorthand for theories about fictional characters.

includes the likes of Harry Potter. But realism is not our only option; we could also accept an irrealist analysis of (1) that doesn't take it at face value: "J. K. Rowling wrote a body of fiction in which Harry Potter is a specific character". Quite independently of irrealism, several philosophers have had serious qualms about taking (1) at face value: Brock (2010, 338) sets out to "explain why creationism about fictional characters [the view that fictional characters exist by being created by their author(s)] is an abject failure. It suffers from the same problem as theological creationism: the purported explanation is more mysterious than the data it seeks to explain" because it cannot offer a satisfactory account of the spatial and temporal dimensions of fictional characters, for example, their moment of creation. Yagisawa (2001, 154) argues that the most influential creationist views (by Searle and van Inwagen) "are ultimately unsuccessful in establishing creationism"; more generally, he thinks no view on which fictional characters exist can do justice to our intuition that a claim like "Harry Potter doesn't exist" is true and is entailed by the true "Harry Potter is a fictional character". In the light of such doubts about creationism, it is worth homing in on an argument for artifactualism (a form of creationism), showing that it is the best form of realism one could adopt *precisely because it incorporates authorial creation*.² The goal of this paper is to expound such an argument.

First, let's take stock of the various realist positions. We may, along with Mark Sainsbury (2010, 44–114), distinguish three realist alternatives about fictional characters: there really are such things just as there are ordinary concrete objects occupying space and time; but unlike those ordinary objects like cups, saucers and the Big Ben, ...

- fictional characters *don't exist*, according to *Meinongianism* about fictional characters;³

² An argument for fictional characters as objects created by people is noteworthy in the light of Brock's (2010, 340–342) criticism. He calls this the Fundamental Thesis: "Fictional characters, to the extent that there are any, are genuinely created by the authors of the works in which their names (or designating descriptions) first appear." Brock then remarks that "arguments in support of the fundamental thesis are almost completely lacking". In this paper, I set out to produce precisely this sort of argument.

³ Parsons (1980) is a contemporary proponent of Alexius Meinong's (1904) eponymous theory.

- fictional characters *are not actual* but merely possible, according to *nonactualism*;⁴ and
- fictional characters *are not concrete* but abstract, created by the activities of authors according to *artifactualism*.⁵

How might the various forms of realism handle (1)? On this point, artifactualism shows a clear edge relative to its two rivals. According to Sainsbury (2010, 61–63, 82–85), the real advantage of artifactualism concerns its response to the so-called *selection problem*: upon introducing the name ‘Harry Potter’ in her novel, how does J.K. Rowling manage to select one rather than another among the countless candidate objects? According to Meinongianism, there are countless nonexistent candidates; according to nonactualism, there are countless merely possible, nonactual candidates.⁶ Sainsbury (2010, 63) doesn’t see “how a Meinongian can offer any sensible account of how an author’s or reader’s thoughts are supposed to engage with one rather than another nonexistent entity”. We are about to see that a more decisive objection emerges against the Meinongian once we consider the difficulties that the *nonactualist* encounters when it comes to the selection problem and other problems.

In the “Addenda” to his “Naming and Necessity” lectures, Kripke (1972, 156–7) motivates two theses for expressions like ‘unicorn’ and ‘Harry Pot-

⁴ Lewis (1978) put forth such a view. This position is sometimes called possibilism about fictional characters. See also Kripke’s earlier (1963) view about Sherlock Holmes.

⁵ Kripke (1973/2013), Searle (1979), van Inwagen (1977), Fine (1982), Schiffer (1996), Salmon (1998), Thomasson (1999) are prominent proponents who hold that authors’ creative process of writing novels, stories, etc. creates fictional characters. This position is sometimes called creationism about fictional characters.

There is a position in logical space for holding that fictional characters are abstract but exist timelessly, and authors don’t create but discover them—we might call such a view Platonism about fictional characters. Zalta’s (1983) unorthodox neo-*Meinongian* proposal can be considered an instance of such an account. The only kind of abstract-object theory I will consider in this paper is artifactualism, given the overwhelming popularity and attention that this position has been enjoying (compared to Platonism), as well as the advantages that I think it has over rival theories (Platonism included) precisely because it treats fictional characters as human-created objects. The arguments expounded here carry over to Platonism also, but I will relegate discussion of that to footnotes.

⁶ Ultimately, Sainsbury (2010) rejects artifactualism in favor of irrealism. For a response strategy that the artifactualist can adopt to fend off Sainsbury’s criticism see Zvolenszky (2012, 2013).

ter’:

- The *metaphysical thesis*: There is no basis for counting any *merely possible* object as Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes, a unicorn, etc.
- The *epistemological thesis*: There is no basis for counting any *actual* object as Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes, a unicorn, etc.

In the metaphysical thesis, Kripke’s target seems to be the nonactualist (given that he is talking about merely possible entities, the nonactualist’s candidates for fictional characters). At the end of the paper, we will see, however, that both theses bear on Meinongianism also. Along the way, we will also see that the two arguments are at root intimately connected.

Elsewhere, (see Kripke 1973/2011, 1973/2013), Kripke motivates artifactualism by suggesting that incorporating authorial creation (as artifactualism does) is a move that is intuitive and natural; but beyond this, he doesn’t provide any *arguments* in favor of such a move. My purpose in this paper is to construct such an argument based on considerations about Kripke’s general view about proper names, in particular, his seminal causal-historical chain account of reference determination (Kripke 1972).

2.

Behind Kripke’s metaphysical thesis is what we might call the *insufficient-specificity problem*.⁷ The Harry Potter novels specify many details about Harry; but they also leave a lot of other details unspecified, for example, which of various parental cells Harry came from. Due to such lack of specificity in the novels, we have no basis for deciding between two distinct merely possible candidates (they originate from distinct zygotes, say) that are just like Harry is described in the novels, which of them is Harry Potter. Notice that it is in part due to insufficient specificity in the novels that Sainsbury’s selection problem arises—for the Meinongian as well as the nonactualist.

The epistemological thesis turns out to generate an even deeper problem for the nonactualist, one that we shall see (at the end of the paper)

⁷ Kaplan also emphasizes insufficient specificity as an obstacle to naming nonexistents (1973, 506; 1989, 609).

affects the Meinongian also. Behind the epistemological thesis is what we might call the *coincidental-resemblance problem*, which Kripke discusses in connection with the mythical species of unicorn:

...the mere discovery of animals with the properties attributed to unicorns in the myth would be no means to show that these were the animals the myth was about: perhaps the myth was spun out of whole cloth and the fact that animals with the same appearance actually existed was mere coincidence. In that case, we cannot say that the unicorns of the myth really existed; we must also establish a historical connection that shows that the myth is *about* these animals. (Kripke 1972, 157, emphasis in the original)

Kripke is making two points here: even if we find animals qualitatively like the unicorns of the myth, that wouldn't justify counting them as unicorns given (i) the lack of historical connection between the newly found species and the use of the expression 'unicorn'; and given that (ii) the unicorn myth was "spun out of whole cloth", not created in the right way, to make the term apply to the newly found species. The upshot of (i) and (ii): we would have no more than mere qualitative coincidence between unicorns as described in the myth and the actual species discovered. And for a proper name, reference takes more than coincidental resemblance, so we don't have any candidate actual objects to count as unicorns.⁸

In the case of the expression 'unicorn', the coincidental-resemblance problem thus arises as a result of two distinct problems: (i) *historical unconnectedness* and (ii) *unsuited mode of introduction*. Pure myth-making mode and pure fiction-writing mode both give rise to expressions that aren't introduced in the right way to refer to actual objects.⁹ Right after the passage above, Kripke (1972, 157–158) repeats the same point with respect to 'Sherlock Holmes' also: "it is theoretically possible though in practice fantastically unlikely, that Doyle was writing pure fiction with only coincidental resemblance to [an] actual man". A crucial consideration emerges from these fleeting remarks about unicorns and Sherlock Holmes: given (ii) the

⁸ Kaplan quotes Harry Deutsch: "reference is no coincidence" (Kaplan 1989: 608).

⁹ One may accept this point with respect to fictional objects but not mythical objects. The points in my paper do not require a stance about mythical characters, which raise a host of distinctive issues, see for example Caplan 2004, Braun 2005.

way the myth/fiction was created, and (i) the fact that we encounter historical unconnectedness, the result is that we find no more than coincidental resemblance to actual objects.

Both theses and all the problems considered so far have taken it for granted that the candidate objects to count as Harry Potter are *concrete, spatiotemporal objects*. It is therefore well to keep this qualification in mind. For example, for (ii) we get: the fiction-writing mode in which the expression 'Harry Potter' had been introduced into the language is unsuited for the name to refer to an actual concrete, spatiotemporal object. For (i) we get: actual, concrete, spatiotemporal objects as potential referents for the name are historically unconnected to the introduction and subsequent use of 'Harry Potter'.

It's crucial to note that of the two problems (i) and (ii), unsuited mode of introduction is the more fundamental one, explaining historical unconnectedness *of the relevant sort*. Given that (ii) Rowling's intention was to create a *fictional character* rather than refer to a flesh-and-blood person with introducing the name 'Harry Potter', (i) 'Harry Potter' was never historically linked (in the relevant way) to an actual orphaned boy wearing glasses, with a Z-shaped scar on his forehead, growing up in suburban England learning wizardry in a boarding school, and so on, and the name cannot refer to any actual concrete boy with spatiotemporal dimensions.

The unsuited-mode problem generalizes to concrete, spatiotemporal objects of all sorts, merely possible ones included; this way, we get:

the unsuited-mode problem generalized: the fiction-writing mode of introducing proper names into the language is unsuited for them to have as their reference concrete, spatiotemporal objects, whether they be actual or merely possible.

It is well to generalize in the same way the coincidental-resemblance problem also:

The coincidental-resemblance problem generalized: there is no more than mere qualitative coincidence between concrete, spatiotemporal objects (whether they be actual or merely possible) and fictional characters as described in works of fiction.

Therefore (in the light of the generalization to merely possible objects), as we dig deeper, the pair of problems behind the epistemological thesis turn out to target nonactualism.

As before, in the case of ‘Harry Potter’, the unsuited-mode problem generalized underlies the generalized coincidental-resemblance problem. And both problems are in the background of the metaphysical thesis also: the generalized unsuited-mode problem provides the following *additional* reason for holding the metaphysical thesis. *If* the character of Harry Potter is not fully specified in the novels, *then* what grounds do we have at all for choosing between two distinct merely possible concrete, spatiotemporal objects which to count as Harry Potter when, given J. K. Rowling’s fiction-writing mode of introducing ‘Harry Potter’, it would be a matter of sheer coincidental resemblance for the name to refer to either of those candidate objects? *With respect to names from fiction, the unsuited-mode problem (and in its wake, the coincidental resemblance problem) therefore raises a key issue underlying both the metaphysical and the epistemological theses discussed by Kripke;* this is a striking detail to bring to the surface given that Kripke mentions the unsuited-mode problem in passing only (saying no more than the two half-sentences quoted above), devoting far more attention to the metaphysical thesis.

3.

Just how bizarre the idea of reference based on coincidental resemblance is—the conception of reference for ‘Harry Potter’ to which the nonactualist is committed—can be brought out based on considerations about *nonfictional* names that fail to refer. The French astronomer Le Verrier put forth a hypothesis about the existence of an intra-Mercurial planet which he named ‘Vulcan’, to explain perturbations in the orbit of Mercury. There were various independent sightings mistakenly believed to be of Vulcan before enthusiasm dwindled; by 1916, Einstein’s general theory of relativity confirmed that the perturbations were produced by the gravitational field of the Sun; there was no intra-Mercurial planet at all; the Vulcan-hypothesis was refuted; ‘Vulcan’ turned out not to refer to anything.

What about a counterfactual situation in which the Vulcan-hypothesis is a success story? Imagine a counterfactual scenario with the laws of physics slightly different, and there being an intra-Mercurial planet affecting the orbit of Mercury; Le Verrier puts forth his hypothesis; there are sightings converging on the planet, which comes to be called ‘Vulcan’, the name featured in Le Verrier’s prior hypothesis. But that is not *our* term ‘Vulcan’ that comes to name the counterfactual planet, but a different one. It is preposterous to think that in coining the name in the actual world, Le Verrier managed to name *that counterfactual object even though his naming attempt failed in the actual world*. ‘Vulcan’ might have been a success story just as ‘London’ might have been introduced as a name for a river instead of a city; but all that is irrelevant to how and whether these strings, as parts of *our* language, were introduced and subsequently used.¹⁰ Le Verrier strove to name an actual concrete, spatiotemporal object; due to his failure to do so, he didn’t *by coincidence* name a nonactual concrete, spatiotemporal object (as the nonactualist would have it); doing so was no part of his intention. So ‘Vulcan’ doesn’t refer to any concrete objects in any counterfactual situations. Kaplan (1973, 506–508) makes this point eloquently with respect to a mythical name like ‘Pegasus’. But what is far more interesting is that the point holds for ‘Vulcan’! We can say the following about this name of our language, as well as other proper names intended for concrete objects or for fictional characters: *if it cannot make it here, it won’t make it anywhere*. If the name doesn’t manage to refer to a concrete, spatiotemporal object here, in the actual world, it doesn’t refer to such an object in other possible worlds either. Elsewhere (Zvolenszky 2007), I call this the *inverse-Sinatra principle for proper names*.^{11,12}

The inverse Sinatra principle is quite general, covering names like ‘Vulcan’, ‘Pegasus’, and ‘Harry Potter’. And the reason why these names don’t make it anywhere given that they cannot make it here (in the actual world),

¹⁰ See Kripke (1971, 145; 1972, 77, 102–3, especially fn. 51).

¹¹ Even an irrealist about fictional characters can, based on the considerations about Vulcan and unicorns above, accept the inverse-Sinatra principle.

¹² Frank Sinatra sang about New York City: “If I can make it there, I’ll make it anywhere”. In the inverse-Sinatra principle (to keep it parallel with the song), I use the modal auxiliary ‘can’, by which I mean (as the song’s ‘can’ does) ‘is able to’; I don’t mean metaphysical possibility. Thanks to Nathan Wildman for prompting me to clarify this.

is because nonactual concrete objects are, at best, coincidentally similar Vulcan, Pegasus and Harry Potter, as these are described in various bodies of text. We thus have a nonfictional variant of the coincidental resemblance problem.

Notice that ‘Vulcan’ and ‘Harry Potter’ differ in one crucial detail: for the case of ‘Vulcan’, the unsuited-mode problem doesn’t arise. Le Verrier’s intention had been to introduce ‘Vulcan’ for a concrete, spatiotemporal object; so a historical connection, if there had been one, linking uses of the name to an actual concrete object, could have served to fix the reference of ‘Vulcan’, circumventing coincidental-resemblance-related qualms. A historical connection can be secured in the actual world only—there is absolutely no historical connection between *our* use of ‘Vulcan’ and a merely possible concrete, spatiotemporal object. And in the absence of an actual historical connection, qualms about coincidental resemblance do arise, leading to the metaphysical thesis about ‘Vulcan’: if the specification of Vulcan isn’t complete, allowing that several distinct merely possible concrete objects fit the specification equally, then we have no basis for counting any one of them as Vulcan. (Notice that here, as before, my argument leading to the metaphysical thesis for Vulcan was crucially linked to considerations about coincidental resemblance and historical unconnectedness, which were originally identified behind the other thesis—the epistemological one. With respect to ‘Vulcan’, too, we see that the two theses are intimately connected.)

The foregoing observation allows us to highlight a more general point of advantage for the artifactualist position over both Meinongianism and nonactualism.

According to artifactualism, Harry Potter is an actual object. Yet the fact that he is an actual artifact makes room for a certain kind of causal-historical dependence on the physical world: in the 1990s, J. K. Rowling’s creative activities bring it about that Potter is an *actual* abstract object. The sort of dependence in place allows Harry Potter qua abstract artifact to be the kind of referent for Rowling’s name ‘Harry Potter’ with respect to which issues having to do with historical unconnectedness and, in turn, coincidental resemblance, and, in turn, the epistemological thesis, do not arise. (Notice that before, we noted that for names of fictional characters, no historical connection to concrete, spatiotemporal objects is of the

relevant, reference-fixing sort. Meanwhile, the point made here is that for the artifactualist, a historical connection to an actual *abstract artifact* is precisely what fixes the reference of ‘Harry Potter’.)

By contrast, alternative realist accounts that make Harry Potter a concrete object whose existence does not causally depend on us either because the object is nonexistent (according to Meinongianism) or because it is nonactual (according to nonactualism), face a challenge. First, these theorists have to explain why those objects are candidates of the right ontological status to count as the referents of ‘Harry Potter’. As we have already seen, on this point, the nonactualist founders already. The Meinongian can get past this hurdle: he may suggest that his nonexistents are objects of thought and hence have just the right sort of ontological status to be suitable targets of authors’ intended reference. But on the next hurdle the Meinongian stumbles: if his nonexistent objects are of a suitable sort as objects of fiction-writing, what historical connection is there to account for Rowling’s ‘Harry Potter’ referring to one of countless nonexistent candidate objects (each equally faithful to the way Potter is depicted in the novels but varying in details left unspecified—about sock color, etc.)? The Meinongian cannot provide such a historical connection: causal-historical connection between his timelessly nonexistent objects and actual concreta (like authors) is extremely problematic, downright unintelligible even. And because of historical unconnectedness, the Meinongian is confronted with qualms about having to work with no more than coincidental resemblance between Harry Potter as specified in the novels, and various qualitatively similar Meinongian nonexistents. And, on the one hand, coincidental resemblance does not suffice for reference, according to the epistemological thesis; and, on the other hand, with insufficiently specified characters like Harry Potter, coincidental resemblance leaves room for the metaphysical thesis (and also the selection problem) to arise.¹³

¹³ This line of argument brings to the fore why the only abstract-theory contender we considered for fictional characters was artifactualism: it is the only view according to which Harry Potter is created and hence historically linked to goings on in the actual world. Platonism, a theory according to which Harry Potter is a *timelessly existing* abstract object (akin to numbers, sets), would, like Meinongianism and nonactualism, run into problems with historical unconnectedness and hence coincidental resemblance, and, in

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Once fleshed out, Kripke's (1972) fleeting remarks about fictional characters can be summarized as follows: qualitative resemblance is insufficient to determine the reference of a proper name; a causal-historical connection between names and their referents is necessary to determine to whom or to what proper names refer. For names of actual concrete objects like 'J.K. Rowling' and 'London', this overarching lesson transparently emerges from the second lecture of *Naming and Necessity*. It is considerably less transparent that Kripke reiterates the very same lesson for names of fictional characters. Of the forms of realism considered, artifactualism is the only one that can heed this lesson.¹⁴

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their wake, the metaphysical and epistemological theses. For an attempt to combine the advantages of artifactualism and Meinongianism, see Zalta's (2000, 2006).

¹⁴ This paper has benefited from comments by participants at the conference *Realism within Phenomenology and within Analytic Philosophy* held at Kaposvár University (Hungary) in January 2012, as well as the conference *Modal Metaphysics: Issues on the (Im)Possible II* held at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in October 2014. Special thanks are due to Tibor Bárány, Zsolt Bátori, Zsolt Kapelner, András Simonyi and Ádám Tuboly for many thoughtful and incisive suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper. This research has been supported by the Integrative Argumentation Studies Grant No. 19648 received from the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA).

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