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Edited by Fabian Dorsch and Dan-Eugen Ratiu

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Dandy Socialism

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ABSTRACT. Eugène Sue has been a star writer of the 19th century bestsellers in form of novels – feuilletons during the period between two revolutions of 1830 and 1848. His first novel *The Mysteries of Paris* appeared in *Journal des Debats* in 1842-1843, and immediately became a sensation and food for thought, translated in many major European languages. Afterwards he was nearly forgotten and hardly mentioned in company of “serious” writers of elite fine art. His temporary fame was confirmed by response of Bruno Bauer’s group of young Hegelians which found in Sue’s literary attractiveness philosophical solution for all mysteries and conflicts of the period. Marx’s criticism of their philosophical and political position in *The Sacred Family* includes lengthy and thorough criticism of their “philosophical” readings of the novel, of the novel itself and of their and Sue’s understanding of new bourgeois reality. Can we, along with re-establishment of the context of *The Mysteries of Paris*, leave critique of ideology and literary critique of popular and mass culture behind to bring into the aesthetic field this melodramatic narrative of class society, and re-establish its politics of the aesthetic?

I. Introduction

I.I.

In *Peanuts* cartoons by Charles Monroe Schulz, on July 12, 1965, Snoopy started writing a novel on the top of his doghouse under slogan »Here is the World Famous Author writing« and from then on and on numerous occasions typed the first sentence of his novel-never-to-be: »It was a dark and stormy night.«

This is believed to be a quintessence of stereotyped melodramatic opening, but even such stereotype had to appear somewhere for the first time. In 1830, Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s novel *Paul Clifford* opened with “It was

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a dark and stormy night...”, and continued: “...the rain fell in torrents – except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.” (Bulwer-Lytton, 2009) In his later life, in the second half of the century, Lytton (as they usually shorten his name Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer – Lytton, 1st Baron Lytton), this artist of the first half of the 19th century became influential politician, including his post as a secretary of state for the colonies (1858-1859), and was in 1862 offered but declined to become king of Greece. Choosing to narrate on London’s criminal underground, he did not surprise his readership with *Paul Clifford*. He established his genre position before 1830 as a dandy writer who introduced new fashions into high society, for instance, with *Pelham* (1828) which stretched from initial *Bildungsroman* of a dandy to a final crime fiction. When we wear *black tie* as an evening dress code, we follow the fashion established by popularity of this novel. He was nearly completely forgotten until the end of the 19th century, and even now, who reads his novels anymore? This is not an occasion to present his literary skill anew. His fame lives now more or less just in “The Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest” which awards the opening sentence into the worst of all novels annually. Let me just say that his hero Paul Clifford lives a double life, being high society member on one and participant in London criminal underground life on the other. Not that author’s intention amounts to something, but it is worth mentioning that in prefaces to 1840 and 1848 editions he insists that he wanted to stand up against severe sentences and against sending younger criminals to prison and through literary intervention influence a substantial reform in the system of punishment and in prison as institution. Needless to say, he was a follower of Bentham. At the start of his artistic career, he had to publish because he had to earn some money after he married - his mother withdrew her allowance because she did not agree with his marital choice. Later, however, he declined political career at first in favour of staying a writer, believing that popular writer has a better chance to change something in politics than a politician. He is the author of another popular stereotype saying that a pen is mightier than a sword.

So, Snoopy was not the first one, and he was also not the first one to

follow “*Paul Clifford*” style of opening. It was Eugène Sue who, after few instructions to the readership, opened *The Mysteries of Paris* (1842-1843) with “On the cold and rainy evening...” (as one of unreliable English translations goes, most of them even omitting the whole bunch of initial instructions), while it really starts with (and I hope that promised new translation of by Penguin this December will be more faithful to the original): “On December 13, 1838, on a rainy and cold evening...” (“Le 13 décembre 1838, par une soirée pluvieuse et froide,...”) and continues “...that a tall and powerful man, with an old broad-brimmed straw hat upon his head, and clad in a blue cotton trousers of the same material, crossed the Pont au Change, and darted with a hasty step into the *Cité*, that labyrinth of obscure, narrow, and winding streets which extend from the Palais de Justice to Notre Dame.” (“...un homme d’une taille athlétique, vêtu d’une mauvaise blouse, traversa le pont au Change et s’enforça dans la Cité, dédale de rues obscures, étroites, tortueuses, qui s’étend depuis le Palais de Justice jusqu’à Notre Dame.”) We are introduced to a man, later called Rodolphe who lives double life, being half of his time a member of society’s elite and another half wandering around Parisian underground among prostitutes and murderers as if one of them. Parallels between Bulwer-Lytton and Sue exceed the first sentence, but it does not mean that Sue is not original. He had Bulwer-Lytton as his initial guide, but his ambition exceeds that of Lytton because it led to reformist proposals which should change just emerging bourgeois society into a kind of socialism. The first sentence was not a stereotype in 1842 when *Les Mystères de Paris* started to appear on July 19, 1842, to be published by *Journal de Debats* until October 10, 1843 as one of the first serial novels or *feuilletons* and a starter of a genre of urban gothic. What both Lytton and Sue have in common is this man who lives both in the aristocratic salons and in the criminal underworld of the city: in aristocratic salons he is a dandy, and in the criminal underground he is a dandy in disguise. Both Lytton and Sue were dandies themselves, they knew each other and they belonged to the same circle, and might sometimes met in the same salon, that of connected French and English dandies. On the French side the link was Comte d’Orsay (Alfred Grimond d’Orsay, 1801-1852), an amateur sculptor and painter, and English link were Lord and Lady Blessington. The three of them attracted numerous dandies and artists from Byron, Dickens, Disraeli and Thackeray to

Alexandre Dumas, Emile de Girardin and Victor Hugo. Not all of them were active dandies, but they were all attracted by dandyism. Eugène Sue, however, was a model dandy during the first half of his adult life. Dandy is a special kind of anti-bourgeois bourgeois who instead of life concentrated upon making money chose to follow beauty. This included carefully established aesthetic presence and similar beautiful life of good company, passionate erotic life and sophisticated pastimes stretching from exquisite food to delicious taste for art and appearances. That, alas, could not last forever. Dandies usually inherited a fortune from their bourgeois families. Spending it for their way of life they inevitably ended broke and bankrupt. Charles Baudelaire was right to say that dandy is a man who elevates the aesthetic to a living religion. (Baudelaire, 1863) Baudelaire, himself a dandy in his youth, concludes that something more than a fortune and the aesthetic taste is necessary for dandy to emerge as a marginal but typical social figure, namely, a period of transition from aristocratic rule to democracy. But dandy's life usually had two parts, the first one when he has assets to indulge in arranging himself and his life according to the aesthetic religion, and the second one when he had to work for survival. To become an artist seemed the most acceptable option. Sue started to write, and made his name with novels – feuilletons, later in his life to continue with novels “à livraisons”, printed in prepaid delivered parts. Art had to follow dandy rules of aesthetic religion. If during the first part of his life Sue mastered his own appearance and his own life as a cult of beauty, during the second artistic phase he, as many other dandies, lived much more humble life of modern artist but believed to be his mission to profess his dandiest cult through art proposing the aesthetic arrangement of society. Bulwer-Lytton and Sue expressed Benthamism and socialism in their novels. Enough socialism was around then and of many different kinds, as we know from *The Communist Manifesto*, but dandy socialism is not mentioned there. Sue was diagnosed with Fourierism as much as Courbet was later diagnosed with Proudhonism, but the whole bunch of artistic utilitarians who claimed to use art as a tool for social change has been described by Théophile Gautier as a strange new sort of small mushrooms which sprang out on the territory fertilised with Saint-Simonian theories. (Gautier, 1834) Sue falls into Gautier's characterizations nicely as one of those who is responding to utilitarian demands and betraying the purely artistic

art for art's sake. Is his literary style Romanticist? Yes, if Romanticist melodramatic narrative may be at the same time an educational novel, or mass literature's *Bildungsroman* (novel of formation). Its formational intention is to arrive at a social state of beautiful morality and tasteful social manners, but his subscribers would then be those who need art to profess their opinions and proposals for social reform, and Sue of *The Mysteries of Paris* could be artist of the avant-garde as it was first defined by Saint-Simon. The successful performative of his novel, however, is that one can recognize what is good and right not by theoretical arguments but from the aesthetic attractiveness of it. Narrative does consist of numerous moral deliberations and suggestions, but it seems to confirm Pascal's saying in a different formulation: pray to the God of beauty and you will find what is morally right.

1.2.

What appealed to German young Hegelians around Bruno Bauer were *The Mysteries of Paris* as *Bildungsroman* through which the spirit of modern liberal age comes to its self-realization, revealing the mystery of modernity in its full sense. Anyway, that is what Szeliga developed in his article on Sue's novel. *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* was one of those short-living journals, published by Bruno Bauer and his group of young Hegelians from December 1843 to October 1844, just in time to publish Szeliga's critique of Sue's novel. Marx devoted to Szeliga's text an extended part of *The Holy Family* in chapters V. and VIII. which embrace another two chapters on Bruno Bauer (VI.) and on correspondence of the critical critique (VII.), and open the way to conclusion. Max Stirner (Max Schmidt) published a critique of Sue as well (Stirner, 1844), but not in Bauer's journal, which is most probably the reason why Marx does not even mention it. And, as we get to know from Engels's article "Rapid Progress of Communism in Germany" published by London journal *The New Moral World*, the burden of criticism was divided between German communist intellectuals: "On the other hand, a war has been declared against those of the German philosophers, who refuse to draw from their mere theories practical inferences, and who contend that man has nothing to do but to speculate upon metaphysical questions. Messrs. Marx and Engels have published a detailed refutation

of the principles advocated by B. Bauer, and Messrs. Hess and Bürgers are engaged in refuting the theory of M. Stirner: - Bauer and Stirner being the representatives of the ultimate consequences of abstract German philosophy, and therefore the only important philosophical opponents of Socialism – or rather Communism, as in this country the word Socialism means nothing but the different vague, undefined, and undefinable imaginations of those who see that something must be done, and who yet cannot make up their minds to go the whole length of the Community system.” (Engels, 1845) These vague, undefined and undefinable notions of socialism and communism are still with us, as we know very well, and so did Engels in 1845 writing for an official national English organ of Owenism fully titled *The New Moral World and Gazette of the Rational Society*, published by Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists. In Germany, socialism is vague, undefined and undefinable; in England, communism cannot be distinguished from socialism, but it can be presented as something acceptable and not too radical if it is linked with the idea of universal community. A war declared against Hegelian philosophers in Germany is also a war for self-understanding of communism which, from this time on and up to now has never stopped. *Manifesto of the Communist Party* from 1848 was the first footstone on this way, including critical relations articulated about different socialist and communist groups and ideologies. In 1845, we are still just at the start of this war, and in Germany it has to deal with specifically Hegelian legacy which turns everything concrete and practical into something abstract, purely spiritual and dogmatic. Szeliga is attacked because his treatment of Sue’s novel is a caricature, or, if you want, a farcical species of Bauer’s conservative Hegelianism, and because the essence he presses and crushes from Sue is such a typical concocted juice of empty activism. Its emptiness lies in the insistence on good soul and charitable deeds. In spite of all Szeliga’s misreading of Sue’s novel, this point is common to both: beautiful soul and charity can solve all social conflicts. The full frame of Szeliga’s interpretation is found at the beginning and at the end of the article, and in between is a journey from art to morality. At the beginning, he says axiomatically: “The art is free.” (Szeliga, 1847, 8) He explains that art has a nature of its own, religion of its own, legality of its own, truth of its own and love of its own. Being free, art can choose its objects freely on its own territory, free of politics, science and life which

have no jurisdiction over art's territory. In conclusion, Szeliga claims that the true object of art is what is eternal and absolute (*vollkommende*), but what it shows at its surface is contemporary and imperfect – and the terrain it covers that way is morality (*Sittlichkeit*). Marx does not discuss the status of art, leaving dandy combination of free beauty/autonomous aesthetic territory and its intrinsic morality aside. But in the third part of Chapter VII “Revelation of the Mysteries of Law” he opens fire upon proposed morality as a solution for all social troubles. His account is shown in a table which exposes two ways of confronting social evil, the first one with police force and another, Szeliga's and Sue's, with moral police forces. The first approach attacks evil with punishment, the second one attacks evil with reward which beautiful souls get from becoming subjects or objects of charity. Here is Marx's Table of Critically Complete Justice (Marx and Engels, 1845):

EXISTING JUSTICE	CRITICALLY SUPPLEMENTING JUSTICE
Name: Criminal Justice	Name: Virtuous justice
Description: holds in its hand a <i>sword</i> to shorten the wicked by a head.	Description: holds in its hand a crown to raise the good by a head.
Purpose: Punishment of the wicked – imprisonment, infamy, deprivation of life. The people is notified of the terrible chastisements for the wicked.	Purpose: Reward of the good, free board, honour, maintenance of life. The people is notified of the brilliant triumphs for the good.
Means of discovering the wicked: Police spying, <i>mouchard</i> , to keep watch over the wicked.	Means of discovering the good: <i>Espionage de vertu</i> , <i>mouchards</i> to keep watch over the virtuous
Method of ascertaining whether someone is wicked: <i>Les assist du crime</i> , criminal assizes. The public ministry points out and indicts the crimes of the accused for public vengeance.	Method of ascertaining whether someone is good: <i>Assises de la vertu</i> , virtue assizes. The public ministry points out and proclaims the noble deeds of the accused for public recognition.

Condition of the criminal after sentence: <i>surveillance de la haute police</i> . Is fed in prison. The state defrays expenses.	Condition of the virtuous after sentence: Under <i>surveillance de la haute charité morale</i> . Is fed at home. The state defrays expenses.
Execution: The criminal stands on <i>the scaffold</i> .	Execution: Immediately opposite the scaffold of the criminal a pedestal is erected on which the <i>grand homme de bien</i> stands. – <i>A pillory of virtue</i> .

To comment on this criticism of Szeliga's writings on Sue which is also a criticism of Sue's dandy *kalokagathia* socialism, there is no need to go into it too deeply. It is enough to mention contemporary civil society police which grew in the last decade in elite sport as its anti-doping system which includes a possibility of total surveillance of athletes in and out of competition, guided by "zero tolerance" and described as "a war against doping" and by perverted Magna Charta Libertatum principle which claims that those suspect of doping by the authorities have to prove their innocence. As this is not successful enough, and as it might fell under inspection of some human rights or supreme justice court, a supplement principle was added this year claiming that "the ultimate goal is to protect clean athletes." (Olympic Agenda 2020, 2015) This is a system typical of contemporary police which is partly privatized together with prisons, and partly de-etatized into civil society police as in the case of sport, and it typically has to cover its total surveillance ambition by proclaiming promotion of good over evil as its main cause, which turns totalitarian system of anti-doping surveillance into necessary supplement of justice. In Marx's Table of Critically Complete Justice, we still have state police on one and civil society moral majority police on the other side. In our time, the difference between legality and morality is blurred up to legalization of moral police, to sustain the system of surveillance and control. Moralization of social conflicts which adds reward for the good to the punishment of the wicked is one of the best ways to keep and maintain social inequality as it is. Wolfgang Welsch once said (in Ljubljana in 1998, to be precise) that art

started as an aesthetic activity of the nineteenth century, to become an ethical activity in contemporaneity, while sport started as an ethical activity, to become an aesthetic activity in contemporaneity. (Welsch, 2005) This sounds true enough, but sport spectacle, being an event to see and to be seen, is still a kind of struggle between good and evil if one takes sides. Rodolphe, Grand Duke of Geroldstein, has finally found an empire where Sue and Szeliga are represented as a rule of both legal system and moral surveillance. Metamorphosis of the Roman spectacular context of “to see and to be seen” (Tertullien, 1986, 286-287) into a struggle between good and evil is entertaining, and at the same time a perfect surroundings for total(itarian) police which includes reward as a kind of “positive punishment”. The struggle between good and evil organized as an artwork is – melodrama.

2. Melodramatic Fiction

The Mysteries of Paris is a melodramatic novel. Initially, melodrama was used as one of the names for musical drama – *opera in musica*. Rousseau gave it another meaning with *Pygmalion* where music comes as “pure music” in-between dramatic acts as a guide to initiate the correct emotional state of the spectators. The genre of melodrama was developed as a mass theatrical relative of Diderot’s and Lessing’s bourgeois drama, featuring everyday life of common people, charging and discharging strong passions with special attention for spectacular mass entertainment and moral struggle between good and evil in which finally good always prevails. Strict differentiation between elite and mass art was still not fully established (if it ever has been, really) in Sue’s time, neither in novel nor in theatre – Sue’s theatrical adaptation of *Mysteries* was put on stage in *Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin* devoted to Romantic movement’s drama and not in one of *Boulevard du Crime* theatres some of which were specialized in melodramatic productions, and where each night up to 20.000 people came for entertainment. Sue did not invent melodramatic novel, and he did not invent basic melodramatic narrative means, but he extended melodrama’s scope from domestic and private to social life, and promoted proletarian class of “people” into his leading character. This is, by the way, main difference between Sue’s *Mysteries* and Bruno Bauer’s social and political

philosophy in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*: Sue treats new urban masses as a mystery with obvious intention to reveal that their moral condition is at least potentially well above their social position; Bauer declares that masses have to be expelled from history because they poison its purpose. In her analysis of Sue's work, Cornelia Strieder puts melodrama and social criticism together to overcome prejudice against trivial literature on one, and prejudice against ideological use of literature on another side. It is interesting that Sue himself has put in his novel a passage admitting that it may be bad literature but has good social and moral intentions, turning literary criticism of the novel into a kind of participation and its counter-voice within the novel, and offering the reader who started to doubt that reading is entertaining enough another moral reason to continue. Strieder names four fundamental structural elements of his melodramatic narrative which certainly belong to melodrama as such and not just specifically to trivial literature's novel or even to Sue's "bad literature": stereotype, mystery, chance and antithesis. Following Walburga Hülk's dissertation, we should add physiognomics as a narrative strategy similar to the part music had in Rousseau's melodramatic *Pygmalion*: to introduce and induce reader with appropriate emotions and affects.

Novel's world is built on *stereotypes*, and stereotypes are not used in characters only but also in descriptions of natural, social and cultural context. The most important stereotype which makes the world of the novel possible is "beautiful soul" as a common source of the aestheticized ethics which is necessary for the constitution of the possibility of redemption which is again necessary to keep expectations concentrated on the flow of the narrative. Social evil, its counter-part, is not absolute but constructed condition, which makes possible another stereotype: change conditions and people will change. There is no question as that of Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach because presence of the "subject who is supposed to know" (Lacan, 1973, 232 and pass.) and "who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (*Revelations*, 12:5) is a precondition for a narrative of this kind, and this precondition is felt everywhere. A combination of exalted, emotional and melodramatic style with omniscient source of knowledge invited, on one side, a criticism of the literary abilities of the author, and, on the other side, reproach that the author, and old dandy and now pretentious dandy socialist, does not know anything about the reality of prolet-

arian life in Paris. This means attacking stereotypes with stereotypes, and opens a necessity to understand, first, the aesthetic features and politics of mass culture narrative, and second, to recognize that novel functioned so well with its contemporaries because in spite of all aesthetic, moral and emotional exaltations, it sounded true enough. Therefore, what contemporary urban mass is about was constructed by this kind of narratives to such an extent that even the object of Le Bon's science of the masses may be found in melodramatic narratives and not in documentary empirical reality. Stereotyped characters are not developing through the novel but announced as already complete, which makes it easier to construct the plot: change comes more from collisions of persons one into another than from their intrinsic change of direction.

Mysteries are many, and some of them are very complicated, even to the extent that their release and disentanglement comes sometimes simple and thin. Mysteries function in opposite direction as stereotypes: stereotypes stimulate the reader to feel safe, while mysteries make him (her) nervous and stimulate him (her) to continue reading to find a clue and solution. There is a strategy and tactics involved to organize a structure in which author and reader are on opposite sides of their dialogue, author having the whole insight into all mysteries and reader expecting to travel from mystery to revelation. In between are located inside mysteries or secrets known to one and not to another character. There is a difference between secret and mystery: fundamental mystery is the mass of poor people living in the same city as the happy few; secrets are just hidden and found, mysteries represent fundamental character of modern society and can only get revealed through author's voice in the narrative. But the reason that these revelations become attractive is not the desire for social (re)cognition, it is their aesthetization which, contrary to stereotype of the beautiful soul, produces an image of barbarians and primitives, an image which directly corresponds to fixation on the primitive Other who, in spite of being poor and culturally undeveloped, enjoys what the wealthy, obeying multiple social conventions and rules, cannot. Mysteries allow (as much as it can be suggested in that period) for perverse desire to have its way. This aesthetic lime-twig has an ideological grip: it enables that, together with sexual innuendos, excessive violence (especially towards children) and disgusting manners and language, the reader gets involved with a process which leads

from introductory image of mysterious mass of modern urban society to the final image of this mass individualized into an articulated and differentiated class, while its bourgeois and aristocratic social counterpart enters a similar process of individualization and division among good and bad, one side rewarded and another punished by life itself. Following the flow of narration one gets both confirmation and negation of author's introductory lesson on masses. Namely, before we are situated into "cold and rainy evening" we are introduced to *le tapis-franc* which in (now archaic) argot means a tavern where low-life persons come together and where police spies mingle. After short introduction to this public point of criminal and police communication, we are warned: "This beginning," writes the author, "is announcing the reader that he will have to get involved with sinister scenes; if he agrees to follow, he will penetrate horrible regions unknown to him..." This social ecosystem of "dirty cesspools" is filled up by types "like reptiles in a swamp". Then, we are offered an analogy between American Indians and lower classes of modern urban population. "The entire world has read admirable pages where Cooper, the American Walter Scott, describes wild customs of savages, their picturesque language, poetics, thousand cunning tricks which help them to escape or follow their enemies." But there is no need to look for savages elsewhere; they inhabit our own modern world: "We will try to demonstrate in front of readers' eyes a few episodes from the life of the other barbarians who, as much as savage tribes painted by Cooper, are beyond civilization. It is just that barbarians we are telling you about are among us..." These men have their own customs, their own kind of women, their own language – a mysterious one full of deadly images and disgusting bloody metaphors. Writing these pages, continues the narrator in his own voice, "we could not escape certain squeezing of the heart...we don't dare to say painful anxiety..." In spite of this horrible step into the swamp and sewage, the narrator counts on readers' "timid curiosity which terrible spectacles sometimes excite." But if the reader decides to follow the narrator to pay a visit the lowest level of social ladder, "the atmosphere will get more and more purified." (Sue, 1842-43– transl. L.K.)

For those who like to study French melodramatic style at its best, here is the original (Sue, 1842-43):

Ce début annonce au lecteur qu'il doit assister à de sinistres scènes; s'il y consent, il pénétrera dans des régions horribles, inconnues; des types hideux, effrayants, fourmilleront dans ces cloaques impurs comme les reptiles dans les marais.

Tout le monde a lu les admirables pages dans lesquelles Cooper, le Walter Scott américain, a trace les mœurs féroces des sauvages, leur langue pittoresque, poétique, les milles ruses à l'aide desquelles ils fuient ou poursuivent leurs ennemis.

On a frémi pour les colons et pour les habitants des villes, en songeant que si près d'eux vivaient et rôdaient ces tribus barbares, que leurs habitudes sanguinaires rejetaient si loin de la civilisation.

Nous allons essayer de mettre sous les yeux du lecteur quelques épisodes de la vie d'autres barbares aussi en dehors de la civilisation que les sauvages peuplades si bien peintes par Cooper.

Seulement les barbares dont nous parlons sont au milieu de nous; nous pouvons les coudoyer en nous aventurant dans les repaires où ils vivent, où ils se rassemblent pour concerter le meurtre, le vol, pour se partager enfin les dépouilles de leurs victimes.

Ces hommes ont des mœurs à eux, des femmes à eux, un langage à eux, langage mystérieux, rempli d'images funestes, de métaphores dégouttantes de sang.

...

Nous abordons avec une double défiance quelques-unes des scènes de ce récit.

Nous craignons d'abord qu'on ne nous accuse de rechercher des épisodes repoussants, et, une fois même cette licence admise, qu'on ne nous trouve au-dessus de la tâche qu'impose la reproduction fidèle, vigoureuse, hardie, de ces mœurs excentriques.

En écrivant ces passages dont nous sommes presque effrayé, nous n'avons pu échapper à une sorte de serrement de cœur... nous n'oserions dire de douloureuse anxiété... de peur de prétention ridicule.

...

Pourtant nous comptons un peu sur l'espèce de curiosité craintive qu'excitent quelquefois les spectacles terribles.

...

Le lecteur, prévenu de l'excursion que nous lui proposons d'entreprendre parmi les naturels de cette race infernale qui people les prisons, les bagnes, et don't le sang rougit les échafauds...le lecteur voudra peut-être bien nous suivre. Sans doute cette investigation sera nouvelle pour lui; hâtons-nous de l'avertir d'abord que, s'il pose d'abord le pied sur le dernier échelon de l'échelle sociale, à mesure que le récit marchera, l'atmosphère s'épurera de plus en plus.

The whole announcement is a contract, a promise and a bond between the narrator and the reader on crossing the line of abominable, invisible, pervert and *Unheimlich*. Both sides know that this is an equal exchange of mutual understanding: narrator will get more than just reader's attention, because the reader admits that he (or she) would never go across the line by himself (or herself) without a safe hand of narrator. This is a promise: the reader will be allowed to enjoy what he (or she) is otherwise unable to, if not forbidden, and he (or she) will get back from the other side of the divide without any harm, not losing face because of being indulged in perversities but, quite the contrary, getting his or her eternal moral cleansing and glory because of the aesthetic charity he was able to feel when confronted with the horrible Other of contemporary barbarians and primitives. And there is a bond: both sides agree that they will not tell about abominable, invisible, pervert and *Unheimlich* desire and enjoyment of their own, hiding it under purifying process using a spray of the beautiful charity: we immersed in evil and had a good time there, but it will remain covered by purely moral intentions.

The narrative is kept together by abundant use of *chance*, so that the reader gets used to it and is expecting that things just happen. This makes chance something expected and logical, as if there is some power behind the curtain which arranges things. This does not amount to anything metaphysical, it is just an invisible hand of modernity with an addition of a visible hand which comes as a German aristocrat connecting two worlds with his disguise and masquerades, to enable that at the end, this invisible hand guided by his visible hand of general manager leaves everything in perfect moral order. Modern social order needs an aristocratic conductor to make combined bourgeois and proletarian orchestra music beautiful and harmo-

nious. The chance, therefore, comes in duality. Social world is shown as a place of “deep play” – of irrational risk which one cannot avoid but for the apparition of *deus ex machina*, pardon, *deus ex Germania*.

The antithesis is used abundantly, but its fundamental structure may be reduced to confrontation between good and evil. The resolution of this antithesis is not Aristotelian purification but moral police decision: purification and happiness ever after is just a fake and an empty pretention. It is not right but nice, as in Bernard Shaw’s remark on what bothers aesthetically delicate souls in modern society: that there are so many poor and ugly people visible from their windows and their walks through the city that it makes them impossible to enjoy their good lives for real. Their socialism is, tells Shaw, in a wish to make lower classes appear clean, well shaven and nicely dressed – primitive but pleasurable barbarians.

The reason why the independent income-tax payers are not solid in defence of their position is that since we are not medieval rovers through a sparsely populated country, the poverty of those we rob prevents our having the good life for which we sacrifice them. Rich men or aristocrats with a developed sense of life – men like Ruskin and William Morris and Kropotkin – have enormous social appetites and very fastidious personal ones. They are not content with handsome houses: they want handsome cities. They are not content with bedaimonded wives and blooming daughters: they complain because the charwoman is badly dressed, because the laundress smells of gin, because the seamstress is anaemic, because every man they meet is not a friend and every woman not a romance. They turn up their noses at their neighbours’ houses. Trade patterns made to suit vulgar people do not please them (and they can get nothing else): they cannot sleep nor sit at ease upon ‘slaughtered’ cabinet makers’ furniture. The very air is not good enough for them: there is too much factory smoke in it. They even demand abstract conditions: justice, honour, a noble moral atmosphere, a mystic nexus to replace the real nexus. Finally they declare that though to rob and pill with your own hand on horseback and in steel coat may have been a good life, to rob and pill by the hand of the policeman, the bailiff, and the soldier, and to underpay them meanly for doing it, is not a good life, but rather fatal to all possibility of even a tolerable one. They call on the poor to revolt and, finding the poor shocked at their un-

gentlemanliness, despairingly revile the proletariat for its 'damned wantlessness' (*verdammte Bedürfnislosigkeit*). (Shaw, 1906)

What Shaw ridicules in "Preface to Major Barbara" is dandy socialism in its purest form. In addition to antithetical class confrontation one should add that Sue starts with transportation from Cooper's "Indians" to modern "proletarians" squeezing barbarians and primitives into one. Squeezing together two categories of progressive states of human development in time and in space, he represents modern masses at the same time as noble savages and as uncivil evil. On the other side, there are aristocrats (if not of title or blood then of the "beautiful soul") and bourgeois whose only link with the world of "the Others" is Rodolphe, German aristocrat excellent in British art of boxing, changing his attire from proper for his class to proletarian disguise to be able to communicate with the whole social world. With support of such an image of social totality, we get an equation between class and race.

Physiognomics supports two purposes. The first one is the same as that of music in Rousseau's melodrama: to make the reader aware of inner, moral fundament of described person, part of the city, or natural surroundings. The second one is to divide the species of modern society into racial types, and then to organize them into classificatory chart of orderly recognition. With the help of physiognomic descriptions which fill in nearly every intermission between actions and dialogues the reader is put into expected emotional state, and the taxonomic distribution of the moral value of persons, classes, manners and locations is mapped for the reader as his (her) literary Global Positioning System. This racism is social: different races are produced by the invisible hand of modern society which naturalizes its outcome into naturalized social taxonomy which, however, can be changed for the better one which will introduce aristocratic moral criteria for classification instead of modern social criteria.

3. Mortal Author and Immortal Narrator

But can we see Sue behind it as predecessor of Ruskin and Morris and Kropotkin? Of course we can. But the Sue as predecessor of the aesthetically delicate or dandy socialism appears in real political life as well. He

was elected a deputy of the French Assembly after revolution 1848. We should not equate this really existing Sue with the narrator of his novels. This Sue gets mentioned by Marx again both in *The Class Struggles in France (1848-1850)* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx, 1850; Marx, 1852) as a symbol of sentimental banalization of the revolution. Really? As a politician against his will, he was a supporter of abolition of the death penalty, of organization of labour, of state care for people's medical supply, of universal voting right, and of abolition of slavery in the colonies. His support for the socialist political camp by novels-feuilletons was strong enough that Bonaparte introduced a new tax on newspapers publishing novels-feuilletons which brought this kind of novel and this kind of the socialist propaganda to an end. Before he died in 1857, Sue published *The Mysteries of People*, a novel now appearing for subscribers in parts. In this last one, Sue put down a history of proletarian struggles for freedom and dignity from pre-ancient times of Gaul to post-revolutionary contemporaneity of 1848 aftermath which is narrated to give plebeian masses a history of their own and to articulate an appellation Shaw mentions as well: proletarians of the world, revolt! As it was widely accepted and used as a stimulus for proletarian self-consciousness, it might represent a new kind of myth.

Still, this is a mortal Sue and not Sue the narrator of his novels whom we can still meet if we open one of his books and start to read. The equation of author and his work could be criticized with Adorno's words as an abdication which turns an artwork into a document, as he mentions in the context of late style. "It is as if...the theory of art were to divest itself of its rights and abdicate in favour of reality." (Adorno, 2002, 564) The equation of author and his work could be denied its rights with a help from Bakhtin: "One can speak of a *pure* author as distinct from a partially depicted, designated author who enters as part of the work...This does not mean that there are no paths from the pure author to the author as person – they exist, of course, and they exist in the very core, the very depth of man. But this core can never become one of the images of the work itself. The image is in the work as a whole, and to the highest degree, but this core can never become a constituent figural (objective) part of the work. This is not *natura creata* or *natura naturata et creata* but pure *natura creans et non creata*." (Bakhtin, 1986, 109-110) Surprisingly, for ('pure') author's position in the

dialogical relationship with the reader, Bakhtin is using metaphors which brings Spinoza (*natura naturans, natura naturata*) immediately to mind, but his insistence on this metaphor and its formulations really belong to Johannes Scottus Eriugena (cca. 810-877) and his treatise *De divisione naturae* where he divides nature in four parts:

Talis itaque erit, ut opinior, supradicta universalis naturae quadri-
formi division in eam... quae creat et non creatur... quae et creatur
et creat... quae creatur et non creat... quae nec creat nec creatur...
(Scottus, 1838, 85)

This is, then, the division: nature which creates but was not created, nature which was created and creates, nature which was created but does not create, and nature which neither creates nor was created. The first and the fourth belong to God. The first one represents God at the beginning of creation, and the fourth represents God at its final stage. In-between are the second and third partition which belong to *saeculorum* or the earthly universe. The first and the fourth are above our ability to sense or comprehend, they are beyond our aesthetic or rational reach. For the reader, the author as real person is beyond reach, what he gets is an image of “pure” author. If we turn from this “pure” author to the real person, this person is not *natura quae creat et non creatur* but just an earthly nature which is created and creates. Consequently, in the field of the narrative, the author of the novel is like God: he is not created but he creates it all until the end of the novel when he, still not created, creates no more. The author as a real person is found before the narrative starts and after it is finished, but never in-between. Consequently, when the reader becomes a reader, i.e. when he (she) starts reading, he (she) is also created by the author if and when he (she) is following the narration and by that entering into dialogue with the author. The reader cannot confront the author in person and cannot comprehend the author otherwise but to follow the path of narration in full trust and confidence. When he (she) starts to interpret the novel he (she) steps out of dialogue and out of narration. The status of reader is that of the second part of nature: he (she) is created by the author, but he (she) creates as well. This relationship between the author and the reader is exactly what Sue is getting at initially, using direct dialogue with the reader on several other occasions during the narrative to bring the contract, the

promise and the bond with the “pure” author to memory. We can explain it once more: the contract - you will go beyond the reach of your senses and comprehension across the partition; the promise - you will get over your “*serrement du Coeur*” (tightening of your heart) and your “*doloreuse anxiété*” (painful anxiety) to experience the life of the damned Other you fear and admire at the same time; the promise - what you will see is horrible, violent, perverse...and you will enjoy it; the bond - nobody will see your perversion and your desire for horrible, violent, perverse. Your desire and your joy will be hidden and removed by continuous moral cleansing.

Thanks to Edgar Allen Poe, a contemporary of Eugène Sue, we do not need Adorno or Bakhtin to take *The Mysteries of Paris* from the critique of ideology and politics back to art and the aesthetic. Better part of Poe’s essay is devoted to mistakes in translation by C. H. Town, but in a short characterization of *Mysteries of Paris*, “a work of unquestionable power” he mentions three main artistic features. One, it is “the ‘convulsive fiction’” of a kind where “the incidents are *consequential* from the premises, while the premises themselves are laughably incredible. Admitting, for instance, the possibility of such a man as Rodolphe, and of such a state of society as would tolerate his perpetual interference, we have no difficulty in agreeing to admit the possibility of his accomplishing all that is accomplished.” He second characteristics which “distinguishes the Sue school, is the total want of the *ars celare artem*[art concealing its means]...The wires are not only not concealed, but displayed as things to be admired, equally with the puppets they set in motion.” This makes the world we are brought into a world of accessible and free manipulation, completely manageable world, which is an image of the world common not just to writers of melodramatic (or biomechanic) fiction but also to neoliberals, socialists and Hegelians. Thirdly: “The philosophical motives attributed to Sue are absurd in the extreme. His first, and in fact his sole object, is to make an exciting, and therefore saleable book. The cant (implied or direct) about the amelioration of society, etc., is but a very usual trick among authors, whereby they hope to add such a tone of dignity or utilitarianism to their pages as shall gild the pill of their licentiousness.” Typical for Sue’s “engrafting a meaning upon otherwise unintelligible” is this *ruse* as “an afterthought, manifested in the shape of a moral, either appended (as in Aesop) or dovetailed into the body of the work, piece by piece, with great care, but

never without leaving evidence of its after-insertion.” (all quotes from Poe, 1846) All philosophical, ideological, political and other aspects of a novel have to be taken and interpreted as literary means. In case of Sue, his tricks and ruses make the world of the novel as a puppet theatre where we can see the puppeteer and the strings – the “pure author” is not hiding behind the curtain as a wizard of Oz but stands in front of us and admits that he is a manipulator, announcing or interpreting his previous or next move. This creates a mythical situation, or better, a caricature of a mythical situation when and where Gods still walked around humans and made them visible. That way author invites the reader to take a place aside the author, watching scenes from modern life from the point a level above novel’s story, to get a perspective on the whole of society, and then pushes him (or her) back into seismic movements of the story itself. These movements are at the core of “convulsive fiction”, helping to make unfounded premises acceptable. The third Marx’s thesis on Feuerbach, therefore, does not apply on literary fiction. Here it is: “The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.” (Marx, 1845a) There is no need to educate “pure” author of the narrative. He comes complete and omniscient anyway. That is why art gets position of the avant-garde by Saint-Simon: no rational deliberation can bring out an instant break-through as efficiently. What is forgotten here is that it works only in fiction, and that in society where things have their mutual social relations instead of humans, humans have to get divided into two parts anyway. This is not fiction, but it is fetishism and mystification. Engels’s invention of “scientific socialism” to explain Marx’s position, if understood in positivist terms, transports us back to Sue’s puppeteer found by Poe. For Marx, science means overcoming the position of “*le sujet suppose savoir*” (subject supposed to know), a subject necessary for melodramatic fiction as well as for melodramatic socialism, and especially for police and moral police. The aesthetic regime of art can question the boundaries of art and life with the help of presupposed existence of *natura creans et non creata*, or *le sujet supposé savoir*. Socialisms would like to cross the line, first from life to art and then back. Following Bakhtin’s premises, they get stuck with art, unable to get out of puppet theatre, or

stuck with life, unable to escape scientific and positivist determinism. Not unusually, they get stuck with both.

4. Conclusion

Marx says that he learned more about French society from reading Balzac's novels in spite of his conservative ideology. With Sue, one may conclude that in spite of his socialist ideology, we can learn more about socialisms before 1848 than from *Manifesto*, *Civil wars in France* or *18th Brumaire*. Not because Sue's novel would be an aestheticization of his politics and/or ideology but because the means he is using to construct his narration are exposed in the open, making the pure author clearly visible, as he turns incredible premises into acceptable accomplishments. That is politics of the aesthetic: to turn incredible premises into acceptable accomplishments.

Poe's praise of the novel as "a work of unquestionable power" is no doubt serious, but he adds that it is "a museum of novel and ingenious incident – a paradox of childish folly and consummate skill." (Poe, 1846) This is a praise of novel's politics of the aesthetic which hints at the existence of its aesthetic police and divides the author and the reader "into two parts, one of which is superior" – "subject supposed to know" of the artworld.

Art is not ideology; art abducts ideas and their ideological systems to turn them into material for fiction organized as an exchange of pleasurable and attractive experiences between the author and the reader.

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An Aesthetic Theory in Four Dimensions: Collingwood and Beyond

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this article is to synthesize four major elements of aesthetic experience that have previously appeared isolated whenever an attempt at conceptualization is made. These four elements are: Kant's disinterested pleasure, Collingwood's emotional expressionism, the present writer's redemptive emotional experience, and, lastly, Plato's concept of Beauty. By taking these four abstracted elements as the bedrock for genuine aesthetic experience, this article aims to clarify the proper role of art as distinct from philosophy and intellectualization. Rather than a medium conducive to intellectual understanding, it is argued that the sphere these four elements of aesthetic experience demarcate is one in which art leads to an emotional understanding that transforms the human condition and imbues it with new meaning only to be found in a moment of aesthetic experience.

What I would like to suggest is that an aesthetic experience is not possible in the first place unless it contains the following four elements: The first dimension is Kant's concept of disinterested pleasure; the second dimension is Collingwood's concept of the expression of emotion (Collingwood, 1938, p. 109); the third dimension is the present writer's concept of redemptive emotion; the fourth dimension is Plato's concept of Beauty.¹ My proposal is that there is no need to make an absolute choice between these differing dimensions, but rather that a complete theory of aesthetics can only exist with these four dimensions. It is not only that a complete theory of aesthetics requires these four dimensions. It is that the aesthetic experience itself cannot occur without the interaction between these four dimensions.

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¹ This attempt to define art within these four dimensions resembles to some extent the list scheme devised by my late, distinguished aesthetician friend, Denis Dutton's *Aesthetic Universals* as summarized by Steven Pinker (2002).

The following consists of the outlines of a trans-cultural aesthetic theory with these four dimensions.

The first dimension is well known. In order for an aesthetic experience to arise in the first place, there cannot be an egoistic interest. For example, the economic investment interest in a famous painter's painting can form no part of aesthetic pleasure. The sexual titillation that may be taken from an erotic painting can form no part of an aesthetic pleasure. This dimension forms the beginning of an aesthetic experience. But, by itself, it is not sufficient. It is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for an aesthetic experience.

The second dimension is Collingwood's concept of art as the expression of emotion. For convenience's sake, I shall choose Collingwood's version as it appears in his *Principles of Art*.² Collingwood distinguishes between craft and art along the lines of inducing or arousing emotion versus expressing emotion. While there are subtle dimensions to craft that involve planning as well as the *intention* to produce an effect (the effect could be a useful object or an emotional state), for the ease of discussion, I shall focus on craft as the production of an emotional effect. Thus, a mass movie designed with special effects to stimulate the senses is, in this sense, not art. Art, for Collingwood, is the spontaneous exploration of the inner emotions of the artist and their consequent (or simultaneous) expression through an artistic medium, whether it be painting, poetry, dance, music, drama, literature, sculpture, etc. The artist, producing art, has no intention to cater to an audience but is simply expressing her or his emotion. For Collingwood, art is cognitive and has to do, not with entertaining an audience, but with the discovery and the expression of the inner emotions

² While Collingwood's concept of art as the expression of emotion is well known, Damla Donmez most clearly captures a complete rendition of Collingwood's view of art when she writes, "Collingwood defines an artwork in *Principles of Art* as an imaginary experience by which we express our emotions" (Donmez, 2013, p. 206). While Collingwood does not use this exact phrase of which Donmez writes, her rendition of Collingwood is an admirable paraphrase. On the other hand, I do not agree with Donmez that Collingwood asserts imagination as the sufficient condition of art (for Collingwood, we need art as the expression of emotion, not only of the imagination), but I very much agree with Donmez that Wolheim misreads the role of externalization and audience and that they are, as Donmez writes, "necessary for art's epistemology not ontology" (Donmez, 2013, p. 208).

of the artist.

The expression of emotion differs from ventilating emotion in that ventilation consists of attempting to get rid of emotion, or act it out whereas “expression” in Collingwood’s special use of this term consists in discovering emotions inside of oneself through the actual process of artistic expression. Expression differs from Freudian catharsis in that there is not an attempt to get rid of the emotion in question. The emotion does not lie in the unconscious (or subconscious) in the Freudian sense. Unlike emotion in Freud, it is not the emotional residue of an early childhood trauma. Unlike the concept of Freudian sublimation, it is not the lower emotions that are kept in check by allowing them surrogates for expression. The full understanding of the expression of emotions is not to be afforded by Collingwood’s theory alone. It is only when one arrives at the third dimension of aesthetics, the discovery and the transfiguration of the higher emotions by and into the beautiful that the nature of the transformative process can be understood.³ To a certain extent, the third dimension is anticipated by Aristotle’s concept of catharsis in experiencing tragedy in which one experiences pity and fear. In order to adapt Aristotle to present purposes, the pity or compassion that one experiences is one that arises out of a recognition of the universal human condition and the fear is the fear of the fleetingness and mortality and the change in fortune that are inevitable accompaniments of human life.⁴

It is necessary to expand the Collingwoodian thesis that art is the expression of emotion to the thesis that art is the expression of the redemptive emotions of the human being. This is the third dimension of the aesthetic theory being put forth. Redemptive emotions lie deep inside the human being and require art for their discovery analogous to the external truths that lie in the universe that require science for their discovery. There is a difference in that the external truths discovered by science do

³ It is not criticism of Collingwood’s view of art as the expression of emotions that he was influenced by Croce. (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 176–177).

⁴ While Aristotle did not see the need to make the following qualification, Jose Juan Gonzalez argues, as against critics of Collingwood, that “if the reader is not able to realize the fact that a given poet has express [*sic*] his emotion, this is not an objection against Collingwood’s definition of art proper; it is an example of readers who do not belong to the poet’s community in question” (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 178).

not require science for their existential status whereas the truths brought to us by art would not exist save for the redemptive power of art.

While art possesses no objective and reminds us of Walter Pater's concept of art for art's sake, it has, if one had recourse to trade on an Hegelian metaphor, the cunning of unreason. Its cunning is to redeem human life through its instrumentality by awakening its audience to the redemption that deeper and higher feelings bring to light. This dimension cannot operate on its own and is linked so closely with the fourth dimension that while it can be logically isolated, it is functionally merged. It is necessary to discuss this third dimension by itself in order to illuminate the necessary form in which these deeper and higher emotions can come to be known.

It is necessary to emphasize the distinction to be drawn here between the present analysis and the Collingwoodian analysis by saying that the higher function of art is not only to discover emotions *simpliciter*, but to discover *higher* emotions and to transform these higher emotions into an artistic creation. To speak this way is already to distort the process, because it is in the very transformation of the emotions that they become higher and it is in the very process of turning them into art that they become redemptive. However, our linguistic tool is clumsy and it is necessary for us to use this distorting instrument to the best service its function provides.

The transformation into an artistic creation is the bridge to the Platonic concept of the production of Beauty. This element, while ruled out by Collingwood, is brought into the picture in these four dimensions of the aesthetic experience. The higher emotions become higher through the instrumentality of Beauty. It is Beauty working together with a higher understanding of the human being that brings the aesthetic experience into full fruition. Once again, this description is misleading because the higher understanding itself possesses redemptive features but these redemptive features cannot truly be seen except when bathed in the light of Beauty.

In order to gain a better understanding of the role Beauty plays as an aesthetic dimension, it is useful to consider how Collingwood's explanation of art as the expression of emotion enables the artist as creator (author, composer, painter), the performing artist and the audience to appreciate art. Collingwood's explanation is well illustrated in his *Principles of Art* with the example of the actress whose production of tears is not to

be understood as the skill that we are to admire, but in whose production we can apprehend the emotion behind those tears that she is attempting to express (Collingwood, 1938, p. 122). What is missing in Collingwood's description is the fact that the tears of the actress, in order to be appreciated aesthetically, must also create a portrait that is in some way idealistically redeeming or beautiful. I shall attempt to bring out this element, the fourth dimension, in more detail below.

Before doing that, however, it is necessary to carefully delineate the function of art from philosophy with which it can too frequently (and sometimes unknowingly) be conflated.

The confusion of art with philosophy arises from the concept that art delivers a message or a meaning. While great art, with the incredibly important exception of music and the less important example of abstract painting, usually possesses great meaning, it does not always do so. In fact, there may be the opposite: the revelation of mystery that by its very nature is devoid of meaning. Part of the appeal of the *Mona Lisa* is that it is a mystery as to what her smile signifies. It is the absence of known meaning in this famous gesture that conveys an unknown meaning that is undiscoverable that forms the essence of the aesthetic pleasure in this work of art. While it is questionable as to whether one should take an artist's opinions as to what constitutes art, Picasso is famous for his answer to a puzzled art appreciator who complained that he could not understand Picasso's paintings by saying that there was nothing to understand. To look for a meaning is to take oneself out of the aesthetic experience. To look for a meaning reduces art to philosophy. The *Mona Lisa* works as a work of art precisely because what could be taken as meaningful (the purpose of a smile) is in reality not to be understood at all. This "not to be understood at all" forms the essence of the attraction of this painting and accounts for its status as the icon of the art world. It is itself both an embodiment and a symbol of the nature of art itself, that it is *not* to be understood and thus reduced to philosophy. Art is not philosophy. What looks like it could be meaningful, a smile, possesses no known meaning and in realizing *this*, one is capable of experiencing aesthetic delight. One realizes that art has trumped philosophy. There is meaning in life that does not require, nay even destroys, intellectual analysis. However, this dialectical tension between art and philosophy must be present. Firstly, what appears as po-

tentially meaningful must exist. Then, when it is realized that the meaning it presumably betokens can never be found, the aesthetic transformation, the delight appears. There must first exist the pretension of meaning for the lack of meaning to work its magic. Meaninglessness can only be redemptive in the deceptive gesture of meaning. It may be that this is what Picasso meant when he said that "Art is the lie that tells the truth".

There is analogy here between the higher seduction of art and the erotic seduction of the art of covering and uncovering the body with clothing. The partially clothed body is more seductive than the totally nude body because something is left unknown. What makes for the erotic atmosphere is precisely the tension between what is clothed and what is unclothed. The smile of *Mona Lisa* is a mystery. It is precisely in this mystery that the aesthetic attraction of the painting lies.

This point about meaning can work in the opposite direction in which that which appears meaningless can become an aesthetic experience when it is realized that it does possess a meaning. I recall appreciating Mondrian for the first time when I went to a little museum in Switzerland where his paintings were accompanied by an explanation written by Mondrian himself. Underneath the famous (or infamous) *White on White*, I found the explanation provided by the artist that the whiteness of the painting reflected his spiritually transformed emotions (these are my own words composed in memory of an experience that occurred several decades ago). After reading this, my aesthetic experience of the painting was dramatically transformed. I refer to this example only to illustrate that understanding may, in some cases, act as a necessary propaedeutic to the aesthetic experience. The difference between this explanation and the explanation that art provides meaning is that one does not look for meaning (that would be to take art as philosophy), but that knowing that something seemingly meaningless is meaningful can enable one to reach a higher form of appreciation. It was the freeing of the mind, in this instance, that enabled the audience (namely myself), to experience the emotion of higher spirituality that Mondrian himself (as he reported) experienced in painting this painting. Part of the aesthetic delight arose from the realization that what appeared to be devoid of meaning was actually pregnant with meaning. It required (at least for this viewer), to understand that there could be a meaning before this meaning could be experienced. That which was

experienced, however, was still distinct from philosophy, because what was experienced was not the understanding of meaning, but the spiritual transformation that occurred by allowing that whiteness to be experienced transcendently and not merely with the senses. It was the knowing that meaning was possible that gave my mind the permission to allow the spiritual dimension of the painting to override the conceptual prejudice that this was simply a canvass painted in all white. Opposite from the *Mona Lisa*, the realization that there was a presence of meaning enabled the art appreciator to experience the spiritual liberation of the artist in a purely aesthetic (not intellectual) sense.

There is no doubt that great works of art frequently contain meaning. Music is the great exception. Kierkegaard attempted to distinguish music from other arts by the fact that it was in motion whereas painting, for example, was still. But, this distinction also applies to dance, to cinema and to poetry. It is not the motion of music that lends it its special quality in the arts, but its nature as devoid of any intellectual meaning whatsoever. Knowing that Beethoven's *Eroica* represents the great Napoleon (even by Beethoven's own account) does nothing for the appreciation of the Third Symphony. The reason that it is notoriously difficult to explain how music produces its aesthetic effects is that the higher emotions are engaged with the understanding that normally accompanying them being completely absent. The great emotions great music can touch constitute a pantomime of meaning of such great proportion that enable a deaf hearer to hear mute sounds. And, this example, literally true of Beethoven, is the metaphorical explanation that accounts for the capacity of music of a certain kind to be experienced aesthetically in the first place. To attempt to "explain" music is the most difficult task in aesthetics because music delivers these higher emotions completely without the symbolic aid of the intellect. To attempt to explain *this* is tantamount to offering a prose paraphrase of a poem. It cannot be done. If it could, the poem could be reduced to the prose paraphrase. There would be no cognitive remainder. This is the whole point. *Art possesses a cognitive dimension that cannot be rendered in non-art form.* It is the nature of music to embody this quality in the most obvious form. Music is bereft of anything which the intellect can turn into philosophy. Music is the unheard language of the emotions.

In a sense, music can serve as an archetype of all art. In all art there is

a cognitive dimension that cannot be rendered intellectually. (This is true even when the cognitive dimension, as in *Mona Lisa's* smile, cannot be explained. Indeed, in this case, it is all the more true because the cognitive as mystical creates the highest appeal.) The inaccessibility of cognitive meaning is precisely what creates artistic appeal. Music represents the most obvious case of the impossibility of divining an intellectual element. It is at the furthest remove from intellectual interpretation and hence most archetypically symbolizes and embodies the unique attraction of art.

The “problem” of music is the problem of metaphor. The reason that metaphors contain meaning that cannot be rendered in prose is that the “meaning” dimension of a metaphor resides in its poetic nature. Richard the Lion Hearted cannot be reduced to a man with courage because the poetic dimension summons the background of a king in battle, a king of England, a country that perhaps was the underdog in the battle, of a king, whose possible death in battle would signify the loss of that kingdom and all that it stood for, and much more. All of this connotation does not represent the aesthetic experience of the phrase “Richard the Lion Hearted” for in gifting King Richard with the heart of a lion, the symbol of Britain itself, one’s mind is transported from the literal into the realm of the fictional, the higher realm that redeems this mortal coil, the transformative experience that cannot be encapsulated in a reductive prose paraphrase. For art lifts us up into the spirit world and it is only in this uplifting moment that our meaningless life in the mundane world can be redeemed. Thus is heralded in the third dimension of aesthetic experience, the redemptive power of art, without which true art is difficult to distinguish from entertainment.

The purpose of great works of art is not to understand their meaning, but to experience the transformative and redemptive Beauty that attends the expression of that meaning. For example, if one understands the meaning of *Romeo and Juliet* to be that we should be careful about forming relationships with partners that come from rival families, one only reaches a sociological understanding. An aesthetic experience consists of the bittersweet pleasure that derives from the understanding that from a sense of unconditional love, a tragic end is their mutual fate. This example is a good harbinger of the third dimension of the present theory because it is an example of how the expression of emotion (which requires as a neces-

sary condition, the understanding of the meaning of social relations) can be transformed into the bittersweet pleasure (the kind of pleasure that is characteristic of appreciating the genre of tragedy), that we find to be beautiful. The transformation at once accomplishes the task of redemption. Love is appreciated because it takes place with the price of loss. Does this not symbolize its very transitory existence and both its power and its powerlessness (to enlarge upon Hobbes) against the pervasive forces of conflict, rejection, sadness, lack of recognition, worthlessness, despair, despondency, ennui, betrayal, failure, and injustice in the life of the human being?

It is important to distinguish the kind of pleasure that characterizes aesthetics from the pleasure of which Sir Philip Sidney spoke of as the sugar with which the bad taste of medicine (which made us healthy) could be coated. Art is not philosophy presented in a pleasant form. If that were the case, one could pick out the philosophy from the art as one picked raisins out of a cake. One could pick out the philosophical passages of the meaninglessness of war from Pierre Bezukhov's soliloquies in *War and Peace*. But these musings in the context of this great novel are to be appreciated as *his* musings that occur to him at his stage of life, of love lost later to be regained, for it is through Pierre's eyes, arguably the most memorable character in literature, that the events of war are seen, and how this war fits into the giant picture formed by the lives of all the characters in the novel, how it affects them and how it heightens and lessens the personal experiences all of the characters have undergone and will undergo. It is a novel of human emotions in which the devastating and meaningless spectacle of war intervenes and plays a role in subjugating and highlighting those emotions. It is not a treatise on the philosophy of war. The novel is not the sugarcoating that enables us to take the problem of war seriously.

It is time at last, to discuss the form of Beauty, the fourth dimension of this theory. What is beautiful about *Romeo and Juliet* is the recognition of the eternal conflict between ideality and reality and how and why the fleeting emotion of love both edifies and saddens the human condition. We appreciate love at its height (we willingly suspend our disbelief that the universality of love is represented by the love between two young teenagers, both in Shakespeare's time performed by males), because it embodies the place of love in the mortality and ultimate dissolution of human life.

Love is that stage of Beauty before deterioration and fatality. Thus it is captured in this archetypical play. Understanding all of this is essential to the emotional feeling that characterizes and informs our aesthetic pleasure. But, it is not the understanding that we are attempting to discover (that may be the goal of the philosopher), but the ultimate experience of the Beauty of tragic emotion that is the end of the artistic production. It is this ultimate experience of which Diotema spoke, that made life worth living. It is for this experience that we attend the drama. For if we do not experience this redemption, life is not worth living.

The art object is not, as Collingwood wrote, the painting on the wall. This is a physical object. A perfect forgery of a Picasso would be no different than a real Picasso (its economic value, upon discovery, would differ). The real painting is that expression of emotion that exists in the painter's and in the audience's mind. *Guernica* expresses the horrors of war. But, that is its intellectual meaning. Its artistic expression is the arrangement of the parts of the horse in such a way that we experience the feelings of suffering that attend the horrors of war in just the way we would experience it if we were a horse torn apart. We experience it (if we do) through the subjective reenactment of the suffering of the dismemberment of the horse. It is the loss of the horse, its function, its Beauty, its power, its symbolism, that embodies and symbolizes the utter mercilessness of war that takes no prisoners, where its "collateral" damage, including the innocent animal, is its real horror.

Aesthetics is itself a contradiction since it attempts to put the mute into words. Emotions can only be felt, not verbalized. When we experience emotions properly, we transcend the words that we use to convey them; we transcend the gesture of the dance; we transcend the notes of the music; we transcend the bronze of the statue. To what do we transcend? We transcend to that state of Beauty that Collingwood wrongly removed from his theory. The horse, a thing of Beauty, is dismembered. In *Guernica*, we experience the loss of Beauty. Indeed, as we see the parts of the horse, we remember the whole that no longer is. The whole of Beauty is dirempted. The power of the painting lies in its Beauty; in this case, Beauty lost.

I have used the example of Plato's form of Beauty to illustrate that Beauty is universal. It is present in differing individual works of art, and yet,

it is the same in all. While different cultures may take different objects as beautiful (the European the curve of a female hip – the Japanese, the nape of a female neck), the experience of Beauty is universal. The expression of emotion is not enough to characterize the aesthetic experience; the expression must take on the redeeming human transfiguration of Beauty.

For Plato, Beauty has no content. In a way, he was right. The content is dissolved into the feeling of Beauty. At the same time, it may be said, to adapt Aristotle and blend Plato together with Aristotle, that it requires the individual work of art to embody that invisible form of the Beautiful. For Aristotle, the individual horse contained Plato's abstract Form. For Beauty, it is the same. It is invisible as it is the same in music, dance, painting and sculpture. Beauty is the same in all works of art and is the end result of all art.

What of comic art, dissonant art, a bronze sculpture representing human feces, for example? Even the sculpture of turds must possess some brown color and some comic arrangement. Comedy, the mocking of art, is itself an art. While its form of Beauty is subservient to its shock value, the shock value is what brings the audience into the realm of the aesthetic transformation. Formerly, comic relief was utilized as part of works of art, not as the whole. For example, the graveyard scenes in *Hamlet* or the entrances of the drunken revelers in the *Symposium*. These would bring temporary relief from the tragic contexts and gain their comic stature from the contrast. Absurdist plays such as Ionesco's *The Chairs* (*Les Chaises*) provide further examples that gain their aesthetic value from their contrast to expectations. Duchamp's toilet, Warhol's soup cans, do not seem to be especially beautiful (although in abstraction from their meaning and use, the lines of a toilet may be artistic), what is "beautiful" is the realization that there is an artistic value in the disinterested pleasure that results from understanding the mockery of civilization that the artist brings before us. That this is not a traditional form of Beauty, a redemption of the human spirit, is all right. It is a relief from the conventional—a freeing of the spirit from the ordinary, a slap in the face of the obligatory. This relief, this comic relief, is itself a transformation of the human spirit, a liberation of the spirit from the mundane. The mundane, the toilet, is, viewed as comic art, a transformation from utility and conventional valuation. This is art in which the Beautiful plays a secondary role. The transcendence is

due to the taking of the ordinary as artistic, the ugly as beautiful; this role reversal affords laughter and laughter is a gateway into transcendence. It is beautiful, that is, liberating, that we can take a toilet as a work of art. This is an expression of emotion of the artist. The artist is fed up with conventional values and is finding that we need to free ourselves from the concept of what is and what is not art. It is this very freeing that constitutes an aesthetic experience and redeems itself as art. That it may not be great art does not mean that it is not art at all.

In the model of an aesthetic experience presented here, we can combine the notion of disinterested pleasure, the discovery/artistic expression of emotions, the transfiguration of these emotions into a redemptive form and the production of universal redemptive Beauty into what makes up an aesthetic experience. It is the aesthetic experience, originally created and then experienced, that makes up the content of what is art. Adding to Kant and Collingwood the Platonic concept of beauty provides a full and rich explanation of how and why art can move us and the role it plays in human life. Beauty, the ephemeral alteration from the ordinary, makes emotion worthwhile and redeems the dross into gold. Musical emotion is the mute made audible; poetic expression is the inexpressible made intelligible—painting, sculpture and dance the invisible made visible. Beauty gives sound to the mute, sightedness to the blind and hearing to the deaf.

The four dimensions, just as Plato's four parts that make up the experience of knowledge that he elaborates in his *Seventh Epistle*, do not exist in isolation from each other. All throughout, Kant's notion of disinterested pleasure pervades the aesthetic experience. The disinterestedness is a necessary condition for the aesthetic experience to take place in the first place. All throughout, Collingwood's revealing and subtle notion of art as the expression of emotion and a cognitive discovery percolates through and both provides for and enriches the aesthetic experience. Without this, art cannot be distinguished from entertainment. All throughout, the concept introduced by the present author, of the redemptive power of art to make life worthwhile by bringing to birth the higher emotions, that makes the expressions of emotion universal and redemptive of the human spirit in the face of the flatness, the meaninglessness, the wastefulness, the crudeness and the ultimately disappointing nature of life devoid of this re-

deeming power of art. All throughout, it is the Beauty that is retrieved, the Beauty that is fashioned, the Beauty that is brought to life, that, conjoined with the higher emotions that are discovered, that transforms the dross into gold, and produces the magic that is the province of art and art alone.

These parts are made possible by and through each other and are only logically separable. Kant's disinterestedness comes into being precisely because the higher emotions are engaged. It is in the discovery of the higher, redemptive emotions (already one can begin to integrate the second and the third dimension), that one moves away from the emotions that grasp, the emotions that cling, the emotions that dissatisfy, denigrate and separate one person from another. The higher emotions themselves are brought into being by the art of Beauty. Beauty, that mysterious, transformative force, is the heir attendant of the higher emotions; it waits upon them and awaits and informs their presence. It ushers them into being and sustains their existence. It is their ultimate destination and their ultimate fulfillment. But, it cannot perform its magic on its own. On its own, it is an empty form. It needs the cognitive dimension of the emotions to usher in its own being. It unfolds with the discovery of the higher emotions as the unfolding of the peacock's tail is heralded by the approach of a mate. It assures the disinterestedness of the aesthetic attitude and much more. It holds the higher emotions in place and redeems them. It redeems the human experience with an enhanced value. The higher emotions themselves are redeeming. But, they, too, need a higher expression, an expression that transcends even their bittersweet understanding of the finitude of the human situation. Beauty is the gift-offering that transcendence brings. Beauty infuses the artwork as a whole; it cannot be reduced to the artwork. It is a universal that is present in all great works of art. In the experiencing of the beautiful, one experiences one of the great fruits of the human spirit. This experience is the same in all great works of art. The work of art is a tribute to beauty. Beauty in turn would not exist without the work of art which is its vessel, its votive offering. The work of art gives birth to Beauty and Beauty itself is the grace note that sounds the redemptive power of the higher emotions.

When one sees the finger of Adam and that of G-d reaching out to each other on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, one sees that the fingers of the

human and the Divine do not touch though they stretch with unbearable emotion towards each other. The reaching out but the impossibility of realization creates the insufferable beauty of Michelangelo's detail. Beauty blossoms when the higher emotions reach out to achieve their highest ideal, the ideal of creation and immortality that forever eludes their grasp. Beauty bathes the human spirit with redemption for while it cannot reach its goal of immortality, this highest emotion, the human spirit reaching out to its creator, painted on a ceiling of a chapel, is an archetype of the role of art in human life, its capturing in images the finite reaching out to the infinite and thus depicting the plight of the human being, its immortality achieved in the only manner possible, by works of art that rescue the human spirit from obliteration by time.

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How to Judge a Work of Art Today?

Contemporary Echoes of Kantian Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. *How to judge a work of art?* This question, already present in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* by Immanuel Kant, was updated in France in the early 1990s, when the *Esprit* and *Télérama* journals dedicated some issues to what was called a “crisis” in contemporary art, namely the supposed loss of normative criteria allowing one to evaluate artworks. Following their publication, several French philosophers – among which Yves Michaud, Gérard Genette, Jean-Marie Schaeffer, and Rainer Rochlitz – took part in a public debate on judgment, which more or less explicitly centered on the third *Critique*, in terms similar to those employed by Kant himself in 1790. Underlining the specificity of this debate, the present paper intends to (re)examine the issue of the judgments on works of art, by establishing a dialogue between Kantian aesthetics and contemporary artistic philosophical discourses and practices.

1. News about the Question of Judgment: the “Crisis” of Contemporary Art in the Early 1990s in France

How to judge a work of art? This question, already present in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* by Immanuel Kant, was updated in France¹ in the early 1990s (that is about two centuries later) when several art critics and philosophers took part in a public debate concerning the state of creation and the situation of the artworld. The *Esprit* and *Télérama* journals dedicated several issues to what was called the “crisis of contemporary art”², namely the supposed loss of normative criteria allowing one to judge and

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¹ Quotes taken from French publications were freely translated by this author.

² See *Esprit*, *L'art aujourd'hui* (July-August 1991), *Télérama*, *Art contemporain, le grand bazar*, special-issue, no. 2096 (October 1992), *Esprit*, *L'art contemporain contre l'art moderne* (October 1992) and *Esprit*, *La crise de l'art contemporain* (February 1992).

evaluate artworks. Following their publication, several French philosophers – among which Marc Jimenez, Jean-Pierre Cometti, Jean-Marie Schaef-fer, Gérard Genette, Yves Michaud and Rainer Rochlitz – took position on this presumed “crisis” of contemporary art and, consequently, of art criticism and philosophical aesthetics. More than on the controversy itself, this paper will focus on the *philosophical* issues raised or reactivated by it: the question of the definition of art, that of the aesthetic experience and the possibility of its sharing, that of the legitimacy (or not) of art criticism today and – especially – the question of judgment: *how to judge a work of art today?* Are our judgements subjective or can they claim a certain universality?

In order to answer this question – or at least define its outlines – I will present and discuss two types of relativism which meet in the idea that “all aesthetic judgments are equal”. The first relativism (that we could call *contingent*) has been based on the state of artistic creation for fifty years: the protean aspect of contemporary art would make any attempt at categorization or evaluation impossible. For the second one (the *absolute* relativism), on the contrary, it would be *intrinsically* impossible to estimate the value of an artwork, since a judgment is *always* biased, whatever the state of creation. The first type of relativism was brandished against contemporary art during the “crisis” evoked; we will respond starting from the thesis developed by Nathalie Heinich in 2014, which pleads to consider contemporary art as a new *paradigm*.³ The second type of relativism went through the history of thought and concerned Kant as much as the contemporary debate on judgment; we will discuss its current metamorphosis – the *subjectivism* – by confronting it with two theses: the first, sustained by Rainer Rochlitz in particular, argues the possibility to evaluate a work using impartial criteria; the second is the Kantian hypothesis of a *subjective universality* of aesthetic judgment.

³ Nathalie Heinich, *Le paradigme de l'art contemporain. Structures d'une révolution artistique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014).

1.1. *The Contingent Relativism of the Opponents of Contemporary Art*

Let's now focus on relativism, this "spectrum" which haunts any attempt at theorization. It is not typical of our time, but it seems to have gained ground with the advent of *contemporary art*. As we mentioned, several voices denounced, in the early 1990s, the supposed loss of criteria to judge contemporary artworks. We will try to explain why by drawing – broadly – the state of creation since about the 1980s.

This age ushers in a *diversification*, a *transdisciplinarity* and an *atomization* of artistic practices. Firstly, a *diversification* because any type of object, material or immaterial, can now characterize a work of art. An ordinary object (like a snow shovel) or an idea (a conversation with one person) can function as a work of art just as a painting; urban graffiti can be admired as much as a fresco of the First Century; a museum can buy a series of codified gestures as it would buy a sculpture; and all of these elements can form an *installation* having the appearance of a clutter, but presented as a unique work in a gallery. So, no content is excluded *a priori* from the field of art anymore: any entity, regardless of its form or its presumed significance, is now a legitimate candidate to "artisticity". Secondly, a *transdisciplinarity* because contemporary artists are no longer confined to a particular discipline (painting, sculpture or photography, for example) and do not hesitate to call on what is considered as para- or extra-artistic practices (craft or informatics, for example). *Installations* are characteristic of this *hybridization*, since they consist in the placement in a situational context of objects or disparate modes of expression whose form may even vary over time and space. Finally, an *atomization*, because these years seem to spell the end of the great avant-garde movements and manifestos with a "global" or "total" aim in favor of a multiplicity of more individualistic artists or divided collectives. These no longer react to an artistic or ideological specific movement, but rather align themselves with a certain time and place, detached from any "pseudo-current".

Such a situation of *diversification*, *transdisciplinarity* and *atomization* of practices – that we can only acknowledge – made some theorists feel confused. For the latter, indeed, any attempt at categorization or evaluation would be made impossible by this situation of pluralism that would corres-

pond, according to them, more to a loss of values and a blurring of aesthetic criteria. This opinion could be defined as *relativist*, since it affirms the impossibility of judging contemporary artworks in an objective way, that is to say from an impartial standard. The peculiarity of this position, however, is that it claims arising from a *recent* state of creation. The proponents of this thesis, indeed, do not say that it is *intrinsically* impossible to estimate the value of a work because a judgment is *always* biased, but that contemporary art as such is not suitable for expert assessments, for it consists, as we say in French, in “n’importe quoi”. Therefore, this relativism would not be a fatality but the precise result of a factual situation, according to them regrettable.

This *contingent* relativism seems easier to criticize than the *absolute* relativism. As we will see, contemporary art – and before it, modern as well as classical art – obeys to some standards, responds to some criteria and is well suited for evaluation. For, if contemporary art translates into a continuing uncertainty about its boundaries (between practices, genres, materials, major or minor arts, art and non-art, etc.), it is based on its proper *logic* and on *new categories* that emerged from its evolution. According to sociologist Nathalie Heinich, contemporary art would even be a “paradigm”, namely a “general structure of the accepted conceptions in a moment of time about an area of human activity”.⁴ Let us pause a moment on this idea because it will allow us to respond to the first type of relativism that we have just mentioned.

1.2. The Answer by Heinich: the Contemporary Paradigm

In the late 1990s, Heinich firstly proposed to consider contemporary art as a *genre* of art rather than a specific period in the history of art.⁵ Heinich thought that one of the causes of the “dispute” between proponents and detractors of contemporary art in France at that time was the traditional significance of the phrase “contemporary art”, namely *all the artistic practices* that take place *today* (without knowing very well when this “today”

⁴ Heinich, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*, p. 43.

⁵ See Nathalie Heinich, “Pour en finir avec la querelle de l’art contemporain”, *Le Débat* no. 104 (1999) and, from the same author, *Le triple jeu de l’art contemporain* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1998).

began or when it will end). Well, according to Heinich, *today's* artistic practices are so disparate that a category based only on the chronology of works does not appear operating. What do a painting by Gerard Richter, a painting mixed with neon lights by François Morellet, a sculpture by Thomas Houseago, an installation by James Turrell, a performance by Tino Sehgal, or even a video by Steve McQueen have in common? Therefore, Heinich proposed at the time to consider contemporary art as a *genre of art*, that is to say *a category of works* whose common characteristics are *aesthetic* before being chronological. The specificity of contemporary art, according to her, would come from a “play on the ontological boundaries of art [and] a testing on the notion of work of art as intended by the common sense”.⁶ On the contrary, the specificity of modern art would proceed from “a testing on figuration rules coupled with an imperative of expression of the artist’s interiority”⁷; that of classical art, finally, would correspond rather to a “testing on academic canons of figurative representation, more or less idealized (history painting, mythological landscape, official portrait...) or realistic (genre scene, still life, *trompe-l’œil*...)”.⁸

In her book *Le paradigme de l’art contemporain*⁹, Heinich takes forward this idea and proposes an enlargement. As she explains, “it is important to understand not the chronological but the category or generic nature of contemporary art, however we can not remain at a qualification of ‘genre’ of art, because it is too limited to aesthetic dimension. The specificity of contemporary art is played out at other levels than the nature of the works themselves”.¹⁰ As a sociologist, Heinich offers to describe different aspects of the paradigm of contemporary art, from an aesthetic as well as a political, institutional, economic and legal point of view. She hopes to make explicit the “structures” of this paradigm (its rules and functioning), often known by specialists or informed amateurs but unknown by laymen. Heinich especially shows that *every aesthetic genre* has *specific criteria of judgment*. Classical works will be judged mostly on their *beauty*, modern works on their *expressiveness*, and contemporary works on their *singularity*. There-

⁶ Heinich, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*, p. 24.

⁷ Heinich, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*, p. 24.

⁸ Heinich, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*, p. 24.

⁹ Heinich, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*, p. 24.

¹⁰ Heinich, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*, p. 42.

fore, the most common way to celebrate artworks in the contemporary paradigm would be to insist on “the consistency along with the singularity (the ability to thwart expectations)”, on “crossing the boundaries and particularly those of different disciplines” and on “the intellectual dimension of the works and their ability to receive expert interpretations and references”.¹¹

What can we learn from this digression on sociology? That contrary to what the relativist thesis says against contemporary art, this art can be evaluated as much as the modern or classical art. However, if the analysis by Heinich allows to counter the *contingent* relativism, unveiling the implicit rules of the contemporary paradigm, it does not seem equipped to respond to the *absolute* relativism, according to which everything is equal *regardless* of the artistic situation of the moment. Such an absolute relativism seems even *strengthened* by the analysis of the sociologist, because the result is that judgment criteria *change over time* and the value of a work depends on its *entry in a paradigm*. Any art judgment would be *related to a paradigm*, that is to say formatted *a priori* by an “unconscious model”¹² and valid for this model only. In other words, there would be more or less sealed artistic spheres, governed by aesthetic laws that are effective only within them. We will see that this is the point of view advocated by the French philosopher Yves Michaud.

Incidentally, it is not insignificant that Heinich makes explicit reference in her book to the epistemologist Thomas Kuhn¹³, whose famous theory of paradigms was at the origin of a return to relativism in science. For Kuhn, indeed, scientists “do not work in a complete intellectual freedom [...] but always within ‘paradigms’, that is to say some theoretical and practical models that delimit (without their [...] awareness) the field of the questions they are able to ask and consider wise”.¹⁴ Similarly, according to Kuhn, it is impossible “to build a third position, ‘off the paradigm’, from which evaluating the relative merits of rival interpretations belonging to

¹¹ Heinich, *Paradigme de l'art contemporain*, p. 14.

¹² Heinich, *Paradigme de l'art contemporain*, back cover.

¹³ Thomas Kuhn is the author of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) to which Heinich's book makes explicit reference.

¹⁴ Cyril Lemieux, “I. Stengers, L'invention des sciences modernes”, *Politix*, vol. 8, no. 29 (first trimester 1995), p. 222.

different paradigms”.¹⁵ This theory applied to art suggests that it would be impossible to judge an artwork *beyond any paradigm*, for what it is and in virtue of a “universal” point of view.

The thesis by Yves Michaud is in this sense emblematic for the *summary* it seems to operate between the contingent relativism and the *paradigmatic* response by Heinich. For Michaud, today would mark a new regime of art, that of *pluralism*, formed by a series of heterogeneous artistic fields each with their own standards. At each “production community” would correspond an “evaluation community”¹⁶ and to judge a work of art today, according to Michaud, we should first associate it with a particular artistic field, then judge it using appropriate criteria:

“Any artistic activity and related assessments take place in very different language games (I add here that a language game, in good Wittgenstein orthodoxy, is not only or necessarily a verbal game). Yes, the success or failure are evaluated internally to the performed fields. Someone [...] seems to blame me for seeing them necessarily as separate fields. This can happen when an ‘esthete’ shows great consistency in his aesthetic tastes, but it is far from being always true: we love ditties along with monochrome paintings without evaluating them with the same criteria and pluralism often happens within individuals who don’t live it as a tragedy: they only have defined and different value scales for each domain. [...] Since [the end of the avant-gardes], and until further notice, [...] we entered another regime of art and culture, that of pluralism. However, the collapse of the system of Fine Arts and the cultural competition of productions does not terminate the aesthetic judgment. It only pluralizes itself according to different regions and areas of artistic activity.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Lemieux, “I. Stengers”, p. 222.

¹⁶ Yves Michaud, *Critères esthétiques et jugement de goût* (Nîmes: Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 1999), p. 24.

¹⁷ Yves Michaud, “Réponse à Marie-Noëlle Ryan, Jean-Philippe Uzel et Louis Jacob”, *Æ*, vol. 3, (Fall 1998) accessed October 2016, http://www.uqtr.ca/AE/vol_3/michaud.htm.

2. Dialogue between Kantian Aesthetics and French Contemporary Aesthetics

So should we surrender to a sort of generalized relativism as far as judgment is concerned? This is the question we will address now, making French contemporary aesthetics dialogue with Kant's aesthetics. Philosophers who took part in the debate on the "crisis" of art and judgment more or less explicitly focused, indeed, on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in terms similar to those used by Kant himself in 1790. He appeared not only as a major philosophical reference, but as the *governing principle* of the debate itself – directing it in its shape.

Before offering a brief reminder of Kant's position – or rather a summary of the items discussed in the contemporary debate – it is important to keep in mind that the main problem of Kant is *beauty*, a historically connoted concept usually used to describe classical art rather than modern or contemporary art – particularly according to the classification by Heinrich. However, our purpose will not be to question the possibility of applying this concept to contemporary art, through this or that update. We will not debate either of the opportunity *itself* to convene Kant today, given the evolution of art and society since the Enlightenment. Our position will simply consist in avoiding two pitfalls: the first consisting in asserting that everything has already been said by the thinker of Königsberg as far as aesthetics is concerned, the second, on the contrary, in believing that his thought is *de facto* obsolete in confront to our times and contemporary art. Far from these two positions without shade, we will allow Kant's text *to express itself* in light of today's issues – as formulated by the French philosophers we have chosen to study and as they emerge from current artistic practices.

2.1. Reminder of the Kantian Position¹⁸

2.1.1. The Aesthetic Judgment

The first moment of the Analytic identifies two essential features of aesthetic judgment: it is *subjective* and *without any interest*. *Subjective*, because

¹⁸ My analysis is based on the *Analytic of the Beautiful* (§ 1 to § 22), the paragraphs 38 to 40 and the *Dialectic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* (§ 55 to § 60).

when judging an object beautiful, its representation is not reported to the *object* by means of understanding for cognition, but rather to the *subject* and the feeling of pleasure that this subject experiences. This feeling designates nothing in the object: through it, the subject feels he is alive and able to judge; he becomes aware of the *free play* which engages his imaginative and understanding faculties.¹⁹ In this sense, aesthetic judgment is *reflective*: the judging subject “affects himself” and feels pleasure *on the occasion* of the meeting with an object. The aesthetic judgment is also *disinterested* because the subject does not take into account the *existence* of the thing considered, or the *interest* he could get from it; it is “only [...] to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me”.²⁰ Thus, Kant emphasizes the *shape* of the beautiful thing rather than its *materiality*: the form is *reflected* by the subject, while the material is simply *consumed*. Therefore, purely sensual pleasures – of sensation, possession or consumption – are excluded because they require foremost the physical presence of the object. For its disinterested nature, the satisfaction related to the beauty differs from that related to the agreeable or the good. In the judgment related to the agreeable, I express an interest for the object that I declare enjoyable as it pleases my senses in sensation.²¹ This interest is reflected in the fact, Kant says, that a pleasant object “excites a desire for objects of the same sort, hence the satisfaction presupposes not the mere judgment about it but the relation of its existence to my state”.²² The satisfaction in the good is also combined with an interest: it always involves the concept of an end which has to be made effective (good in itself or good for something – the useful). On the contrary, the judgment of taste “is merely contemplative, i.e., a judgment that [...] merely connects its constitution together with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure”.²³

The second moment of the Analytic affirms *the subjective universality of*

¹⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), § 1, p. 89.

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 2, pp. 90-91.

²¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 3, p. 91.

²² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 3, p. 92.

²³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 5, p. 95.

judgment, which *results* from its disinterested feature²⁴: it is because my satisfaction is independent of any interest in the object, so of strictly personal conditions, that I can legitimately “have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone”.²⁵ Judging in a disinterested way, I feel that my satisfaction has as a starting point something I can “presuppose in everyone else”²⁶; in fact, that feeling has the effect of making me “speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a property of the object and the judgment logical [...] although it is only aesthetic and [...] this universality cannot originate from concepts. [...] Consequently, there must be attached to the judgment of taste [...] a claim to validity for everyone without the universality that pertains to objects, i.e., it must be combined with a claim to subjective universality”.²⁷

Let’s pass the third moment of the Analytic, in which Kant describes how judgment takes into consideration a *purposiveness without end*, to reach for the *lawfulness without law* introduced in the fourth moment. The necessity that judgment of taste claims, says Kant, is not a *theoretical objective* necessity (where it could be cognized *a priori* that everyone will feel the same satisfaction in front of beauty) nor a *practical necessity* (where my satisfaction would result from my obedience to a law) but an *exemplary* necessity, where my judgment appears as the “example of a universal rule that one cannot produce”.²⁸ In taking my judgment of taste to be universally valid, I take it, not that everyone who perceives the object *will* share my pleasure and (relatedly) agree with my judgment, but that everyone *should* do so. My satisfaction *should* be shared because it is based on something “greater” than me: what Kant called a *common sense*. This concept must be distinguished from the common human understanding of the phrase²⁹: it is not a spontaneous or not cultivated way to judge, but a “subjective principle”³⁰ whose existence is impossible to prove but should necessarily be assumed to think the possibility of a non-skeptical cognition³¹ and a

²⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 6, p. 96.

²⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 6, p. 97.

²⁶ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 6, p. 97.

²⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 6, p. 97.

²⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 18, p. 121.

²⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 20, p. 122 and § 40, p. 173.

³⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 20, p. 122.

³¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 21, p. 123.

sharing of aesthetic judgments.

2.1.2. *The Common Sense*

Common sense is – maybe with the disinterestedness – the most discussed Kantian concept in the current aesthetic debate. It corresponds to a hypothesis, that of the existence of a shared human sensibility – a common way to experience the free play of our imagination and understanding faculties – and of the same ability to judge. Why have we to presuppose this hypothesis? Kant gives some explanations in paragraph 22, where he begins to define the ambivalence of aesthetic judgment. When we describe something as beautiful, indeed, “we allow no one to be of a different opinion”³², although we do not base our judgment on concepts, but on a personal feeling. Why do we want so ardently our “verdict” to be shared? Why do we expect the support of all? This is because the feeling experienced during our judgment is primarily perceived as a *common* feeling.³³ Indeed, Kant defines taste like the ability to judge what is universally common in our feelings (the universality of what we experience). Note that if this ability can be revealed by a number of situations (the fact, for example, that I speak of beauty *as if* it were in things, or that I wait for my opinion to be shared) it cannot in any case be proved or invalidated empirically. Common sense “does not say that everyone *will* concur with our judgment but that everyone *should* agree with it”.³⁴ Therefore, the fact that a majority of individuals share or reject my judgment does not presage the value of it.

What does this common feeling perceived as shareable in the inner self of the subject correspond to? Kant defines it in paragraph 9, “key to the critique of taste”³⁵, where he states that the pleasure *follows* the act of judging, not the reverse. When I judge an object beautiful, my understanding and imagination faculties enter a free play, “since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition”³⁶; this mindset then gives me pleasure and appears to me as intrinsically communicable.³⁷

³² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 22, p. 123.

³³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 22, p. 123.

³⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 22, p. 123.

³⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9, p. 102.

³⁶ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9, p. 102.

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9, p. 103.

The pleasure I feel when judging is similar to the feeling of being connected to a community.

This raises the following question: does this common sense represent an ideal towards which every man should aim – that of a sense *to constitute*, of a common thinking *to realize* – or is it rather *constitutive* (as the *a priori* forms of sensibility)? In § 22 of the *Critique* Kant seems to focus on the first possibility, describing common sense as an “ideal norm”³⁸ or an “indeterminate”³⁹, “necessary for everyone”⁴⁰ rule to judge. In § 38, however, Kant adds value to the second possibility, since he states that “subjective conditions of use of the power of judgment”⁴¹ can be “presupposed in all human beings”; we must admit they are worth, he says, “for everyone *a priori*”.⁴² The condition of an agreement of judgments would be that “the essential structure of reason [is] the same in every person”.⁴³ One way to escape this alternative would be to condense these two interpretations, as proposed by Danielle Lories: “Being what judgement is based on as much as the rule it refers to, common sense [would thus] always be both below and beyond the expression of judgment: its condition of possibility as its regulating Idea”.⁴⁴

2.1.3. *The Antinomy of Taste*

The concept of common sense thus allows Kant to address the issue of the potential universality of aesthetic judgments. It is in the Antinomy of taste that he will compare two schools of thought that deliberated about this at the time – empiricism and rationalism – and will propose a third way as a solution.

Kant presents two positions, apparently opposed, on the judgment of taste. The first – the *thesis*, which is the opinion of the *subjectivist empir-*

³⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 22, p. 123

³⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 22, p. 124.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 22, p. 124.

⁴¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 38, p. 170.

⁴² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 38, p. 170.

⁴³ Alexis Philonenko, in Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, trans. Alexis Philonenko (Paris: Vrin, 1993), p. 181, footnote number 2.

⁴⁴ Danielle Lories, “Autour d’une lecture “politique” de la troisième *Critique*”, *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, Vol. 86, N° 70 (1988), p. 151.

icists – asserts that “the judgment of taste is not based on concepts; for otherwise it would be possible to dispute about it (decide by means of proofs)”.⁴⁵ The second – the *antithesis*, which is the opinion of *objectivist rationalists* – asserts that “the judgment of taste is based on concepts; for otherwise [...] it would not even be possible to argue about it (to lay claim to the necessary assent to of others to this judgment)”.⁴⁶ Well, to resolve this antinomy, it is enough to note that the term “concept” does not refer to the same thing when used in the thesis or the antithesis: in the first it refers to a *determinate* concept (that of the understanding); in the second to an *indeterminate* concept.⁴⁷ Once this is clarified, the two maxims are no longer opposed: it is possible *to argue* about taste (as the judgment is based on a concept) but not *to dispute* about it (as this concept is only indeterminate).⁴⁸ The subjectivists and objectivists are sent back-to-back by Kant⁴⁹, for whom the aesthetic, subjective judgment can nevertheless claim to a universal validity.

I will not discuss the precise signification of this undetermined concept here. Kant himself says that it can not in any case be demonstrated and the explanation of its possibility “exceeds our faculty of cognition”.⁵⁰ What interests us, however, is that it allows Kant to save the possibility of shared aesthetic judgements and of communication between men, as did the concept of common sense. This issue is at the heart of recent discussions around the “crisis” and around judgment, which we will now approach in detail. We will see how Kant is present not only in the *form* taken by the contemporary debate, but also as a – posthumous – participant himself.

2.2. The Current Aesthetic Debate

2.2.1. The Form of the Current Debate

The book by Mark Jimenez *The quarrel of contemporary art*⁵¹ is particularly

⁴⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 56, p. 215.

⁴⁶ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 56, p. 215.

⁴⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 57, p. 216.

⁴⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 57, p. 216.

⁴⁹ Danielle LORIES, “Kant et le jugement artistique”, in *L'art en valeurs*, ed. Danielle Lories and Ralph Dekoninck (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011), p. 83.

⁵⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 57, p. 216.

⁵¹ Marc Jimenez, *La querelle de l'art contemporain* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005).

eloquent on this matter: not only does he make Kantian aesthetics the starting point of his reflection, but he also operates a partition of the contemporary debate similar in all means to the terms of the Kantian antinomy of taste. As noted by Danielle Lories about Jimenez's book, "two positions emerge in the contemporary aesthetic debate, reproducing the thesis and antithesis of the Kantian antinomy, a strict subjectivist position in Genette and Schaeffer [...] and an objectivist position in Rochlitz, for example".⁵² It is those respective positions that we will now review.

2.2.2. *The Subjectivist Aesthetics (Current Avatar of the Absolute Relativism)*

In Volume 2 of *The work of art*⁵³, titled "The aesthetic relation", Gérard Genette indicates that he will only retain two elements of the third *Critique*: *subjectivity* and disinterestedness of the judgment of taste – or, put it in his words, the fact that the *aesthetic attention* is disinterested and the *appreciation* (which follows) purely subjective. According to Genette, Kant himself would have introduced the idea of a claim to universality for the sole purpose of avoiding "an unfortunate consequence: the relativity of judgment of taste".⁵⁴ Kant's aesthetics "[would be] typically subjectivist, but it [would keep], or rather it [would defend itself], as much as it can, from the relativism which [would result] from this position".⁵⁵

Genette will then criticize the way Kant justifies the claim to universality of judgment. As we have seen, it is primarily because my judgment "is not determined by personal, physical or moral interest"⁵⁶ that it can be shared by all. Well, Genette remarks, other parameters distinct from interest may restrict the universality of judgments, including "native or acquired difference [...] of individual *sensitivities*".⁵⁷ Kant's assumption of *common sense*, also supposed to justify this universality, is also criticized by

⁵² Danielle Lories, "Kant et la scène esthétique contemporaine", in *L'expérience esthétique en question. Enjeux philosophiques et artistiques*, ed. S. Foisy and C. Thérien (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), p. 139.

⁵³ Gérard Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art* (Paris: Seuil, 2010).

⁵⁴ Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art*, p. 422.

⁵⁵ Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art*, p. 502.

⁵⁶ Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art*, p. 504.

⁵⁷ Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art*, p. 504.

Genette as it would violate the “most common observation”.⁵⁸ We have to specify immediately that Genette interprets the concept as a “community of sense (sensitivity) of all men, which would naturally bring them to agree on their judgments of taste” – he will also speak of “identity of taste among men”.⁵⁹ Whatever the ambiguities of the concept, we have seen that Kant does not postulate a community of *effective* taste: he specifies that the universality of voices is only an Idea, so an element for which there is no experience and that can not, as such, be empirically tested⁶⁰; Kant adds that it is impossible to know if he who makes a judgment actually refers to this Idea.⁶¹ As we have seen, only he *who judges* can have proofs, for example when speaking of beauty *as if* it were a property of the object and *as if* everyone had to agree. But for Genette, the only thing these evidences show is that such a claim to universality *exists* and not that it is legitimate. In fact, we say “This painting is beautiful” rather than “I like this painting”, because we are victims of an *objectivist illusion*: we *believe* that beauty is in things.⁶² According to Genette, the aesthetic judgment is a “simple expression objectifying a feeling of pleasure or displeasure” whose claim to be valid for all – real but vain – would hide a deep *relativity*.

The position of Jean-Marie Schaeffer⁶³ is close to that of Genette but it has the merit of suggesting additional distinctions, useful for our purposes. We have to say immediately that Schaeffer is not interested in judgment itself but rather in the aesthetic *conduct*, namely a kind of “*relation of appreciative attention*”⁶⁴ towards artworks (and non-artworks). This conduct is both *cognitive* (since it requires a certain degree of attention) and *interested* (since we want it satisfactory) – so Schaeffer is opposed to both Kant and Genette on this last point. The aesthetic judgment *follows* from this appreciative relation according to Schaeffer, that is to say, it aims only to

⁵⁸ Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art*, p. 505.

⁵⁹ Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art*, p. 505.

⁶⁰ Antoine Grandjean, in Emmanuel Kant, *Analytique du beau*, trans. Alain Renault (Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2008), p. 66, footnote.

⁶¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 8, p. 101.

⁶² Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art*, p. 506.

⁶³ See for instance Jean-Marie Schaeffer, “Discernement, Plaisir et jugement: de la conduite esthétique”, in *Convergences et divergences des esthétiques*, ed. Danielle Cohen-Levinas (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

⁶⁴ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 59.

express the “satisfaction index”⁶⁵ that can be felt during this personal experience. Such a judgment is therefore both *subjective* and *irrefutable* (how can we refute the experience that one says to have lived?)⁶⁶

But in this case, what importance have the works as such? Do their intrinsic qualities determine the experience I feel (therefore the judgment that I will carry on them)? According to Schaeffer, the properties of the object may well influence my judgment (they have a “causal force”⁶⁷), but it will nevertheless remain subjective because the influence these properties will have on me results only from my “mental disposition to react in a particular way for a particular type of property, a disposition that is a subjective characteristic (and largely pre-intentional)”.⁶⁸

How to explain, then, the fact that there can somehow be a *consensus* between individual aesthetic judgments? Schaeffer indicates several possible explanations: first, the fact that there is, he suggests, “a ‘genetic basis’ for certain aesthetic preferences”⁶⁹ (for the purpose, he cites for instance a study showing that babies from two to three months, not yet exposed to cultural stereotypes, enjoy the same kinds of faces the adults do – which would suggest the existence of a cross-cultural ideal of beauty).⁷⁰ The same generational or social affiliation of the audience can also explain the agreement about judgments according to Schaeffer.⁷¹

But what about agreements based on *intellectual* reasons? When facing an artwork, a consensus is not yet acquired but occurs as the result of a debate; it leads to a mutual recognition of opposing arguments: I make the reasons of others mine and the others appropriate my own arguments. Therefore, explaining this agreement through generational, cultural or social origins of the audience only seems to be inadequate. Rainer Rochlitz will indeed take over the issue by studying the *rationality* of a critical discussion. Before considering the position of the latter, I would like to highlight one aspect of Schaeffer’s thesis, which is more complex than it seems.

⁶⁵ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 59.

⁶⁶ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 60.

⁶⁷ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 60.

⁶⁸ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 60.

⁶⁹ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 61.

⁷⁰ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 61.

⁷¹ Schaeffer, “Discernement”, p. 62.

Schaeffer actually distinguishes between two types of judgments. The first is an *aesthetic* judgment (already described above), that is to say a *personal* and *subjective* assessment in which I express the pleasure or displeasure felt. This is a *value* judgment (by which Schaeffer means that it concerns the relation *I* have with the artwork). The second is a *judgment of operal success*, meant to estimate the relation *the work* has with some presumed constraints (material, technical, and even communicational). The scope here is to verify the “compliance [...] of the work to a program, a standard, an ideal, etc.”⁷² This is “a factual ‘evaluation’ (in the sense that we speak of the ‘evaluation’ of a length)”⁷³ in which I state an objective assessment (based on reality). It corresponds to *judgment of expertise*, *factual* and purely *descriptive*⁷⁴, where instead of expressing my personal feeling as in an aesthetic judgment I adopt the “neutral” point of view of the observer. The success envisaged by this judgment can be twofold. In the first case, I evaluate a work in respect to the *creative* constraints which delimit the type of Intentional activity it derives from. The criteria vary and may include, for example, the compliance of a work to the rules required for defining the art or genre to which it belongs, or the extent of expertise of the artist in relation to proven technique standards.⁷⁵ The work’s success here depends on its compliance or lack of compliance to a “purpose placed upstream of its production”.⁷⁶ In the second case, the evaluation doesn’t concern creative constraints: it rather estimates the object’s “ability to perform [...] the function or functions it is supposed to perform”.⁷⁷ For example, you could estimate if a work manages to fulfill a ritual, political or even aesthetic function. Again, it is a factual judgment, purely descriptive.

According to Schaeffer, therefore, the aesthetic judgment – subjective – must absolutely be distinguished from the judgment of operal success – objective. The main objection⁷⁸ that may be made to him is the following:

⁷² Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Les célibataires de l’art. Pour une esthétique sans mythe* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), p. 236.

⁷³ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 236.

⁷⁴ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 236.

⁷⁵ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 234.

⁷⁶ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 234.

⁷⁷ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 238.

⁷⁸ This objection is suggested by Schaeffer himself p. 233 of *Célibataires*: he responds to it in the following pages.

couldn't we give value to some works *because* they are successful in the same way we would give value to a car because it holds the road? In this case our assessment would be objective! The answer by Schaeffer is quite simple: even if I can give value to a work (that is to say, enjoy it) because it is successful in practice, it does not change the status of aesthetic judgment, which remains subjective because *the fact itself* to appreciate a work *because* it is successful for one reason or another "is the expression of a specific interest"⁷⁹, which is in itself subjective.⁸⁰ As we have seen, the properties of the object have a necessary influence on my judgment, but not sufficient, because my reaction *ultimately* depends on my willingness to respond "in a particular way to a particular type of property, a disposition that is a subjective characteristic".⁸¹ According to Schaeffer, proof is that one can find a work technically successful without appreciating it, and appreciate a work that he recognizes as failed from a technical point of view. Phrases like "This novel is very successful, but it is detestable because it defends unacceptable moral positions" or "I know that the musical language of this piece is particularly rough and awkward from a tonal point of view, but I've never heard anything so mesmerizing"⁸² are common.

Aesthetic judgment and judgment of operative success are therefore "irreducible one to the other".⁸³ But what about art critics, then? Is their activity still legitimate? According to Schaeffer, the ability of an art critic is to highlight certain features of a work that were previously neglected and propose "ways for our own aesthetic commitment, considering the fact that it falls to everyone to experience for themselves if they agree or not with the proposed way".⁸⁴ The art critic's talent and strength come from the persuasive force of his judgment, which nevertheless remains intimate and – often – biased.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 240.

⁸⁰ On the contrary, says Schaeffer, if I judge a work successful because it gives me pleasure (and because it matches its purpose), then it is simply an aesthetic judgment, which endorses the appearance of a judgment of operal success (Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 239).

⁸¹ Schaeffer, "Discernement", p. 60.

⁸² Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 241.

⁸³ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 240.

⁸⁴ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 247.

⁸⁵ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 247.

Schaeffer's position is reminiscent of the thesis of the American analytic philosopher Morris Weitz⁸⁶ who, already in 1956, sought to distinguish between factual and value judgments.⁸⁷ According to the latter, most of art theorists claimed *to describe* works of art by revealing their essence, while they were actually expressing their own preferences. Stating what art *was*, they implicitly suggested what art *should have been*. The properties they attributed to works of art were therefore not purely descriptive but *evaluative*, that is *prescriptive*. However, Weitz does not consider these aesthetic theories as useless. They even have a great interest for him, that of pointing certain features of art that were either neglected or distorted by previous theories.⁸⁸ The value of each of these theories lies in their ability to advance *reasons* for choosing or preferring a particular evaluation standard, fueling the "perennial debate" about the value of art.⁸⁹ Therefore, as Weitz concludes, "the role of the theory is not to define anything but to use the definitional form, almost epigrammatically, to pin-point a crucial recommendation to turn our attention once again to [certain features of works of art]".⁹⁰

It may seem curious that Schaeffer concludes his chapter with the following statement: "The value of a critical text [is] that it indicates us potential ways of satisfactory aesthetic attention or that it makes us wonder whether we content ourselves with poor satisfactions."⁹¹ This last sentence actually seems to revive the debate it was supposed to close: for if there are satisfactions richer than others, this means that there might be artworks more successful than others.

2.2.3. *The Objectivist Aesthetics*

It is this question of the value of works of art and the legitimacy of the reactions related to them which interested Rainer Rochlitz, who opposed the traditional "subjectivist" or "empiricist" tradition and its relativism by

⁸⁶ Surprisingly, Schaeffer doesn't mention Weitz in his text.

⁸⁷ See Morris Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XV (1956).

⁸⁸ Weitz, "Role of Theory", p. 35.

⁸⁹ Weitz, "Role of Theory", p. 35.

⁹⁰ Weitz, "Role of Theory", p. 35.

⁹¹ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 246.

sustaining the strictly *normative* dimension of art and the need to use *common criteria* for evaluating them.

According to Rochlitz, indeed, a work of art is *intrinsically* a fact of value, since any artwork would include in itself a “claim to validity”, namely the aspiration to be recognized as successful. The distinction between artwork and non-artwork would therefore derive from an *aesthetic judgment*⁹², the unique way to respond to this artworks’ claim, and it would be futile to try to define the concept of a work of art in a descriptive way, that is in a neutral way from a value perspective. The peculiarity of artworks *lies* in their intrinsic “claim to validity”: if they do not get the recognition they target, they lose their artistic status, unlike natural or everyday objects that would keep theirs. While “a flower does not expect anything from us”⁹³ and “a plane that is no longer capable of flying keeps its descriptive airplane identity”⁹⁴, “an artwork that is neither explained nor valued is dead”.⁹⁵ This question of the work of art as an object of intrinsic value or as an objective phenomenon was the subject of a debate between Rochlitz and Schaeffer that we will not repeat here, where the first pleaded for a definition of *evaluative* art and the second advocated a definition of purely *descriptive* art.⁹⁶ This abstract of the position of Rochlitz shows in any case the *importance* he attaches to the evaluative judgment. It is necessary for *the very existence* of artworks: it defines as much as it evaluates them.

But how, again, can we estimate the value of an artwork? According to Rochlitz – who extends the reflections by Habermas on an ethic of discussion – the value of a work must be the subject of a *critical discussion* that, far from being reduced to the mere addition of personal preferences, allows to reach a rational verdict. Participants should be *at the height* of the debate, that is to say, offer arguments that will be built on the actual properties of the work and that can be evaluated collectively. According to Rochlitz

⁹² Rochlitz doesn’t explicitly distinguish between different types of judgments like Schaeffer: it seems, though, he uses the expression “aesthetic judgment” to describe a judgment which intends to *evaluate* artworks, similar to those of art critics.

⁹³ Rainer Rochlitz, *Subversion et subvention. Art contemporain et argumentation esthétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 137.

⁹⁴ Rochlitz, *Subversion et subvention*, p. 142.

⁹⁵ Rochlitz, *Subversion et subvention*, p. 137.

⁹⁶ In *Célibataires* Schaeffer responds to the thesis developed by Rochlitz two years before in *Subversion et subvention*.

“a work of art [...] follows a principle which is revealed by careful examination, rules that allow to appreciate its ambition and success [and] it is a fact that we exchange arguments to persuade each other of the merits of a particular artwork”.⁹⁷ This kind of discussion has its own rationality, able to validate or invalidate the judgments contained under the argument that underlies them. The strength of rational debate is indeed to be able *to shed light* on the gaps or qualities of an argument about a work. As Rochlitz notes, “some subjects express their preferences because of passions, privileged memories, family, regional or national habits, traditions, established cultural assessments. But when they express such claims in the presence of subjects who do not share their axiological choice, these claims are immediately problematized, and it is no longer possible to think that one can, in Kantian terms, ‘assign them to everyone’ or ‘assume them in any other’”.⁹⁸

Rochlitz therefore reclaims the notion of *common sense* by Kant and transforms it: it becomes a common *rationality*, constructed and activated intersubjectively, capable of measuring the relevance of judgments in an *effective* rational debate. This interpretation is actually quite close to the spirit of Kantian text, especially § 40 of the *Critique*, except that for Kant “[the] critical dimension of common sense is [...] transcendental rather than empirical”⁹⁹: one should not confront with the *real* views of others but rather put one’s self in place of any other “by [...] holding his judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgment of others”.¹⁰⁰ Rochlitz therefore considers *common sense* as the rule of critical debate, its condition of possibility.

But what about the *content* of actual judgments? On what criteria are they based on? Rochlitz suggests four of them, which are not definitive criteria but rather *critical parameters*. None of them (alone or in combination with others) is sufficient to justify a judgment; but without them, no judgment could be sustained.¹⁰¹ It is thus the argument of the critic that

⁹⁷ Rochlitz, *Subversion et subvention*, p. 149.

⁹⁸ Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 162.

⁹⁹ Jean-Philippe Uzel, “Sens commun ou ”communisme culturel” ?”, *Æ*, vol. 3, (Fall 1998) accessed October 2016, http://www.uqtr.ca/AE/vol_3/michaud.htm.

¹⁰⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 40, p. 174.

¹⁰¹ Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 211.

will ultimately be determinant.¹⁰² The first parameter is the *coherence* of the work, which can be symbolic, stylistic, emotional, etc. The second parameter is the *culmination* of the work, namely the efficiency with which it will bring its idea. The third parameter is the *challenge* of the work that must justify the effort undertaken.¹⁰³ The fourth and final parameter is the *originality* of the work, that is its exploratory nature and its contribution to the history of art. All these parameters should be present in the work ideally, because, for example, “a stylistic coherence without a challenge may be weak and purely decorative, [and] the presentation of a challenge without style may drag to confession or documentary information and make the art form incidental compared to the ‘message’”.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, according to Rochlitz, a valid aesthetic judgment is based on critical parameters and reasons evaluated in an intersubjective way during a rational debate. He is opposed to Genette and Schaeffer for whom the differences of taste are ultimately explained by the cultural, social or family origin of the subject. The drawback of this empiricist conception, according to Rochlitz, is that it prohibits “taking seriously any debate on a work of art”¹⁰⁵ assuming “that there is no rational motivation [...] but only fallacious justifications”.¹⁰⁶ This explanation of aesthetic judgments thus always leads “to the psychoanalyst’s ‘couch’”.¹⁰⁷

2.2.4. *Conclusion on the Contemporary Aesthetic Debate*

This analysis has shown that for Gérard Genette and Jean-Marie Schaeffer judgment can only be subjective (left to each individual’s appreciation); according to Rainer Rochlitz, instead, judgment can indeed be based on objective properties and verified in an intersubjective way. Not only do these two antagonistic positions correspond respectively to the thesis and antithesis of the Kantian antinomy relative to the judgment of taste, they also exclude what allowed Kant to resolve this apparent *aporia*: the notion of common sense.

¹⁰² Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 202.

¹⁰³ Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 212.

¹⁰⁴ Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 212.

¹⁰⁵ Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁶ Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁷ Rochlitz, *L’art au banc d’essai*, p. 161.

Schaeffer thinks significantly that “if the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* shed light on some of the essential features of the aesthetic conduct (pleasure and subjective appreciation), Kant immediately turned it into a myth under the form of a communicational utopia”.¹⁰⁸ Rainer Rochlitz also rejects the idea of common sense – or rather transforms it – but with an opposite result compared to Schaeffer’s: critical judgement is a public statement whose validity is experienced during a rational confrontation of arguments about the works. So, we have two opposing positions¹⁰⁹ – the “subjectivist empiricism” by Genette and Schaeffer and the “objectivist rationalism” by Rochlitz – which nevertheless meet in their choice to keep, in the end, only *a part* of the Kantian thesis on aesthetic judgment.

3. Judgement Today

By the visual and conceptual shifts he creates, contemporary art challenges the public’s “horizon of expectations” and the categories of aestheticians. Consequently, he invites them to continually review their classifications, to refine their concepts, to challenge their criteria. As we have seen, the contingent relativism according to which the advent of contemporary art would sign the loss of any normative benchmark seems distant from reality: we are not witnessing a loss of criteria, but rather their *transformation* and *multiplication* over time. The question that arises, then, is the following: does the formation of a new genre or artistic paradigm make the previous out of date? According to Nathalie Heinich, it is not so¹¹⁰: if certain paradigms are more significant than others during a given period, their coexistence is possible and even proven. The “modern” and “classical” paradigms are still ongoing today, and if their distribution networks are often separated from “contemporary” networks¹¹¹, their values are still

¹⁰⁸ Schaeffer, *Célibataires*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ One could nevertheless find some common ground between “subjectivists” and “objectivists”: as shown in our previous analysis, indeed, Schaeffer distinguishes between different types of judgments and acknowledges the possibility to formulate justified artistic evaluations; Rochlitz prefers to the idea of objective criteria that of *critical parameters*, necessary to elaborate a rational judgment without assuring for all that the objective validity of the latter.

¹¹⁰ See Heinich, “Pour en finir” and, from the same author, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*.

¹¹¹ See Heinich, *Paradigme de l’art contemporain*, p. 35.

conveyed by the public and some of the artworld's actors. Therefore, the boundaries between paradigms are not as sealed as they may sound.

Still remains the question of universality. Is it possible to outline some criteria that would be applicable to any type of work, regardless of its genre? This is the proposal made by Rochlitz and each of his "critical parameters" would deserve to be analyzed and confronted with the most varied productions – what we can not do here.¹¹² What may be missing in Rochlitz's text is the *reflective* nature of judgment and the *demonstrative* or *exemplary* status of aesthetic argumentation: we must always start out from works, because they renew through their very existence the criteria intended to characterize them.¹¹³

A track to address the issue of universality would also be to distinguish between *relativity* and *relativism*.¹¹⁴ Unlike *relativism*, which believes that any judgment about art is inevitably *biased*, that is to say strictly valid for the person who utters it or the paradigm which it refers to, *relativity* specifies that the fact that "a judgment is conditioned by a particular factor [does not mean] it is groundless or that the observer is blind to its own conditions".¹¹⁵ Unlike the relativism that "[exclude] encounters and argued discussions in favor of the 'casualty' of agreements"¹¹⁶, relativity allows anyone to consider another's perspective in order to evaluate its legitimacy.

Kant's text seems to be accurate on this point: rather than prescribing rules to be applied mechanically to the works, he offers us some "keys" to

¹¹² In the second part of *L'art au banc d'essai* (pp. 259-431) Rochlitz offered himself to confront his theory to practice, by applying his "critical parameters" to the works of two writers and two artists.

¹¹³ It is nevertheless interesting to note that while many criteria of the past seem obsolete today, or seem suited to certain artistic genres only, other criteria seem to have strangely maintained their importance throughout the history of art. Among these, for example, that of novelty – or at least the ability for a work to amaze the spectator. Could such a criterion be understood as a meta-criterion? The idea of novelty seems included within the very concept of work of art, which would make it both a common feature (although present in it in varying degrees) and a criterion of judgement.

¹¹⁴ See Christophe Genin, "Présentation. Juger l'art ? Perspectives et prospectives", in *Juger l'art ?*, ed. Christophe Genin and Claire Leroux (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2009), p. 11.

¹¹⁵ Christophe Genin, "Présentation", p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Agnès Lontrade, "Tour d'horizon. Penser le jugement esthétique après Hume et Kant", in *Juger l'art ?*, ed. Genin and Leroux, p. 192.

adopt a critical attitude necessary for the development of a free and independent judgment. For the judgment to be opposed to prejudice¹¹⁷, hence to the hasty opinion that “decide before understanding”¹¹⁸, it has to prevail from being satisfied with its own taste, or that prescribed by fashion, conventions, or any paradigm. This is what Kant already intended with a *disinterested* judgment: a judgment free from any personal interest in the contemplated thing but also free from any opinion imposed by environment, time or education. Because this is also what Kant had thought: the possibility engraved in every man to exercise his faculty of judgment *beyond* his membership to a specific community, so to discuss artworks as “common things”¹¹⁹ and from a code of common references.

Of course, as Goodman reminds, “there are no innocent eyes”¹²⁰: “the eye comes always ancient to its work [;] it selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyses, constructs. It does not so much mirror as take and make; and what it takes and makes it sees not bare, as items without attributes, but as things, as food, as people, as enemies, as stars, as weapons. Nothing is seen nakedly or naked”.¹²¹ But that first interested attitude can then be corrected, by dismissing associations that are too personal or erroneous, by working on our vision so that it becomes, in a second stage, sharp and relevant.

Various methods may be considered for this purpose. Presenting our own views during a rational debate would have the advantage, as demonstrated by Rochlitz, *to highlight* – through others’ eyes – gaps or qualities of an argument about a work. This type of exercise can also occur in isolation: the individual would then imagine a virtual space of discussion and would elaborate his judgment in view of the potential objections he may receive.

The maxims suggested by Kant in paragraph 40¹²² are revealing about this. The first, that of “the unprejudiced way of thinking”, is directed to

¹¹⁷ Agnès Lontrade, “Tour d’horizon”, p. 192.

¹¹⁸ Christophe Genin, “Présentation”, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ Danielle Lories, introduction to *L’art en valeurs*, ed. Lories and Dekonink, p. 11.

¹²⁰ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1976), p. 7.

¹²¹ Goodman, *Languages*, pp. 7–8.

¹²² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 40, pp. 174–175.

“think for oneself”: it requires never to be passive, hence not to give in to prejudice. The second maxim, that of “the broad-minded way” invites to “think in the position of everyone else”: it seeks an open mind, able to stand over “the subjective private conditions of the judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed, and [reflect] on [its] own judgment from a universal stand-point (which he can only determine by putting himself into the stand-point of others)”. The third maxim, that of the “consistent way” requires “always to think in accord with oneself”; it is, according to Kant, “the most difficult to achieve, and can only be achieved through the combination of the first two and after frequent observance of them has made them automatic”.

Once this attitude is adopted, of course, everything remains to be done: the “form” of a judgment does not guarantee the validity of its content. It is up to us to choose the tools that will appear most adapted to produce sense and to discriminate among artworks – and to be prepared to argue for this choice, keeping in mind that the more general or common are the chosen criteria, the more relevant will be our judgment. Art, by its *public* nature, “speaks to us on another level than that of the [idiosyncratic] preferences”.¹²³ When an artist speaks to the multiplicity through a work he opens a space of *interlocution*¹²⁴, because each singular proposition enroll and is apprehended in a shared world. The answer to the question “How could we judge artworks today?” is perhaps the following: by aiming at universality – without ever losing sight of the works.

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¹²³ Lories, introduction to *L'art en valeurs*, 11.

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Notes on the Self-Manipulation of Taste

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ABSTRACT. Can we change our tastes? Can we bend our own preferences? This paper deals with the controversial question of voluntary self-construction of taste as a peculiarity of contemporary culture. This problem will be briefly discussed not only from a philosophical point of view, but also using insights from sociology and economic theory. In sum, self-mastery over one's own tastes can be considered both a particular act of autonomy toward one's own internal constraints and an act of self-subversion or even self-deception.¹

1. Introduction: Changing Oneself

Arthur Schopenhauer famously stated: 'A person can do whatever he wants, but he cannot want what he wants'. Yet, there are situations in which we aspire to transform what we want in order to make us appreciate an artwork, a new food or fashion, a lifestyle or even an idea that we frankly do not like. That is, these are situations in which we would like to voluntarily change our *tastes*. The first problem, as Schopenhauer asks, is whether this is feasible and reasonable, philosophically and also psychologically. Moreover, if this were possible, why should we have an interest to do so? And how? On the other hand, according to the philosopher Gerald Dworkin (inspired by Kant) - a person is autonomous and free if she can reflect on her own preferences and, if she considers it necessary, change them (Dworkin 1988).

Then freedom would be not much 'doing what you wish to do', but rather 'deciding what to prefer and wish'. In other words, we want not only to be free from external impediments, but we also want to be free from the internal ones. That is, we would like to have control above our system of desires, tastes, and predilections.

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¹ This topic has been investigated extensively in Arielli (2016), of which this contribution is a general summary.

On close reflection, this is a suspicious idea, since we assume that tastes and preferences are *there* within us, and we can at best bring them to light educating ourselves, exposing us to artworks, food, music, and other experiences. But to bend them to our will or build them from scratch seems hypocritical and morally questionable, since our preferences define who we are and changing them would mean to betray ourselves and deny our *authenticity* (Melchionne 2007). We would feel like Clockwork Orange's Alex, forced by the Ludovico technique to reject what he loves (violence, but first of all, Beethoven), and to accept what he despises (obedience and submission), becoming through a Pavlovian conditioning a better person according to society's criteria, but alien to his own true nature.

We should be however careful in taking the notion of authenticity and of 'true self', with its genuine and immutable tastes, as a valuable principle opposed to voluntarily acquired likings. This is because our tastes are determined by complex factors we are not always aware of, such as our personal history and education, biology, influences from the cultural environment, the media, etc. What we consider to be a 'true self' would only be the final product of factors that elude our introspection.

Moreover, what we don't usually realize is that the effort in changing and adapting tastes and preferences is not at all exceptional, but on the contrary a pervasive everyday practice. Imagine an ambitious and opportunistic employee who develops a passion for tennis because he noticed that his boss is a tennis player. Or a woman who is trying to find interest in the football championship, in order to please her new boyfriend. Or a person who tries to appreciate regular exercise, even though he never liked sport in the past. Or who, in a relationship, would prefer to have an inclination for good-mannered and amiable partners, instead of being always attracted to individuals with difficult personalities. Furthermore, anyone trying to change his habits carries out an effort to transform his own preferences, as when someone is trying to quit smoking, to eat healthier food, to cut the time surfing the internet and so on.

As these examples shows, it is clear that 'coming to like something' is a much broader phenomenon than artistic and aesthetic appreciation, it involves every effort related to the self-manipulation of preferences.

2. Self-reflexivity and the Avant-garde

Marcel Duchamp, known for his urinal transformed into a work of art, provocatively stated: '*I have forced myself* to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste.' (in Janis & Janis, 1945, p. 18). This summarizes an essential aspect of last century's artistic avant-garde. Decades later Andy Warhol used similar words: 'There are so many people here to compete with that changing your tastes to what other people don't want is your only hope of getting anything.' (Warhol 1975, p. 93). These quotes show how contemporary art could be seen as an example where a self-induced change of tastes becomes a necessary component of its mission, and not only for the artist, but also for the public. With the birth of the avant-garde, 'it may have been the first time when artists themselves took entire charge of taste,' wrote the famous art critic Clement Greenberg not without some disappointment, and the art lover 'had to work as art lovers never worked before in order to get it.' (Greenberg 1999, p. 119). In other words, the avant-garde have inverted the relationship between *art and judgment*: you do not measure an artwork according to your tastes, but your tastes have to find a way to fit to the artwork. An art student who focuses on contemporary experimentalism no longer learns techniques based on predetermined aesthetic principles, but must exercise a self-transformative work on him, trying to produce a new aesthetic sensitivity and break the cage of his existing tastes. Also the visitor of a contemporary art exhibition is asked to exercise openness and recalibrate her taste to understand an artwork and make it interesting to her. A case, as we said, in which it is not the object that has to be measured on the basis of some criteria, but where the criteria have to be tailored and created *ad-hoc* around the object.

Working on one's own tastes, willingly force them to adapt to something unusual, all this could be read as an expression of the avant-garde 'imperative', which is the constant search for novelty, the urge to be cutting edge, the readiness to take control and rewrite our own aesthetic inclinations. The art theoretician Ossian Ward, investigating how the public should try to deal with the puzzling products of contemporary art, writes for instance:

The best foundation for any fresh consideration of contemporary art

is to start from zero and wipe the slate clean, no matter how many bad encounters you might have had before. Think of your mind's eye as a white canvas, a blank page or an empty gallery, and then slowly let the work fill in that space. (Ward 2014, p. 12)

In other words, the spectator should not project his own prejudices on the work of art. Instead, he is the one who need to become a 'white canvas' and let the work of art seep in and change his mind. On a side note it should be however observed that the avant-garde has been considered only a moment in the art history belonging now to the past: the constant reshaping of styles and tastes has already reached its limits, since everything seems to have been tried and experienced. The widespread feeling is now that it is difficult if not impossible to push even further the margins of what is new and innovative, because these margins have dissolved. Moreover, the public already knows and expects that in the arts *anything goes*. The consequence is that there is no such thing as a contemporary 'taste', but only a general taste for newness. The public strives for innovation and is constantly hungry for what has not been seen yet. In this scenario, the artist today is not alone but is surrounded by members of *artworld* that includes influential figures such as critics, curators, collectors, and other players in the art market. All of them are engaged in recreating over and over the reason for appreciating an artwork or an artist as innovative, interesting and worthy of attention. The taste-changing task described by Duchamp and Warhol concerns today not the single artist anymore, but this whole complex constellation of aesthetic stakeholders.

According to Arthur Danto, the arts, in their ongoing process of questioning themselves, are fascinating because they are a symptom of an era of great cultural self-reflexivity. In it, culture looks on itself and constantly subverts and challenges itself. 'The art of the twentieth century', Alain Badiou adds, 'is a reflective art, an art that wants to exhibit its own process.' (Badiou 2007, pp. 49-50).

The origin of reflexivity can be attributed to the high value that we confer to the individual's autonomy and self-determination. A symptom of this is the proliferation of psychological literature on self-regulation, as well as the flourishing of popular *self-help* manuals suggesting ways to change habits and turn for the better, develop self-control, gain more con-

fidence, more social skills, and so on. Sociologist Micki McGee (2005) suggests that the proliferation of self-help books is a revealing sign of modern societies, where we experience an unprecedented freedom from predetermined social roles and from religious and traditional guides of the past that dictated everyone's conduct and position in society. Today, choice is an individual matter, we are 'condemned to freedom', as the existentialists say. Concerning taste, this is evident in the pressure toward self-fashioning, the creation of identities through cultural choices and consumption habits in which, as the critic and philosopher Boris Groys states, 'we are condemned to be the designer of ourselves.' (Groys 2008, p. 24).

3. Is It Really Possible to Change Taste?

If this is true, then the question will be: How can you voluntarily mold and change your taste and preferences? This is in fact easy to say, but less obvious in practice. Most of us think, actually, that *de gustibus non disputandum est*. Moreover, this question is preceded by another one: *do tastes change at all?*

According to our common sense, it seems obvious that tastes can change, since we are naturally influenced by new experiences, like discovering an innovative design or a new fashion trend, listening to the music of an emerging artist, and so on. If this were not the case, every kind of cultural transformation or style evolution would be impossible. We could yet assume that some preferences are anchored in human nature and are difficult to manipulate (as, for example, the liking for sweet and the aversion to bitter tasting food, the sense of satisfaction in admiring certain natural landscapes, and so on) whereas other are shaped by the individual experiences we are exposed to.

Yet, our common sense seems to hold on this matter a contradictory view, according to which our tastes are considered far from malleable. This contradiction was empirically shown in a recent study around the so-called 'end of history illusion', a phenomenon studied by Harvard psychologists Daniel Gilbert and Jordi Quoidbach (Quoidbach & Gilbert 2013). Twenty thousand people were asked by the researcher to express their views about their current and past tastes. The surprising outcome of this survey was that, on one side, those people mostly admitted that their predilections

- for example in music or literature - changed if compared to their past preferences (like, e.g. remembering to have liked rock music in the teenager years, but now listening to jazz); but on the other side, the subjects considered their current tastes as stable and definitive, that is, they were convinced that the present likings will be the same also in the future. This is a surprising asymmetry, because we perceive our past selves as wandering and mutating, but assume our present self to be fixed once for all. Which is probably false: in the future we will likely have new preferences, we will again admit to have changed them in the past, and hold the new one as final and immutable.

Granted, the discussion about whether tastes are fixed (that is, not changing in an individual over time) or perhaps even universal (that is, being the same for all individuals) has a long history in aesthetics. The word 'taste' (French *goût*, German *Geschmack*) was first used in the eighteenth-century in the attempt to tie the problem of aesthetic judgment with the preferences for specific flavors, which were assumed to have a natural basis and thus be universal (such as the liking for sweet and the aversion to bitter tastes). Through this link it was possible to think of aesthetic taste as subjective on one side, but not arbitrary on the other side, and to allow the possibility of a foundation of 'good taste' that an individual could achieve by education and experience, refining his senses and thus attaining to a stable and universal criteria of beauty.

Also in modern economic theory individual tastes have been often considered as given and stable. Gary Becker and Georg Stigler, both Nobel Prize economists, have famously stated that 'one does not argue over tastes for the same reason that one does not argue over the Rocky Mountains – both are there, will be there next year, too, and are the same to all men' (Stigler & Becker 1977, p. 76). This is a stance that is shared by many economists and social scientists. According to them, this does not contradict the fact that tastes can change over time, because changes affect only *instrumental* preferences and not *final* ones. Instrumental preferences change with the circumstances (for example, I prefer light or warm clothing depending on the temperature) and they are only steps in satisfying deeper, final needs, which are immutable (in this example, maintaining an adequate body temperature). Tastes as final preferences would be 'fundamental aspects of life, such as health, prestige, sensual pleasures, benevol-

ence or envy.' (Ibid.).

Moreover, following Stigler and Becker, another explanation of why instrumental tastes change in the course of time is due to the fact that past choices affect present preferences in form of habits and *cultural capital* accumulated through experience. For example, if I have learned to follow the intricacies of nineteenth-century Russian novels, their appreciation over time will cost me less and less effort compared to the first readings: the cost / benefit ratio will necessarily decrease in my favor, allowing me to enjoy (and prefer) reading more and more intellectually demanding texts.

Building a habit brings us to the further question whether taste could be molded in a desired direction. For this to be possible, a person needs first to be able to reflect on her own system of preferences and then identify tastes that she considers needful of change. As Bertrand Russell wrote: 'We do not even always consider our own tastes the best: we may prefer bridge to poetry, but think it is better to prefer poetry to bridge.' (Russell, 1994, p. 21). The maxim *de gustibus non est disputandum*, Russell therefore suggests, does not apply in the first person: I am entitled not to approve what I like. Consequently, there are circumstances where we do not want what we like and we do not like what we want. This fact reveals that we are able to gain a view from above on our own likings and build *second-order preferences* (or meta-preferences), which means 'preferences over preferences', tastes about tastes. For Harry Frankfurt, 'The ability to reflect on my desires is what distinguishes me from an animal that may desire to do things but cannot lay its desires out and pick among the ones that conflict.' (Frankfurt 1971, p. 5).

Having a meta-preference could allow me to take up the initial effort to change taste. Bertrand Russell's quote shows in fact how the hierarchy of my first order preferences can be completely detached from those of the second order. For example, I could be a person who appreciates movies according to the following ranking: first of all, I love the horror genre, then science fiction, historical films and, at the bottom, romantic comedies. But, for reasons concerning the desire to adapt to a partner's tastes, I might have meta-preferences ordered as follows: first I *would prefer to love* romantic comedies, then historical films and finally, I would like to have no desire for science fiction or horror whatsoever, in order not to suffer missing them, given the usual opposition of my partner. My reasons to

support these second-order preferences hold unless my partner one day changes her tastes (and we don't break up) or they hold until the first order preferences had molded according to them, managing to get myself to like romantic comedies.

'Preferring to prefer something' - or 'wanting to want something' - could manifest as a simple desire to have inclinations that we think we can bring us benefits, for example in the case of desiring to like exercising or eating well. In other cases, second order preferences are only general assessments of what we think could be a 'better self', without committing too much to them. So I could say, without contradicting myself: 'Classical music is culturally superior and should be listened to, but I prefer pop singers'; 'The Nobel Prize writers are, without doubt, the pinnacle of human narrative, but I never wanted to read any of them.' In these terms, meta-preferences could be seen as normative standards we believe as desirable compared to our actual behavior, a sort of Super-ego which make us aware of our imperfection.

4. Adaptation and Authenticity of Taste

Preferences and meta-preferences, moreover, involve the difference between 'inner' or true tastes and tastes we would like to *display*. According to evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller (2009) a person advertises his qualities through the exhibition of his aesthetic tastes, for example showing on a social network his preferences for a specific music genres, books or movies, or showing off products that signal a certain status and lifestyle. Similar to the peacock spreading its tail in order to show his fitness to potential mates, the modern consumer displays his new iPhone model in order to signal his value to other people. The display to others of a self-image is therefore a natural mechanism in which the true purpose is not to disclose how we really are, but rather how we would like the other to see us in order to attain some general goal (social respect and status, power, seduction). This means that the expression of taste is often a construction where the boundary between sincere expression and hypocritical staging remains inevitably subtle.

An usual distinction we found in psychology and sociology concerns the fact that every one of us has a private and a public dimension of the

self. These dimensions may be discrepant when we stage a public identity that has no reference to our real inclinations. But things get complicated if we take into account another common psychological distinction, that is the difference between a 'perceived self' (how we see ourselves) and a 'desired self' (how we would like to be). This difference is present both in the private sphere as well as in the public one, giving rise to four dimensions: the perceived and the desired private self, the perceived and the desired public self (Higgins 1987). Now, a discrepancy between perceived self and the private self generates dissatisfaction and frustration ('I would like to appreciate modern classical music, but I am not able to do it'), whereas a similar conflict in the public dimension creates shame and embarrassment ('I should know everything about modern classical music, but everyone discovered my poor competence'). These discrepancies may entice me to change my behavior. For example, the difference between my present tastes and those I would like to have according to the ideal of a more educated and sophisticated self can push me to cultivate refined forms of cultural consumption.

This pressure to transform my inclinations can be elusive and remains completely unconscious and involve broader areas of human motivation. Consider the scenario of a person who marries for money: few of us are so bold to sincerely confess to ourselves ('perceived self') to be moved by such an opportunistic reason, since we prefer a more virtuous picture of ourselves ('desired self'). This conflict may result in a change of feelings in order to remove one's opportunistic intentions: this is described by the character of Lucy Steele in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), who shifts her affection from Edward to his brother Robert as Edward is disinherited, masking the opportunistic move with the self-deceiving belief of being emotionally interested in those persons and not in their money (Elster 1999, p. 355). Leaving the fictional example aside, let us consider an admirer of 'degenerate art' during the Nazi dictatorship in Germany. Due to these circumstances, she may choose to hide her passion for these artists ('private perceived self') and to publicly lie and express contempt toward them ('public perceived self'). Exhausted by the effort to disguise herself or for fear of betraying her real preferences, she could develop new habits and end up changing her tastes.

Not matter if the reason is social approval, status, material interest or

self-preservation, these considerations could lead us to think that taste has always a constructed and opportunistic side. But one could wonder if in all these examples the subject 1) just opportunistically hides his true inclinations, simulate them and put on stage a public self that is completely detached from the private self, or if 2) he pretends, but try (according to his 'meta-preferences') to shape his preferences to fit his own tastes to what he thinks he should like or dislike, or 3) he really molds his private inclinations with or without conscious efforts, conforming them to the public expectations.

In general, public expectations seem to prevent us from having a clear hold of our preferences. Even actual and physical presence of the other it is not really necessary to exert an influence, since a inner 'public self' is always gazing at us acts like a Freudian Superego or, following George Herbert Mead, like a 'generalized other', namely a system of normative ideals that socialization has installed within us. Even when we are alone in front of an artwork at the museum, we do not escape the pressure to show to ourselves (or, rather, to our 'generalized other' spying on us from within...) how we are endowed with excellent taste and sensitivity. From this point of view, the boundary between private liking and public display of tastes gets inevitably pale.

The fact that my preferences are determined by the taste of others is a central topic in sociology, from its original theorizations by Thorstein Veblen or Georg Simmel, to the more recent contributions of Pierre Bourdieu. According to this latter, taste is the product of a person's social status and an instrument for the preservation of class identity by means of 'distinction' with respect to other classes. Taste becomes a 'social weapon' to assert one's own status against others. Through what clothes I wear, which car I drive, how do I spend my leisure time, what books I read, what music I listen to, I become a full member of a specific category of people endowed with a certain cultural and symbolic capital. Moreover, the fact that others do not understand these tastes only strengthens the bond to my cultural circle. At the same time, the taste of people I am culturally distant are consequently belittled. As Bourdieu writes, whenever an individual think of the tastes of another social class, he or she 'feels disgust, provoked by *horror*, or *visceral intolerance* ('feeling sick') of the tastes of others.' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 56).

Bourdieu's analysis and criticism inspired the assumption that most cultural preferences are the product of hypocritical attitudes, opposed to the simplicity of authentic tastes, for reasons of cultural exclusion. This shows however how authenticity as an absolute ideal and criteria of 'true' preferences is a problematic notion, because the boundaries between real, perceived and adapted tastes are never clear. The idea of a 'true self', an innocent core completely separated from external influences and contaminations, and totally uninterested of public display, has to be questioned. As we have seen, according to evolutionary theories displaying and public staging are natural and essential aspects of ourselves, they are a side of our social nature and it would be harsh and simplistic to definitely brand them as fake and hypocritical. Moreover, it is interesting to note how the need of authenticity is actually at odds with the idea of self-reflexivity and autonomy. If authenticity highlights spontaneity, then a person evaluating her own inclinations ('preferences over preferences') would already be guilty of contaminating this requirement. Authenticity presupposes a Cartesian individual in which the interiority can be surgically separated from the public masks worn in everyday life. But this is an unrealistic vision of subjectivity, since we are the product of complex influences, including our biology, history, experiences and relationships with others.

5. Autonomy from One's Own Preferences

If we accept this view, then the authentic / inauthentic dichotomy (that is, the question about 'who you really are') should be replaced with the reflective / non reflective dichotomy. Being reflective should be here considered as a presupposition for an autonomous subject. If our identity is the product of fluid and complex processes, determined by factors beyond his control, then autonomy manifests itself as the constant effort to observe and manage those factors. This critical look, thus, doesn't consist in getting to know the 'true inner self', but rather to recognize the factors that make up our own system of preferences and try to push these influencing factors in new directions. To know the factors that influence our tastes becomes a prerequisite for a targeted and conscious intervention on them. Taking a distance from the self (from its immediate – and 'authentic' – appetites, impulses and desires) guarantees the autonomy of the subject.

This ‘management of the self’ is a dynamic and never ending effort that lies at the core of every attempt, imperfect at it is, to mold one’s own preferences and tastes and consists in strategies with whom we attempt to question the system of our actual inclinations. In a famous passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes clear that virtue and character does not arise spontaneously, but require exercise:

[so are] the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, 1)

This means that if you are not virtuous, then you need to behave *as if* you already were virtuous. To be autonomously able to mold ourselves in acquiring a behavioral attitude, we need to use some kind of staging as a tool for self-transformation. *Autonomy and simulation go therefore hand in hand*. Although there is no guarantee of success, we can strive indirectly to change our preferences doing *as if* they were already changed, in order to circumvent our current taste. Or, as the saying goes, you need to ‘fake it until you make it’ (Melchionne 2007).

It seems almost a paradox, but this self-circumvention becomes a ‘practice of freedom’, to borrow an expression from Michel Foucault, which means taking a critical distance from oneself and from one’s inner constraints. In Arielli (2016), I tried to suggest a typology of strategies that we usually adopt every time we try to mold our tastes. These are, for instance, *behavioral* strategies, like forcing oneself to behave *as if* a taste were already acquired, repeatedly exposing oneself to what one would like to appreciate, attending groups of people sharing the preferences one would like to adapt to, imitating also their manners, flaunting a liking in a playful and ironic way and so on. In addition to that, there are also *cognitive* strategies like reframing and shifting perspective on what one would like to appreciate, making comparisons, juxtapositions and analogies between what one already likes and what one doesn’t like yet, being perceptually selective and highlighting only the positive aspects of what one tries to

appreciate, describing and using the right words to persuade oneself and so on.

We are not always conscious of using these strategies, and the aim of developing a typology of this kind is to bring them to light. Knowing how we actually manipulate ourselves allow us to have a ‘toolbox’ of interventions we could intentionally use to make us acquire a specific taste. These interventions are neither perfect, nor give us a guarantee of success. First of all, because there are always inclinations that are deeply anchored in our nature and biology, and are thus difficult to modify. And secondly, interventions of this kind are voluntary attempts to change attitudes through strategies that in normal circumstances are spontaneous and unreflective. ‘Deciding to like’ is still an ambiguous feat.

This conclusion should not be unsettling: transforming our own tastes inevitably requires a work of detachment from the self which makes use of something quite similar to self-deception. But in a certain sense, knowing how to deceive ourselves becomes an important tool of autonomy from our internal constraints, a tool that allows us to explore new possibilities and to subvert the cage of our existing preferences and tastes.

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Categories of Photography

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ABSTRACT. In my paper I consider the process of recognising photographs as belonging or not belonging to specific photographic categories. I examine the standard, variable, and contra-standard aesthetic property types suggested by Kendall Walton, and I argue that this system of properties helps us clarify category recognition in case of photographic works as well. I suggest that this recognition is an often-neglected first step in interpreting and appreciating photographs. On the basis of the property types considered I provide some examples for how their careful examination may focus and enrich the interpretation and appreciation of photographic works.

1. Introduction

In his “Categories of Art”¹ Kendall Walton argues that at least some socio-historical contextual information, and at least some knowledge about the intention of the artist are relevant, and even necessary for interpreting and appreciating artworks. This argument was presented in the context of the intentional fallacy debate.² In this paper I consider his arguments, but my primary concern here is not to examine arguments from the point of view of the intentional fallacy debate. I will be interested in how the aesthetic property typology suggested by Walton sheds some light on the processes of interpreting and evaluating photographs.

Concentrating on music and the visual arts Walton first asks us to consider if non-perceptible properties may be regarded to be aesthetically relevant. Danto’s arguments³ about this issue easily come to our mind today,

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¹ Walton, 1970.

² See Beardsley 1958, 1982, for instance.

³ Danto, 1981.

but here we will be interested in Walton's compatible position and framework. He suggests that we need to distinguish three types of aesthetic properties: standard, variable, and contra-standard properties. These properties are properties recognised *by us*, that is, they are based on our knowledge about the artworks in question in the specific socio-historical context of our artworld. The same property may be standard in one context but variable in another. An important question is how to account for what happens when the properties recognised by us place the work in a category that is different from the one intended by the artist and recognised by the artworld in which the work was originally produced and presented.⁴

2. Standard, Variable, and Contra-Standard Properties

According to Walton standard properties are the ones that establish the artwork in a given category *for us* (in the socio-historical context of our artworld). On the one hand, this means that we perceive and recognise the work to belong to the category by virtue of perceiving and recognising properties that are standard properties of the category. On the other hand, the lack of a standard property tends to disqualify the work from the given category. For instance, flatness (disregarding the thickness of the paint) and motionlessness are standard categories of paintings. If we perceive three-dimensionality, then we tend to categorise or re-categorise the work as a relief or a sculpture. If we perceive motion, then we tend to categorise or re-categorise the work as animation. Flatness and motionlessness are also standard properties of photographs. Diverging from flatness immediately leads to expressions like "experimental", "conceptual", and the like, and introducing motion means that we re-categorise the work as film or video (or any other kind of photographic moving image).

Variable properties are the ones that are irrelevant from the point of view of belonging or not belonging to a given category. The presence or absence of particular shapes or colours in a painting does not influence the perception and recognition of the work to belong to the category of

⁴ Considering this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. On the role of the artworld in recognition and interpretation see Danto, 1964; Dickie, 1983, for instance.

painting. It is possible, however, that the presence or absence of particular shapes and colours helps us perceive and recognise art historical periods, movements, styles, etc. What is a variable property with respect to one category (e.g. painting) may be a standard or contra-standard (see below) property with respect to another category (e.g. Cubism). Specific types or styles of shapes are certainly not standard categories of paintings, but they are the ones that make us recognise Cubist paintings, for instance.

Contra-standard properties tend to (but as we will see, do not necessarily) disqualify a work from a given category. Artworks may have contra-standard properties in two ways. The lack of a standard property and the presence of a contra-standard feature may both qualify as having a contra-standard property. If flatness is a standard property of paintings for us, then the presence of a three-dimensional object in a painting is a contra-standard property. If having colours (other than black, white, and the shades of grey) is a standard property of paintings (for us), then a black and white painting (having only black, white, and the shades of grey) will be perceived and recognised as having a contra-standard property. If linear narration is a standard property of novels (in a specific art historical context), then a work with a nonlinear narrative has a contra-standard property that at least raises the question of its perception and recognition in the category.

The conscious and deliberate use of contra-standard properties has been an artistic tool for many. Individual artists and movements have often relied on the shock value or provocative artistic communicative effect of contra-standard properties for voicing their disagreement about previously established “rules” (that established and often prescribed what was standard, variable and contra-standard). This has often been one powerful way of changing the received perception, recognition, and interpretation of artworks. (In his “Historical Narratives and the Philosophy of Art”⁵ Noël Carroll provides an excellent account of the processes of questioning and renewing previous sets of artistic standards in various art forms.) Monochrome paintings in black and white, for example, communicate specific meanings; black and white monochromaticity is recognised and interpreted against the background of the general and age-old standard of us-

⁵ Carroll, 1993.

ing a variety of colours in paintings. The “moving paintings” in the magical fantasy world of Harry Potter rely on the very idea that in a magical fantasy world (as opposed to our real world), paintings may have properties that are contra-standard in the real world. In our world motion would disqualify a work from the category of painting (we would most likely re-categorise the work as animation), but in Harry Potter’s world moving paintings are just everyday pieces of furniture.

3. Property Types in Photography

I think that this framework for the three types of properties is highly useful for accounting for the processes of interpreting and appreciating photographs. The reason for this is that (most likely for historical reasons) it is usually assumed that perception and recognition in a given photographic category is evident and uncontested. This however, may not be the case. Although there are some categories where the standards for the category are clear and known (or even explicitly stated in written documents), but in other cases we only have some vague ideas about the categories and their boundaries. For instance, in photojournalism and wild life photography the prohibition of manipulation (of pictorial content) and staging is well known. There is hardly a month passing by without an international scandal about some kind of violation of these rules. On the other hand, we are less certain about standards when it comes to fashion photography, street photography, landscape, etc. We might be especially puzzled about standards in fine art photography.

I suggest that with the help of the aforementioned framework of artistic property types we can better account for the perception and recognition of various (artistic and non-artistic) photography categories as well. Let us first consider black and white photography, and how the property of being black and white influences category perception, recognition and in turn interpretation and appreciation. Then we will examine a specific subgenre of staged fine art photography and conceptual photography.

3.1. *Two Categories of Black and White Photography*

I think that in case of black and white photography first we need to consider *when* the photograph in question was taken, and this example will highlight how important this piece of (socio-historical or art historical) information is.

Although the technology for colour photography had been available decades earlier, for economic and technological reasons colour photography only became widely available and used in the seventies of the 20th century. Before that time, black and white was the standard. This means that in case of a photograph taken in 1953, for instance, the property of being black and white is taken as a standard property, and hence *the choice of black and white* is not the subject of specific aesthetic interpretation and evaluation. We think that the photographer used black and white film simply because that was the technology available to her.

On the other hand, by 2016 (analogue and digital) colour technology has been widely available for several decades. Colour in photography was established as a standard long ago. Opting for the now contra-standard property of black and white today carries meaning; the choice is to be noticed, and the contra-standard is to be interpreted and evaluated. What was not the subject of interpretation and evaluation sixty years ago became the subject of such interpretation and evaluation by now, because of the shift in what is standard and contra-standard *for us*. In other words, the property of being black and white carries no more meaning than simply being the standard in case of a photography taken in 1953, while today the property of being black and white is the result of a conscious artistic (photographic) choice that prompts interpretation.

3.2. *Staging the Everyday*

Another example for the importance of property types is the specific kind of staged fine art photography that recreates everyday scenes and situations as if they were stills from a movie.⁶ In case of such scenes and situations the standard photographic property would be that the photo-

⁶ Gregory Crewdson created a subgenre in fine art photography on the basis of this idea.

graph captures a spontaneous everyday moment. The (visually) recognisable staged recreation, however, results in a non-standard photographic property that will be the subject of interpretation and evaluation, as opposed to spontaneous “captured” shots (or as opposed to staged fashion photographs, for instance). The staged nature of the photograph is highly relevant here as an artistic property, while staging in other photographic genre categories (where it is standard) is not the subject of specific interpretation and evaluation.

3.3. *Conceptual Photography*

Finally, I would like to examine a specific kind of practice that is often called “conceptual photography”. The general (creative industries and theoretical) use of the term is not very precise, but we can easily clarify how we might use it in photography and art theory contexts. On the one hand, the term is often used to refer to any photographic practice that involves pronounced or profound ideas about the production and/or the communicative content of the photographs. For instance, staged fine art photography (mentioned above as well) is sometimes included in the category of conceptual photography, simply because it often involves such pronounced or profound ideas. On the other hand, the more specific (and theoretically more precise) use of the term refers only to *conceptual art* that happen to use photography as a medium. Kosuth’s ‘*Titled (Art as Idea as Idea)*’ [Water] is a paradigmatic example of this type of work. The line between the two categories might be thin indeed in some cases, but I think that it has been correctly pointed out by many that the production, interpretation and evaluation processes of conceptual art radically differ from the processes involved in traditional fine art (including traditional fine art photography). I use the term “conceptual photography” here in this more specific theoretical sense, referring only to conceptual art using photography as a medium. My remarks are about this practice, and not about staged or other fine art photography with pronounced or profound ideas about the production and/or the communicative content of the works.⁷ Let me further explain this important distinction.

Conceptual art is often regarded as a new art form that is quite distinct

⁷ On conceptual photography see Bátori, 2013, 2014.

from the traditional art forms, such as sculpture or painting. Therefore, recognizing, interpreting, and appreciating works of conceptual art might also be thought to diverge radically from the practices of recognition, interpretation, and appreciation of former, traditional forms of art. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens, for instance, argue that the medium of conceptual art is ideas, while the chosen physical medium is merely the means of communicating the ideas of the artist.⁸ In other words, as Derek Matravers suggests, works of conceptual art are dematerialized; the physical medium is not the determining, or even a relevant factor in understanding, interpreting, and appreciating these works.⁹ According to another formulation of this view by Robert Hopkins, the very conception of a conceptual work of art is itself sufficient for determining its artistic properties, as opposed to works belonging to other art forms, where the execution of the work is also necessary for determining its artistic properties. Hopkins further argues that conceptual art diverges from other art forms by first setting up, and then frustrating our expectation of sensory fulfilment. That is, the perceptible properties of the work are not the aesthetically relevant ones, and our traditional interpretative methods break down if we try to understand and appreciate works of conceptual art by appreciating their perceptible properties.¹⁰

Accordingly, by “traditional fine art photography” I mean photographic artworks that cannot be understood, interpreted and appreciated without studying their visual (photographic) properties. By “conceptual photography” I mean artworks that are easily recognized as belonging to the category of conceptual art, merely using the medium of photography. An important aspect of this recognition and categorization is that we can effectively describe conceptual works with words. Consider, for instance, that the conceptual content of Kosuth’s work can be easily described with words, and the specific visual properties of the dictionary entry are quite accidental; many other dictionary entries could have served just as well as the raw material for the work.

Returning now to Walton’s terminology of property types, we can easily see that in case of a photographic work it is a *highly contra-standard* fea-

⁸ See Goldie and Schellekens, 2010, for instance.

⁹ See Matravers, 2007 and Schellekens, 2007 for arguments about dematerialization.

¹⁰ Hopkins, 2007, pp. 58–61.

ture that the recognition, interpretation and appreciation processes of the work *do not necessarily involve* studying their visual (photographic) properties. I propose that it is such a radical contra-standard feature that conceptual photography *is not a photographic practice* at all; it is a conceptual art practice that happens to use the medium of photography. I suggest that studying the visual (photographic) properties is a necessary component of recognising, interpreting and evaluating traditional (non-conceptual) photographic works.

On the basis of these considerations we can identify a very practical problem concerning the practice that works of conceptual art (that use photography merely as their medium) often appear in photography exhibitions *together with* traditional fine art photographic works (for instance, with staged fine art photographs). Many photographers create works in both categories; some of their photographs are traditional fine art photographic works, while others are conceptual works using photography merely as their medium. As a result, photographers themselves often do not draw a clear distinction between conceptual art and traditional fine art photography practices. Because of this, they usually do not find it problematic either, when the two different types of works are mixed and presented together in exhibitions, for instance. However, I think that there is a problem with exhibiting together works belonging to these two distinct categories. Let me explain.

I suggest that conceptual photographs are to be critically distinguished from traditional fine art photographs that cannot be interpreted, evaluated, and appreciated without studying their visual (photographic) properties. When viewers see a body of works (an exhibition or publication, for instance) consisting of both types of photographs they easily assume that the recognition, interpretation and appreciation processes with which the works are to be approached are the same, since they all *appear to be* fine art photographs in the same context (exhibition, publication, etc.). The recognition of conceptual photography as such is a step that is very easily missed in this situation. However, trying to use the same type of interpretive strategies for conceptual photographs that we use for understanding and appreciating traditional fine art photographs would surely mean misunderstanding the conceptual works.

4. Conclusion

I maintain that conceptual photographs do not belong to the category (genre or subgenre) of fine art photography (which is always to be *looked at*, and never sufficient to be *described with words*). As I argued above, if studying its visual (photographic) properties is not a standard (and necessary) requirement for recognising, interpreting and evaluating the work, then (because of this contra-standard interpretative practice) it is not a photographic work, but rather, it is a conceptual work that merely uses the medium of photography. Photography galleries that exhibit traditional fine art photographs and conceptual works in the same exhibitions make a pronounced category mistake, confusing, instead of assisting interpretive and appreciative practices.

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Bottura's "Not-roast Guinea fowl". Three Arguments Supporting the Artistic Status of Cuisine

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ABSTRACT. In recent times, the debate surrounding the aesthetic status of food has gained increasing attention. While cuisine certainly produces an aesthetic experience, its possibility of constituting a genuine form of art is contested from several directions. In this short paper I advocate in favour of the possibility for food to hold an artistic status under certain conditions. Nonetheless, due to the length and the complexity of this topic I will not pursue abstract universal principles by means of general discourses. Instead, I will consider a single dish and elaborate the reasons for which it should be considered, on par with great paintings, sculptures or musical compositions, a genuine artwork. The considered dish is "Not-roast Guinea fowl" by Massimo Bottura, a renowned chef who led his restaurant, Osteria Francescana, to first place in the world's best restaurants list proposed by the British magazine *Restaurant*.

Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food. (Hippocrates)

In this paper I will present a single dish, "Not-roast Guinea fowl" by the chef Massimo Bottura, advocating that its status is the same as that of a genuine work of art. This claim has a double implication: in the first place, it asks for a global re-evaluation of the status of cuisine and the act of tasting in the sphere of aesthetics. Too often, in the Western philosophical tradition, the pleasures of the table and the craft (or the art?) of cooking have been dismissed as inferior diversions, not worthy of conceptual analysis or even a debased pursuit since intrinsically tied to the most primitive beastly instincts.

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A second implication is a partial *mise en question* of the limits and the nature of works of art in general. May the borders of art's definition stretch far enough to include only the highest cuisine or should they favour a more inclusive definition of art?

Our answer to this question partly depends upon our ethical attitude towards cuisine and food. There are, in fact, no contemporary moral philosophers who blame Giotto for having gilded his *Ognissanti Madonna* (1310) with boar-bone or ox-bone burnishes, and none who blame Michelangelo for having used rabbit-skin glue for coating his paintings, or other ancient or recent artists for having used such devices or other animal-based (rabbit, goat, marten, squirrel...) tools.

Neither is anyone criticizing those who enjoy these artists' works at the Uffizi Museum or anywhere else. Yet, people who enjoy the cuisine of Michelin-starred non-vegetarian restaurants (or non-vegetarian restaurants in general) are often criticized.

To what extent are we willing to sacrifice our primary need for aesthetic satisfaction? And in the case where we are completely disposed to do so, would it be ethically justifiable to enjoy a museum in which ancient or contemporary works are created by means of animal-based components or tools? Should we not, driven by the inflexible coherence of any genuine ethical thinking, ask as soon as we enter a museum whether any of the artworks are prepared by means of animal-based components or tools, and thus abstain from entering, if that is the case?

If we are to remain ethically consistent, we should not be allowed, in the case of ancient artworks, to appeal to the fact that the rabbits used to make glue-coating for Michelangelo's masterpieces are long dead. There is no ethical difference between a rabbit that died five hundred years ago for painting-purposes, and a rabbit put to death five hours ago for other purposes: Bottura's not-roast guineafowls will be five hundred years dead in five hundred years.

For the moment I will leave aside these ethical questions: I simply wish to make a case for the potential relevance of presenting a dish as an artwork, and more generally for presenting cuisine as a form of art, in relation to our daily behaviour and our fundamental ethical assumptions.

In particular, this paper focuses on presenting a single dish as an artwork rather than elucidating a general theory of art in relation to the act of

cooking. The latter issue could only be properly addressed at book-length. Rather, I consider a single dish, namely Bottura's "Not-roast Guineafowl", and analyze its aesthetic implications to show its substantial affinity with the status of the so-called "canonic" or "major" artworks.

The present analysis takes into account three potential objections and three corresponding supportive arguments in relation to the artistic status of Bottura's "Not-roast Guineafowl". The first section of the paper is thus devoted to a brief introduction of the historical Western view on cuisine and the traditionally inherent lack of regard and philosophical consideration.

Next, Bottura's "Not-roast Guineafowl", is presented and described by considering its composition, preparation, and its position within the context of the gastronomic tradition of the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna.

Following this presentation, I contrast the traditional disregard of cuisine which characterizes Western philosophy by offering three arguments supporting the aesthetic and artistic relevance of Bottura's "Not-roast Guineafowl" (and, by extension, of similar and analogous creations).

1. *Contemptus Cibi*: Classical Views on Cuisine and Food in Western Philosophy

The art and craft of cuisine, unavoidably related to the realm of sensuous pleasures, has suffered in the history of Western philosophy from the associated controversial reputation. Already in Plato's *Phaedo*, bodily pleasures are an obstacle on the way to true knowledge.¹ In the *Republic* it is suggested that a rich and varied diet would be adequate to pigs, rather than humans.² In the *Hippias Major*, the notion of beauty is presented as exclusively inherent to the senses of seeing and hearing.³

A better fortune for cuisine was not to arrive with the coming of Christianity. Gluttony is indicated as one of the Seven Deadly Sins, but it does not simply consist in exceeding the necessary quantity of food: the sin of gluttony is committed whenever one seeks delicacies and good quality

¹ Plato, *Phaedo*, 64c-67d.

² Plato, *Republic*, 372.

³ Plato, *Hippias Major*, 297e-298a

food to gratify the “vile sense of taste”.⁴ But also whenever one stimulates the palate with overly elaborated recipes. In the Bible, the sons of Eli, high priest of Shiloh, are cursed to death for having cooked the sacrificial meat in a more sophisticated manner.⁵ Even an enthusiastic attitude towards food is a sufficient reason to merit divine punishment. An overly desirous attitude to food could even represent the worst of all types of gluttony because of its unwholesomeness, since “it is not the food, but the desire that is in fault”.⁶

With modern philosophy, the moral contempt towards the sphere of taste and cuisine diminishes, being gradually replaced by intellectual reasons. According to Kant, for instance, any gustatory experience fails to be genuinely aesthetic; in fact, any authentic aesthetic experience must be disinterested, contemplative and reflective.⁷ In the view of the Prussian philosopher, the pleasure of taste is unworthy of philosophical consideration, not only because the drive to eat is not a disinterested one, but also because it is incapable of inducing contemplation or reflection which are, in Kantian aesthetics, essential conditions of the genuine aesthetic experience.⁸

Remaining in the domain of modern German philosophy, it is relevant that even Hegel, preserving and conveying the Platonic and Judeo-Christian mark on the history of Western philosophy, dismisses bodily senses as lower mediums and therefore evaluates the sense of taste and cuisine as unworthy of artistic status, since their being unavoidably trapped in the material dimension, as opposed to those “genuine” or “true” arts, which tend to the “spirit”.⁹ Hegelian aesthetics is conditioned by the fundamental metaphysical prejudice according to which the physical is always defective in respect to the spiritual.¹⁰ On this ground, Hegel also disqual-

⁴ Orby Shipley, *A Theory About Sin* (London: Macmillan, 1875), 268-278.

⁵ 1 Samuel, 2:12-36.

⁶ Gregory the Great, *Magna Moralia*, Book XXX, 60.

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000: §1-5.

⁸ I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, VII.

⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Introduction to Aesthetics* (1820). New York: Oxford University Press, 1977: pp.38-9.

¹⁰ And which in turn, depends by the contestable metaphysical assumption that a distinction between “matter” and “spirit”, whatever it means, does make any sense at all.

ifies perishable objects from the domain of art, since lasting artworks are required to offer a glimpse of the incorruptible and eternal reality lying beyond the world of deceptive and transient phenomena.¹¹

This particular thesis, also known with the acronym CET (Consumption Exclusion Thesis), does not look very attractive nowadays, within a historical period in which most of philosophers (and most people) would agree that performances and temporary installations, for instances, can be effective artworks.¹² The material persistence of an object does not necessarily make it “more artistic”, nor is the aesthetic experience derived by, for instance, observing a painting necessarily more intense than the one originating from watching a performance.

On the opposite, the Kantian objection inherent to the impossibility for the sense of taste to raise complex reflections and feelings, to defer to a higher degree of contemplative thinking, to vehiculate or represent articulate meanings still persists in the contemporary debate on the status of cuisine and on its possibility to be addressed as a form of art. More generally, the Western tradition of thinking in its entirety suggests that gustatory experience cannot offer a reflective aesthetic encounter.

It is undeniable that cuisine, if compared for instance to figurative arts and literature, does not possess an equivalent representational power, neither can it provide accurate and complex descriptions of reality. What is argued in the following pages is that, although cuisine cannot be equated to other “traditional” or “major” arts on the basis of transmitting or elaborating a meaningful configuration of concepts, there are particular cases (exemplified by Bottura’s “Not-roast Guinea fowl”) in which a dish can actually raise a contemplative and reflective experience rightfully belonging to the sphere of aesthetic judgment.

2. Bottura’s “Not-roast Guinea fowl”: Ideation, Creation, Composition and First Argument

“Not-roast Guinea fowl” is a culinary ideation of Massimo Bottura. A renowned Italian chef who recently led his restaurant, Osteria Francescana,

¹¹ Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999: p.62.

¹² For instance, Christo’s landscape art or Kaprow’s performances.

in the city of Modena, to first place in the world's best restaurants list proposed by the British magazine *Restaurant*. The classification is widely considered an important source for determining the best fine dining world-wide. It is published yearly and presents the results of a poll voted on by international and highly esteemed chefs, food critics, restaurateurs and gourmands.

For several years, "Not-roast Guineafowl" has been among the classics in the menu of Osteria Francescana. The dish is inspired by a traditional dish of the Emilia-Romagna region, in which the restaurant is situated. The "original" dish would be the "roast Guineafowl".

Guinea fowl are native to the African continent and were introduced to Italy most likely by the Romans, becoming a relatively common dish especially in Northern Italy, mainly due to their adaptability and the limited costs required for their breeding. Particularly appreciated by the Langobards, the guinea fowl, conveniently roasted, later became a classic Christmas dish, the appropriate gastronomic complement of a festive occasion. The rustic yet dainty flavour of roast guinea fowl was then an infrequent delight to the low and middle class' palate.¹³

This classic recipe from the Emilia-Romagna gastronomic tradition is taken by Bottura in a cultural and historical perspective, and completely overturned to include chemical processes such as distillation in order to create a new work that proposes an audacious aesthetic reinterpretation of traditional flavours.

Before proceeding with my analysis, I must briefly expound on Bottura's recipe. The cooking of guinea fowl is optimized by using the entire animal. The thighs are stuffed with sauté giblets and laid on oil-flavoured spinach; the drumsticks are lacquered with balsamic vinegar and posed on a thick guinea fowl broth; the roast breast on a mash tun of potatoes and truffle; the skin is caramelized and combined with chocolate liver paté and toasted bread ice cream.

To bring the dish to completion, the whole composition is sprayed with a distillate obtained by filtering a blended mixture of toasted guinea fowl bones and herbs in a chemical distiller. This final passage is conceived,

¹³ This dish is also reported in Pellegrino Artusi's *La Scienza in Cucina e l'Arte di Mangiar Bene*, a masterpiece among cookbooks of all times.

as the chef claims, for the purpose of producing a “sensation of roast guineafowl”, an ephemeral impression which “perfumes the table with love, family, memories”.¹⁴

On the basis of the foregoing, I want to contest the common assumption that a gustatory experience is not able to raise contemplative or reflective judgments of serious aesthetic relevance. Contrarily, I argue that Bottura’s “Not-roast Guinea-fowl”, is able to provoke at least three different kinds of contemplative or reflective judgments: an objective judgment, inherent to the acknowledgment of the recipe’s position within the historical tradition of Emilia-Romagna’s gastronomy; a subjective judgment, inherent to one’s own personal memories and feelings; an inter-subjective judgment, concerning the perception of this recipe as a sophisticated conceptual and practical re-elaboration of a shared culinary heritage.

It is indeed not the first time that someone challenges what I characterized as the “Kantian objection”. The lawyer, politician and gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin presented in his *Physiology of Taste* a tripartite model of gustatory experiences, indeed more elaborated than Kant’s analysis:

The *direct* sensation is the first one felt, produced from the immediate operations of the organs of the mouth, while the body under consideration is still on the forepart of the tongue.

The *complete* sensation is the one made up of this first perception plus the impression which arises when the food leaves its original position, passes to the back of the mouth, and attacks the whole organ with its taste and its aroma.

Finally, the *reflective* sensation is the opinion which one’s spirit forms from the impressions which have been transmitted to it by the mouth.¹⁵

Nonetheless, in his *magnum opus* Brillat-Savarin refers mostly to subjective impressions inherent to the sphere of taste alone. For instance, he continues the passage with an oenological remark:

¹⁴ As specified in an online interview available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHWUKH_QLM> [Accessed last time on October 25th 2016].

¹⁵ Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste* (1825). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978: p.40.

While the wine is in the mouth one is agreeably but not completely appreciative of it; it is not until the moment when he has finished swallowing it that a man can truly taste, consider, and discover the bouquet peculiar to each variety; and there must still be a little lapse of time before a real connoisseur can say, "It is good, or passable, or bad".

And yet, tasting Bottura's "Not-roast Guinea fowl" is also able to induce an objective comprehension of the evolution of gastronomy in the Emilia-Romagna region; knowing the historical context of this recipe, which is lurking in the background, it is possible to perceive this dish not only as a refined organoleptic combination, but also as a conceptual re-interpretation of a century's old tradition.

From an intellectual point of view, the aspects of this recipe show an intellectual effort which is far beyond the simple process of mixing ingredients or converting raw meat into cooked meat. It required working with concepts in addition to working with ingredients.

I would like to attempt a pictorial comparison, starting from the famous statement by Pablo Picasso: "It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child". It is not only this statement, but even Picasso's entire mature production that is only understandable in historical terms. The systematic fragmentation of reality in a pulsating profusion of geometrical volumes acquires a wider and complete sense only in respect to Western history of art and its research for a veracious representation of beauty by means of symmetrical forms and harmonious proportions, whereof Raphael constitutes one among other major exponents.

At the same time, Bottura's "not-roast Guinea fowl" is concretely historicized within Emilian cuisine, both differing from it and deferring to it through an aesthetic experience which implies more than simple *aisthesis*.

There is also a second kind of reflective judgment that this recipe evokes, a subjective judgment concerning those partially inexpressible memories and feelings intrinsically tied to one's own history. The episode of Proust's *madeleine* is well known. The writer tastes a *madeleine*, a small cake typical of the French Lorraine region, and suddenly the past, with its burden of lost memories, materializes:

Once I had recognized the taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked

in her decoction of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, all from my cup of tea.¹⁶

It is the taste of *madeleine* which provokes this sudden resurfacing of time within the field of consciousness ("The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it").¹⁷ Similarly, the taste of "Not-roast Guinea-fowl" heralds concealed memories, which are awaiting a specific provocation to recover their consistency. In my case, for instance, childhood memories of Sunday meals at my grandmother's farmstead, mostly in the joyful Christmas period, experiencing an eccentric mixture of palatal beatitude and sharp nostalgia.

In this regard, John Dewey's aesthetic theory as it is expressed in *Art as Experience* is of particular interest. According to Dewey, the real work of art consists in its effect within ordinary experience, and the highest form of experience operates towards a positive engagement of the self with the

¹⁶ Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past* (1928). Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2006, p.63.

¹⁷ *Idem, ibidem.*

world and their progressive and positive reunification. This is the beginning of art in Dewey's view.¹⁸

Furthermore,

An experience has a unity that gives it its name, *that* meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship. The existence of this unity is constituted by a single *quality* that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. [...] Art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and underdoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience.¹⁹

Thus, the greatest merit of artworks is the reunion of impressions, will and instinct following the discriminating action of consciousness. In this sense, few interactions are more successful than a pleasant meal. Whenever eating, the aesthetic involvement is undoubtedly intimate, in physical terms even more so than when admiring a painting or listening to a symphony.

All of the above are good reasons for acknowledging how Bottura's dish not only arouses subjective feelings, memories and judgments, but even that these feelings, memories and judgments do possess profound aesthetic relevance.

Furthermore, there is a third kind of contemplative judgement that "Not-roast Guineafowl" can induce in its tasters. A judgement where the dish is perceived as a sophisticated re-elaboration of the collective gastronomic heritage to which the dish belongs. If those enjoying the creation do possess a reasonable knowledge of Emilia-Romagna's culinary traditions, it will not be difficult for them to recognize "Not-roast Guineafowl" as an artwork whose objective collocation within a specific gastronomic context with subjective aesthetic features that refer to its inclusion in a dynamic inter-subjective cultural heritage.

¹⁸ John Dewey, "The Live Creature" in *Art as Experience* (1934). New York: Putnam.

¹⁹ J. Dewey, "Having an Experience", *ibidem*.

3. Art as Technique and Self-expression: Second and Third Arguments

So far, I have argued in favour of considering “Not-roast Guineafowl” as a genuine work of art showing its capacity to inspire contemplative and reflective judgments of three different kinds: subjective, objective and inter-subjective.

In this section, I develop two additional short arguments, the former inherent to the technique of the dish and the latter inherent to the possibility of its being “read” as a concrete expression of the chef’s ideas, values and emotions.

In the first place, it is worthwhile to carry out a short digression on the term “art”, whose original meaning both in Latin, *ars*, and in Greek *techne* indicated a practical ability or craftsmanship, a profession or expertise rather than, as it is considered today, an object of reflection and contemplation. Certainly, the semantic ambiguity of the term has led to several problems, since in today’s ordinary language we speak of an “art of painting”, “art of music”, but also about “art of living” and “art of seduction”.

Nonetheless, I believe semantic richness to be a potential resource rather than an obstacle; the semantic displacement of the term reveals an overall tendency within the history of Western philosophy, i.e. an axiological supremacy of the ethereal over the material, of the Platonic *idea* over the raw *byle*, of the soul over the body in Christian theology, and so forth.

From this point of view, the original meaning of art as craftsmanship or profession would be easily applicable to the case of cuisine, not just because common sense suggests that the role of a chef is closer to a professional designation as opposed to the role of a painter, despite the fact that becoming a great chef, as with becoming a great painter, demands numerous years, often decades of tireless dedication and intense effort.

The difficulty inherent to the vocation of the chef (as it happens with the case of painters, musicians and others) is that the art of cooking truly requires an art in the etymological sense, a *techne*, that comes as a natural result of practice and training, to be combined with innate talent and inexplicable intuition.

Returning to our “Not-roast Guineafowl”, we can note that this dish includes five different cooking methods (breast, thigh, drumstick, skin and the bones to be later distilled), six different preparations (spinach, broth, paté, ice cream, mash tun, distillation), with several different tools and devices required for an intrinsically complex preparation, and finally, one needs rigor, precision and a refined aesthetic sense for the assembly.

In other words, cooking a perfect “Not-roast Guineafowl” is not merely the result of mechanical execution alone, exactly as the good score of a symphony alone will not prevent a poor orchestra from a poor interpretation. An excellent mastery of cooking techniques is an essential prerequisite for the realization of this dish, exactly as an excellent mastery of the instrument is indispensable for the rendition of a symphony.

We can now ask, on which basis should the cooking techniques be considered less artistic, or less difficult, than the practice of solfège, or mixing colours, or chiseling marble? I am certainly not stating that any form of art necessarily needs particular technical skills to be realized (think of Duchamp’s Urinal; or, to the plain cuts in Fontana’s provoking canvasses). Yet, is there not any artistic merit in developing highly refined techniques and in the fact of using them in order to produce aesthetic artefacts?

Whether or not we accept to recover the full etymological sense of the term “art”, we must certainly admit that the stunning manifestation of technical virtuosity revealed in “Not-roast Guineafowl” is a powerful argument supporting its artistic status. Furthermore, as in the case of other forms of art, the technical execution constitutes a reliable basis for an objective (or a not-completely-subjective) evaluation, thus challenging the generalist *adagio* “anything goes” argument.

A third and final argument in favour of the thesis that “Not-roast Guineafowl” deserves recognition as a genuine work of art mainly derives from the relationship between the dish and its creator. Like a great number of artworks (for example, paintings) “Not-roast Guineafowl” maintains a twofold connection with its author: an emotional connection as the expression of his creativity and personality, perhaps even of his memories and emotions, and a conceptual connection as the result of an astute process of ideation and experimentation.

As it is universally known, the relationship between author and work is crucial in Romantic aesthetics, since Romantic thinkers considered any

genuine work of art as an autonomous object produced by an individual genius, expressing a faultless synthesis of matter and spirit, immanence and transcendence, subjective and objective truth.²⁰

Without necessarily maintaining this outdated set of dichotomies, we can nevertheless maintain that an expressive relation between creator and creation can account for a genuine aesthetic experience. The notion that some sort of veritable self-expression is at work in the creation of artworks is clearly formulated, among others, by Collingwood: “The artist’s business is to express emotions; and the only emotions he can express are those which he feels, namely his own”.²¹

From this point of view, “Not-roast Guineafowl” is an authentic self-expression of Massimo Bottura’s personal idea of cuisine and his creative flair, as well as an expression of the flavours of his home region that he acknowledged, interiorized and creatively re-elaborated.²²

In this sense, “Not-roast Guineafowl” is obviously a material artefact expressing a subjective taste and experience, but it is also an aesthetic step towards an inter-subjective dialogue based on the gastronomic tradition of Emilia-Romagna, on its common reception, on its possible evolution, and on the shared heritage of memories and feelings evoked by the sense of taste within a given community. Thus, the artist “undertakes his artistic labour not as a personal effort on his own private behalf, but as a public labour on behalf of the community to which he belongs”.²³

4. Conclusion

In this short paper I have argued that a specific creation of the chef Massimo Bottura is in principle comparable to several traditional “major” artworks and therefore possesses a genuine artistic status. If so, this supports the thesis that cuisine must be considered, under certain conditions, an authentic form of art rather than a limited instance of craftsmanship.

²⁰ See for instance Bernstein (2003), Tauber (1997).

²¹ Robin George Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (1938). Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.314-5.

²² For a more accurate analysis of the notion of “self-expression”, please see Green (2007).

²³ R.G. Collingwood, *ibidem*, p.126.

The arguments I considered in favour of my hypothesis are: in the first place, that “Not-roast Guineafowl” is able to arouse not only sensuous pleasure and feelings, but also reflective and contemplative judgments of three kind: objective, inherent to the history of Italian cuisine; subjective, inherent to one’s own memories and emotions; inter-subjective, concerning the awareness of the recipe’s inclusion within the shared cultural and culinary heritage of a given community.

In the second place, the complexity of the preparation of “Not-roast Guineafowl” requires an outstanding technical ability. The mastery of a wide set of skills and techniques, even if they do not on their own prove the artistic value of the dish, they nevertheless are skills that are characteristic of a great number of artistic practices.

In the third place, the recipe is a concrete self-expression of the chef’s intention, philosophy of cuisine, feelings, technical skills, creativity and personality. Since self-expression is a relevant component in the process of art-making, and “Not-roast Guineafowl” constitutes a veritable and virtuous self-expression, it would not be excessive to consider it a work of art.

More generally, I believe the frequent reluctance to recognize cuisine as a possible form of art to be a consequence of a long tradition of thought in which the transcendent was esteemed more than the immanent, the ethereal more than the material, the intellectual more than the sensuous, the *idea* more than the *byle*.

In effect, cuisine potentially shares several characteristics with other “major” forms of art, exactly as “Not-roast Guineafowl” does with other “major” artworks. Yet, the ephemeral nature of dishes and the low status of food, traditionally associated with the coarse, vulgar aspects of reality, still prevents the public from a necessary re-evaluation of cuisine as a potential form of art.

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Artistic Astronomical Photographs and Representation

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ABSTRACT. The development of astronomical photography has raised many interesting epistemological, metaphysical and ethical questions as well as questions in aesthetics. One such question concerns the nature of the aesthetic properties possessed by these photographs and in this paper I concentrate on one such property, namely representation. That modern, 'artistic astronomical photographs' are representational cannot be disputed but whether this is an *aesthetic* property is open to question. In this paper I show that it *is* an aesthetic property, and compare it with the analogous property of paintings on the one hand and 'traditional artistic photographs' on the other. I explain that what makes representation an aesthetic property of a painting is the artist's intentional control over the fine detail, whereas in the case of traditional artistic photography it is the intentional control over the level of transparency of the fine details. I go on to explain that many astronomical subjects are unique because they are *intrinsically* invisible to the naked eye and I outline some of the photographic processes that it is therefore necessary to undertake in order for an artistic astronomical photograph to be produced. I argue that it is in virtue of this that representation as an aesthetic property of artistic astronomical photographs differs significantly from the analogous property of painting and traditional artistic photography.

1. Introduction

There has been some discussion of astronomical photography in the aesthetics literature but, for the most part, it has concentrated on photographs taken by professional scientific observatories such as the Hubble Space Telescope.¹ The ultimate purpose of these observatories is to capture data for scientific research and the spectacular photographs that have

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¹ The most comprehensive discussion is Kessler (2012).

been released for public consumption are really just a bi-product of this (Lynch and Edgerton, 1996, pp. 120-123). For aesthetic effect the colours in some of these photographs are represented arbitrarily and, in many cases, data from wavelengths beyond the visible range are assimilated. This has led to the charge that they are just ‘pretty pictures’ (Snider, 2011, p. 3). Consequently, the philosophical discussion of such photographs has tended to view their aesthetic worth as secondary to the scientific value inherent in them. As they are a bi-product of scientific data I call these sorts of astronomical photographs ‘scientific astronomical photographs’. However, what these discussions have overlooked is the fact that, over the last ten years, modern digital technology has progressed to such an extent that astronomical photographs with aesthetic properties can now be taken by non-scientists using consumer grade cameras and optics often similar to those used in traditional artistic photography (Chadwick and Cooper, 2011). Furthermore, these photographs are not produced for scientific reasons but are “purposefully made in order to capture, engage and sustain aesthetic experience” (Friday, 2002, p. 33). It is for this reason that I call such photographs ‘artistic astronomical photographs’. In this paper I restrict the discussion to these sorts of astronomical photographs so that a fair comparison can be made with traditional artistic photographs that are likewise made for aesthetic and not scientific reasons. I do not, however, include ‘nightscapes’ in this discussion. Although these contain an astronomical element, usually the Milky Way, they are more akin to landscape photographs as an essential element to their aesthetic success is the terrestrial foreground.² The subjects of the sorts of artistic astronomical photographs that I wish to discuss are purely astronomical and include nebulae, star clusters and galaxies. These are the most interesting from a philosophical point of view because they are largely devoid of things we experience in everyday life that are usually the subjects of traditional artistic photography. I must add that this paper concentrates solely on digital photography, partly because digital has largely superseded film in most realms of photography but, more importantly, it is only by virtue

² The fact that nightscapes do contain astronomical subjects does raise some of the issues discussed in this paper but I will not pursue this here.

of digital technology that artistic astronomical photographs can be taken.³

By aesthetic properties I mean those properties of a work of art that are relevant to the *aesthetic* experience we have when viewing it. These include figuration, expressiveness, form, beauty, grace, style, novelty, balance, the sublime and representation (Friday, 2002, pp. 30). Much can be said about the role that all of these properties play in the aesthetic appreciation of artistic astronomical photographs but in this paper I concentrate on one of them – representation.

2. Representation in Art and Traditional Photography

In order to appreciate the role of representation in artistic astronomical photography I begin by providing a brief outline of the aesthetic nature of representation in non-photographic pictorial art as well as in traditional artistic photography. For simplicity I use painting as an exemplar of non-photographic pictorial art.

2.1. Representational Painting

In general we can say that a painting is representational if it depicts objects in the real (or fictional) world and if we can recognise them in the painting. Some paintings are ultra-representational, such as Chuck Close's "Big Self Portrait" (1967), which could actually be mistaken for a photograph. At the other end of the spectrum lie paintings such as Picasso's "Girl with a Mandolin" (1910), which requires much imagination to recognise the objects it is purported to represent. In some cases the objects represented might only become evident on the discovery of the title of the work.

Representation is not of course *necessary* for aesthetic success. Abstract paintings may not represent anything but can still be aesthetically successful due to the purely visual experience that arises from contemplating the forms, shapes, patterns and colours in the work. However, although representation is not necessarily a property of a painting, we can ask the question: where it *is* present what is it that makes it aesthetically significant?

³ Whilst astronomical photographs taken with film were certainly extremely important scientifically, it is unlikely that most people would claim that they had much *aesthetic* value. For a collection of such photographs see Malin and Murdin (1984).

ant? Jonathan Friday says that representational “paintings...present to the viewer a particular artist’s imaginative representation of real or fictional objects, and the pictorial manifestation of this is often capable of capturing [and sustaining] aesthetic interest” (Friday, 2002, p. 69). He goes on to say that it is the artist’s “control over detail that makes it possible to speak of an aesthetic interest in representation for its own sake” (Friday, 2002, p. 70). With paintings this is particularly apparent as features right down to the level of a single brushstroke are under the direct intentional control of the painter. Consequently, when viewing such a painting, we can ask *why* the painter chose to represent the scene as he did right down to the finest detail, and it is this that makes representation in painting aesthetically significant.

2.2. Traditional Artistic Photography

It cannot be doubted that photographs are representational – there is, after all, a direct causal relationship between what appears in the photograph and the objects that were in front of the camera when the shutter was released. But just because representation is a photographic property does not mean it is aesthetically significant. For example, a ‘selfie’ is representational but we would not necessarily say this is an *aesthetic* property of the photograph, for it might have been taken as an aid to memory and not to sustain aesthetic interest. However, with a traditional artistic photograph, that *has* been taken in order to sustain aesthetic interest, what is it that makes representation an aesthetic property?

In the case of a representational painting it is the intentional control the painter has over the fine detail that makes representation aesthetically significant. But can it be said that a photographer also has intentional control over the fine details found in a resultant photograph? In the case of traditional artistic photography the photographer has control over exposure, aperture, lighting and depth of field. However, it is important to realise that the choices made do not just have a uniform, *global* effect across the resultant photograph, but actually have an intentional effect on the *fine details*. Here are a few examples of the many ways that the photographer can intentionally affect the fine detail: Firstly, by adjusting the depth of field (via altering the aperture) the photographer can produce a

photograph which presents a scene some of which is in focus and some of which is out of focus. Secondly, by using a very short exposure, a moving object can be made to appear static in the resultant photograph. Thirdly, by carefully choosing exposure and lighting the photographer can effectively remove fine detail from the resultant photograph, such as in [FIGURE 1]. It is highly likely that the woman represented in this photograph had some skin blemishes and it surely goes without saying that she had a neck. But by the expert choice of exposure these features have effectively been removed from the resultant photograph. In all three of these the choice of camera settings completely changes the aesthetic qualities of the resultant photograph and, importantly, these changes occur at the level of fine detail and not just globally, across the whole photograph uniformly.



FIGURE 1. Bill Brandt *Nude*, 1952.⁴

So altering the camera settings enables the photographer to represent a scene in a photograph in a way that it would never appear to the naked

⁴ Photo courtesy of the Bill Brandt Archive and the V&A.

eye. And the reason this is possible is because the human eye is not a camera, and the photographic process and the human perceptual system do not function in the same way. When I look at a scene with the naked eye I cannot help but see it as my perceptual system presents it to me. The only thing I have control over is which part of the scene I attend. I cannot consciously appreciate depth of field with the naked eye because, as I move my eyes to examine different parts of the scene, my eyes automatically bring into focus that on which I attend. Similarly, by the dilation or contraction of the pupils, my eyes automatically adjust to ensure I gather the most detail from the part of the scene on which I am focused. The photographer, on the other hand, can intentionally represent the same scene in the photograph in a way that it does *not* appear to the naked eye, and it is this that makes a successful artistic photograph. So, as with the painter, the photographer does have intentional control over the fine details in the work of art they present and this control is dependent upon choices made prior to the shutter being released. (Potential changes that can be made in the processing stage will be discussed later.) As with a painting, when we view a traditional artistic photograph we can ask ‘why this way’ when we examine particular aspects of the scene. So, in this respect, photographs are in fact representational in a similar way to paintings.

However, there is another element to photographic representation that arises from an obvious difference between a photograph and a painting. For all the control the photographer has over the fine details in the photograph, and the effect this has on the observer’s aesthetic response, the object or scene photographed does have to exist in order for it to be in the resultant photograph. As Barbara Savedoff says: “if there is a horse in a photograph, we assume that there must have been a horse in front of the camera, since the horse cannot be a product of the photographer’s imagination” (Savedoff, 1997, p. 202). In the case of a painting, on the other hand, that which is represented could, literally, be a figment of the imagination. It is this that leads to the intuition that, as Kendall Walton says: “Photographs are *transparent*. We see the world *through* them” (Walton, 1984, p. 251). For a photograph seems counterfactually dependent on the properties of the subject and, consequently, gives us epistemic access to the world in a manner that a painting does not. Thus when viewing a photograph we feel that we are attaining some perceptual contact with the real

world even if it is mediated by the intentions of the photographer. So, in the case of [Figure 1], even though we do not know whether the woman had skin blemishes, or whether it was in fact just a waxwork model, because we know it is a photograph we can at least assume that there was a female figure in front of the camera when the shutter was released; an assumption we would withhold if informed it was a painting.

This is not the place to discuss the many arguments that have been presented both in defense and in opposition to Walton's view.⁵ However, what does seem to be the case is that there can be *levels of transparency*, so a photograph can be more or less transparent depending upon how well we can see the world through it. In having control over the fine detail the photographer effectively has intentional control over the *level of transparency* presented in the resultant photograph, but the crucial point here is that this is not just *globally*, i.e. across the whole photograph equally. Rather it is down to the *fine detail* and so, prior to the shutter being released, the photographer can intentionally choose how transparent different parts of the resultant photograph are to be. And it is *this* control, over the level of transparency in different parts of the same photograph, that makes representation in traditional artistic photography an *aesthetic* property and, furthermore, different from how it is in representational painting.

3. The Production of Artistic Astronomical Photographs

Having briefly outlined the aesthetic significance of representation in painting and traditional artistic photography I now turn to artistic astronomical photography. As with traditional artistic photographs it cannot be doubted that artistic astronomical photographs are representational – there is, after all, a direct causal relationship between what appears in the photograph and what was in front of the camera when the shutter was released. But is this representational property also an *aesthetic* property and if it is then what makes it so? I will show that it is also an aesthetic

⁵ For example, see Martin (1986) and Walton (1986). Walton points out that his 'transparency thesis' was originally formulated in terms of film photography (Walton, 2008, p. 115). Without justifying it here, I believe that much of this thesis can be applied with equal force to digital photography.

property but one that differs in kind to the analogous property in painting and traditional artistic photography and this is in virtue of the nature of astronomical subjects.

In the last section I explained that the traditional artistic photographer has intentional control over exposure, aperture, depth of field, composition, lens and choice of subject. All these decisions are made prior to the shutter being released and they all have a direct effect on the way the resultant photograph represents the world down to the fine details. However, it must be acknowledged that releasing the shutter is in fact far from the end of the photographic process, for this action does not actually produce a photograph. Rather, in all forms of digital photography, all that happens during the period of time that the shutter is open is that the camera's sensor detects the photons that arrive from the scene and converts them into an electrical charge. In order for a photograph to be produced, the raw data that has been collected by the sensor has to be processed by software and there are two ways in which this can be achieved.⁶ The most straightforward is to use the camera's firmware – the software that is installed into the camera itself. If the photographer wishes, however, the internal firmware can be bypassed and the raw data can be downloaded onto an external computer and manually processed in photographic software.⁷ If this method is chosen then the photographer can manually alter many aspects of the photograph such as brightness, colour balance, sharpness and so on.

In the case of artistic astronomical photography, however, using automatic software is not an option because astronomical subjects are, for the most part, simply too faint to be visible to the naked eye. The only reason that the colours, shapes and forms of astronomical subjects appear in photographs is because digital cameras, in conjunction with long exposures, can detect so much more light than can be detected by the human eye. The astronomical photographer cannot rely on automatic software because this is written with the aim of processing data gathered from the kinds of subjects that we meet in everyday life. Consequently the *only* way to produce artistic astronomical photographs is to process the data

⁶ For a more detailed discussion see Benovsky (2014) and Chadwick and Paviour-Smith (2016).

⁷ For an in-depth outline of this process see Benovsky (2014).

manually on an external computer and, as I will show, this directly affects representation as an aesthetic property. In order to accentuate this point I will briefly comment on two important aspects of all photography – dynamic range and colour balance.

3.1. *Dynamic Range*

Dynamic range in photography is the difference between the brightest and darkest parts of a photograph and in most everyday scenes there is an appreciable spread of shades from the darkest to the brightest. The camera's firmware can automatically deal with this and can do a reasonably good job of presenting the brightest and dimmest parts of the scene in the resultant photograph in a way that appears 'natural'. If the traditional artistic photographer wishes to undertake this process manually then the way the scene appears to the naked eye can be used as a guide, so there is an element of objectivity to the activity even if, for aesthetic reasons, the photographer wishes to substantially alter the dynamic range in order to diverge from the 'natural' appearance.



FIGURE 2. Details given in the text.

However, because astronomical scenes are very faint the majority of the data in the photograph lies towards the dark end of the scale, as can be

seen in [FIGURE 2], which is raw data of the Pleiades star cluster.⁸ The only things that are visible in this photograph are the very brightest stars. Automatic software is simply not able to cope with this and so, in order to successfully present the scene in the resultant photograph, the light collected by the camera has to be *manually stretched* by the photographer so that the brightest and the dimmest parts appear in the photograph concurrently. The problem that the astronomical photographer faces is deciding how to manually stretch this collected light because, as the subjects are largely invisible to the naked eye, there is nothing with which to compare the photograph and so, unlike in the case of traditional artistic photography, there is no objective guide and therefore no way of arriving at a 'natural' appearance. The whole photograph cannot simply be brightened linearly because, if it is, the brightest parts become too intense whilst the fainter background remains barely detectable, as can be seen in [FIGURE 3].



FIGURE 3. Details given in the text.

⁸ All astronomical photographs in this paper © Stephen Chadwick.

Rather, through numerous tiny increments, the photographer has to choose which parts of the scene to brighten, and which parts to keep dark, in order to produce a photograph that satisfies his aesthetic end. So in order to effectively represent the scene the astronomical photographer has to make subjective decisions as to how the dynamic range of the scene is to be distributed across the photograph, and as there is no objective criterion guiding this process the end result will never be ‘natural’ and will always vary even if the same person processes exactly the same data twice. One such end result derived from the data shown in [FIGURE 2] can be seen in [FIGURE 4].



FIGURE 4. Details given in the text.

3.2. Colour Balance

A second important aspect of producing any photograph is achieving correct colour balance. As with dynamic range, in the case of traditional artistic photography, the manufacturer’s firmware automatically ensures a relatively realistic colour balance in the resultant photograph and this is

because the software developers have calibrated the algorithms with the ‘natural’ colours we see with the naked eye. Thus, again, there is an objective guide available. The photographer is of course at liberty to manually alter the colour balance but when they do they still have a good idea of what the ‘natural’ colours are in the scene that was photographed for they can be perceived with the naked eye. The situation is, however, very different for the astronomical photographer because the colours of astronomical subjects are usually too dim to be seen with the naked eye (even through a telescope), and so such comparisons cannot be made. From the light collected by the camera it is obvious which parts of the scene contain the most red, green and blue but there is no objective way of deciding the shades of these colours and this greatly affects the resultant secondary colours. As with dynamic range, it is necessary for the astronomical photographer to balance the colours manually by making subjective decisions as there is no objective criterion to use in order to determine a ‘natural’ colour balance. [Figures 5 & 6] show exactly the same photograph of the Eta Carina Nebula that has been processed by two different people and there is no objective way of saying whether either presents a ‘natural’ colour balance.



FIGURE 5. Details given in the text.

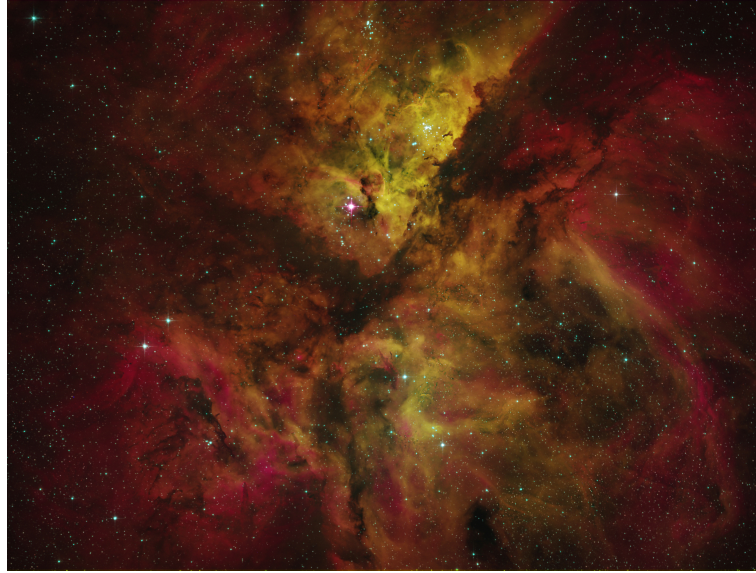


FIGURE 6. Details given in the text.

But surely this need for subjective decisions only exists because the subjects of astronomical photographs are at such large distances from us and *as a consequence of this* they are faint. Surely if we were able to fly close to these subjects then they would be clearer and brighter and thus visible to the naked eye. The photographer could then represent these subjects objectively because then they would be able to compare the photograph with the naked eye view and hence achieve an objectively correct dynamic range and colour balance. We would then be able to decide which of [Figures 5 and 6] was the most ‘natural’. However, the assumption that is at the heart of this thought experiment is actually incorrect because although an extended astronomical subject, such as a nebula or galaxy, would appear larger the closer you were to it, its brightness would be spread out over a larger area and so the average brightness would actually remain constant. This means the intensity would appear exactly the same to the naked eye however close you got to it. The Pleiades [Figure 4] would actually still be largely invisible and colourless to the naked eye even if you were to fly right through it and, consequently, however close you got to it, any photograph taken would still rely on the subjective decisions favoured by the photographer during the processing stage. So it is not simply because they

are so far away that makes it impossible for the photographer to represent the dynamic range and colour balance naturally. Rather, it is an intrinsic property of extended astronomical subjects that makes this impossible and this property is not possessed by anything that is the subject of traditional artistic photography.

4. Representation in Artistic Astronomical Photography

So how does this leave representation as an aesthetic property of artistic astronomical photographs? Earlier I argued that in the case of representational painting it is the direct intentional control that the painter has, right down to the fine detail, which makes representation an aesthetic property of the painting. I went on to show that the traditional artistic photographer also has direct intentional control right down to the fine detail, but because photographs are transparent it is actually the control over the level of transparency in different parts of the same photograph that makes representation in traditional artistic photography an aesthetic property and therefore distinguishes it from the analogous property in representational painting.

Taking into account the level of subjectivity that is involved in order to produce an artistic astronomical photograph, it is tempting to think that representation as an aesthetic property is closer in character to how it is in a painting rather than a traditional photograph. After all, in artistic astronomical photography you start with what appears to be a blank canvas [Figure 2] and, by making subjective decisions, work towards the final product that fulfills your aesthetic desires [Figure 4]. However, this analogy is flawed because an astronomical photograph is not really a blank canvas. For the photograph is there from the start of the process - it is just hidden in the shadows and only appears once the data has been stretched. So representation in artistic astronomical photography is in fact very different from that found in representational painting. With representational painting the artist is free to represent the scene in whatever way they choose and can even add imaginary objects, such as a horse, should they desire. But this freedom is not accorded to the artistic astronomical photographer for the photographer can only work with the light, captured by the cam-

era, which originated in the astronomical subject. In common with all photography it certainly cannot be denied that artistic astronomical photographs are transparent to some degree, because they are counterfactually dependent on the properties of the subjects and do give us some epistemic access to the world in a manner that paintings do not. Consequently, unlike the painter, the artistic astronomical photographer is not free to simply create or erase parts of the scene or arbitrarily change the colours, for once such actions are performed the photograph becomes an abstract digital picture.⁹

So does this mean that representation in artistic astronomical photography and traditional artistic photography are identical? We have seen that in the latter case it is the direct intentional control over the level of transparency in different parts of the same photograph (via the ability to control the fine details), that makes representation an *aesthetic* property and therefore distinguishes it from the analogous property in representational painting. In addition the photographer is fully aware of the level of transparency of the different parts because they were in front of the scene when the photograph was taken. Furthermore, other observers of the photograph can usually form reasonable conjectures about how transparent different parts of the photograph are by making comparisons with the way objects in the real world usually appear to the naked eye. So, for example, intuition tells us that the black area below the woman's head in [Figure 1] is not transparent, because it is reasonable to assume that the woman photographed had a neck. But even if an observer cannot be sure how transparent different parts of a photograph are there does seem to be, at least in principle, an objective guide to determining this, namely how would the scene have appeared if observed with the naked eye – something of which the actual photographer is well aware.

In the case of artistic astronomical photography, the photographer has a similar level of control over the fine details in the photograph, and therefore control over the level of transparency in different parts of the same photograph. However, what is different here is that the photographer does not know how transparent the different parts of the resultant photo-

⁹ These techniques are often undertaken when 'scientific astronomical photographs' are processed and this is one reason why they should only be considered 'pretty pictures' and not photographs.

graph are and, subsequently, neither does any other observer of the photograph. And this is because of the lack of an objective guide for, in the case of most astronomical subjects, we cannot ask the question ‘how would they appear to the naked eye?’ because they are *intrinsically* too faint to be seen. There are some basic conjectures that can be formed and applied by the photographer when processing the photograph if they know some of the science behind the subjects. So, for example, the informed photographer knows that the brightest parts of [Figure 4] should be the stars because astronomers tell us that stars are always brighter than nebulosity. Such knowledge can guide the photographer, and the subsequent observer of the photograph, when trying to comprehend the level of transparency. But for much of the time there is a lack of objectivity and it is this lack of knowledge of the level of transparency across a photograph that makes the aesthetic property of representation in artistic astronomical photography different from the analogous property in traditional artistic photography.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have examined the nature of representation as an *aesthetic* property of astronomical photographs. In order to do this I have compared it with the analogous property associated with painting and traditional artistic photography. In the case of the former, representation is an aesthetic property in virtue of the fact that the painter has intentional control over the fine details found in the painting. In the case of the latter, representation is an aesthetic property in virtue of the fact that the traditional artistic photographer has intentional control over the level of transparency of the fine details found in the resultant photograph. Furthermore, they have knowledge of the levels of transparency and this arises from the fact that the subjects of the photographs are, in principle, visible to the naked eye. There is therefore an objective guide that can be used to measure transparency. I have shown, however, that in the case of artistic astronomical photography, representation as an aesthetic property differs from both of these. As with the painter the artistic astronomical photographer does have intentional control over the fine details found in the end result. However, as is the case with the traditional artistic photographer, they also have intentional control over the level of transparency

of these fine details. Where it differs is that, unlike traditional artistic photography, there is no objective way of knowing how transparent these fine details are and so subjectivity and the imagination play a huge role in determining how the photographer represents the scene in the final photograph. It is this that makes representation such a rich *aesthetic* property in artistic astronomical photography.

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The Environmental Sublime: From Aesthetics to Ethics

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ABSTRACT. This paper is about the concept of the sublime and its environmental ethical implications. I claim that sublime, as an aesthetic concept; is helpful to give us moral motivation for preservation of nature. We have a paradoxical relation with nature; we are both a part of, and alien to it. Hence, I claim the sublime is a specific aesthetic concept that can help us unveil this paradoxical relation due to its peculiar dual character causing both pleasure and displeasure. It can give insight how to adopt, adjust and accommodate to the environmental problems. First, with its displeasure effect, it can point to the “Otherness,” of Nature and induce (1) humility and (2) respect and second, with its pleasurable effect, it can reveal our “Oneness,” with nature and create (1) attentiveness/sensitivity and (2) compassion/love for Nature. The objections against the sublime fall into three different categories, (1) historical, it is an outdated concept that has no relevance in the contemporary agenda, (2) metaphysical, the sublime is same with religious experience, and (3) ethical, the sublime is self-regarding, anthropocentric and creates distance with nature. Against these I defend that, (1) nature is the original sublime and it can never be exhausted, (2) ideas and feelings can have associations, but this does not undermine the fact that the sublime is aesthetic and secular, with no necessary dependence on a divine being and (3) the sublime does not create distance, but accepts the difference and commonality with Nature, and is not *anthropocentric*-centered on humans, but *anthropogeneric* -generated by humans.

I. What is the Sublime?

It was the philosopher Longinus in the first century A.D. who described sublime as the indeterminate part of the rhetorical speeches of men which lacked any form in his work *Peri Hupsous*. *Hupsous* literally means “height” or as *megathos* is used as an equivalent, it means “greatness” in Ancient

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Greek (Heath, 2012, 12f). The Latin term for the sublime has similar connotations. The etymology of the word composes of a prefix and a noun: *sub-limis*. *Sub* is a preposition of place that means “under, below” or “at the bottom”. *Super* or *surpa* are the other two close words that respectively mean “a movement from below to above” or “to rise” (Cohn, 1977, 291). On the other hand, for *limen* there are two various meanings: (1) threshold or (2) limit, boundary. In this sense, when the two terms are connected, they literally mean “below the threshold” or “to rise from below to above”.

Longinus’ writings were revived back in the literature with Boileau’s translation in 1600s. Afterwards, a new genre of sublime aesthetics flourished among the English philosophers such as Addison, Hutcheson and Burke. However, the discussion reached its most sophisticated form in Kant in 1780s with his 3rd Critique. Kant distinguished sublime in two kinds of aesthetic judgment: mathematical and dynamical. Mathematical sublime is related with greatness in size, measure and dynamical is related with power. Infinity is the concept linked with mathematical sublime. Although the mind tries to apprehend the vastness of the object lying beyond, it is impossible to comprehend it in its totality. Mathematical sublime is an experience that is absolutely great, “beyond all comparison”. On the other hand, dynamical sublime is about the power of the natural object. When one encounters a volcano in explosion, a tsunami that is in devastation or mountains that are reaching as if “to the heavens”, one encounters a dynamical sublime. In mathematical sublime a proper distance is important with respect to the encountered object, neither too small nor too far away, which would affect the comprehension of the mind; and similarly in the dynamical sublime, the subject has to be in a proper distance where his existence would neither be threatened nor lack the ability to perceive the power of the object.

In both types of sublime, Kant involves (1) an estimation of nature’s “formlessness”, (2) an operation of the imagination, which creates a “serious activity” with reason, (3) a realization of the power of reason, positing the source of the sublime in one’s own mind and (4) a felt inadequacy of our power hand in hand with a compensating superiority, “negative pleasure”. Our focus will be on the fourth characteristics, i.e. the dual characteristic of sublime, experience of both displeasure and pleasure. Mingled with “these positive and negative elements”, sublime becomes “not just an

emotion with two aspects but as one in which there is a movement back and forth between two aspects, an oscillation between repulsion from and attraction to the object” (Budd, 2003, 135).

2. The Paradoxical Dual Character

The importance of sublime lies in its “peculiar dual character”. Many scholars even from the times of Longinus have described it as “oxymoronic” (Hitt, 1999, 607). Addison (1773) defines it as “agreeable horror” (261), Burke (1998) “a delightful horror” and Kant “negative pleasure” that composes of “at once a feeling of displeasure and a simultaneously awakened pleasure” (KU, 5: 106). The first stage is displeasure where the feelings of terror (Burke, 1998, 53), astonishment or distress (Burke, 1998, 79) is felt. It is the moment where the subject feels his “creaturehood” (Otto, 1928, 35), extreme smallness and insignificance. On the other hand, the second stage is quite contrary to the first one, a feeling of pleasure. Pleasure induces us not to abstain from the experience; but be engrossed in the phenomena and feel “*ekstasis*” (Longinus, 1.2., 33.4, 39.2) or a kind of “oceanic feeling” (Young, 2005, 140). The combination of these two phases makes sublime to be *schlechtin gross*¹, “awefully big” or *schlechtweg*, “simply absolute” (Kant, KU, 5: 249) and illuminates the paradoxical character of our relation with nature.

2.1. Displeasure

The first phase is the negative side of the medallion which is marked with displeasure. The emotions heralding in this stage is first of all “terror” which is a “natural emotion of fear”, distress or astonishment as Burke cites. For Kant, it is not “fear” *per se* but a peculiar “displeasure” that leads to disturbance with an admixture of uneasiness. The subject goes through a “painful” state with “bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens...the boundless ocean set into a rage” or with “a lofty waterfall on a might river” (Kant, KU, 5:262). In these

¹ *Schlect* in German means “bad” or “aweful”, here in English it can come to mean as “aweful” which also has the root word of “awe”. It is interesting to see the link between “awe” and “aweful”.

instances our capacities are without comparison powerless; we realize our “own fragility in the face of the forces of nature” (Young, 2005, 133). Otto (1928) explains the same phase as a “*mysterium tremendum*”. *Mysterium* as a concept that means “hidden or esoteric”, in other words “extraordinary” or unfamiliar (27). It denotes the dissimilar nature of the experienced object to one’s own being. *Mysterium tremendum* denotes “absolute inapproachability” (Otto, 1928, 34), a mystical awe, a kind of “shudder” (Otto, 1928, 32). Mark that it is not merely a fear; if it was so, then experiencer would have run away from those scenes. Burke and Kant both emphasize that there should be a proper distance between the subject and the phenomenon so that the subject acknowledges his own existence is not barely threatened but *could have been* threatened if it was *that* close.

The next question is: what causes the painful state of the sublime, leading one to shudder or be awfully struck? The answers come along with a rich terminology: “mortal condition” (Deguy, 1993, 9), finitude (Nancy, 1993, 46) and “creaturehood” or “creature-consciousness” (Otto, 1928, 35). We are creatures that are born and will be dead. In this respect, sublime reminds us our mortality, the fragile aspect of our being that is a part of “beings of nature”, small and insignificant. For Kant, this is the part we share with animal nature, dependent on time and space and will deteriorate with time and space. That is why, in sublime we fear or feel displeasure towards our “own death” (Young, 2005, 133). The body we have is a material of everydayness, an embodied and mortal individuality that is incomparably petty in contrast to nature. Otto (1928) calls this moment the realization of our “creature consciousness” (35), where the individual becomes aware of his/her dependency on the material things above and beyond us.

As the dynamical makes us aware of our “vanishing nothingness” as individuals, in the face of nature’s power, so the mathematical “reduces us to nought” in the face of its immensity; as the dynamic makes us aware of our fragility in the face of its gigantic forces of nature—and so of what we normally repress, the inevitability of death—so the math makes us aware of the nothingness of our tenure in space and time, the blink-of-an-eye-ness of our existence, the almost-hereness of death. (Young, 2005, 138)

Creaturehood means “the status of being a creature” that makes you feel

petty and small, in contrast to the “majesty” of the “Other”. It is in connection with the “feeling of dependency” which gives “immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self”. The moment one is dependent on an externality, it acknowledges the existence of “others” apart from his/her own being. In sublime’s first phase, when one realizes his/her creaturehood one becomes aware of the existence of nature independent of one-self. Nature stands with such might and Otherness right in front of us (Otto, 1928, 24). What is more, the fact of being “beyond our comprehension and apprehension” strengthens the fact that Nature is “wholly other” which transcends our limits. “Its kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb” (Otto, 1928, 42).

2.2. *Pleasure*

The peculiar character of sublime experience does not compose only of, i.e. displeasure, but consequently transforms into pleasure. Sublime phenomenon first raises terror, fear, and distress; but afterwards causes pleasure, fearlessness, equanimity and joy. The emotions heralding in the second phase of the sublime are fearlessness, equanimity, joy (Young, 2005, 136f), pleasure (Kant), eternity, *ekstasis* (Longinus) and oceanic feeling (Freud). Although the first phase reminds us our mortal and finite condition, brings pain and displeasure; the spectator still desires to continue his/her experience which means that s/he gets satisfaction and feels pleasure after a while. The question is what makes one to have this oceanic feeling?

There are various answers for the motive behind the pleasurable part of sublime in literature. Longinus defines the sublime experience in *Peri Hupsous* as “*ekstasis*”, a joyful element in which we sense “something superior to our natural self” (Young, 2005, 136). With feelings of *ekstasis*, we “transcend our everyday selves, undergo a kind of ‘out-of-body’ experience”. “*Ekstasis*” is an experience of “transporting” from the ordinary self (ibid.). In Greek, it literally means *ek-stasis*, stepping out (Soelle, 2001, 33). Hence, for Longinus the pleasurable element in sublime is the fact of being transported and transcended to a state that is distinct than “everydayness of embodied and mortal individuality” (ibid.). Similarly, Kant addresses the sublime experience as a sign of *noumenal* self which is akin to “God’s will” (KU, 5:263).

Kant asserts that in sublime experience, the supersensible part of human nature, “rationality”, is realized (KU, 5:261). We feel pleasure, because we realize the common core we share with the transcendent reality. This is “reason” which has the ability to shape and structure a will, and a will that is able to put his own laws upon itself. Hence, sublime is the realization of our freedom, our rationality and our *noumenal* self that we share with Gods and angels, i.e. the pure rational realm. Just like the German word of sublime literally indicates, “*erhabene*”, sublime “raises” us “up” from the “operations of nature” (KU, 5:103-4).

Similarly in Schopenhauer (1969), the pleasure felt in the second phase of sublime is explained as a means of finding our “real”, “eternal” nature. Sublime fits into his philosophy as a realization of the “eternal, serene subject of knowing” (205) that is in contrast to the petty, individual will.

He feels himself as individual the feeble phenomenon of will...a vanishing nothingness in the face of the stupendous forces; and he also feels himself as the eternal, serene subject of knowing, who as the condition of every object is the supporter of this whole world... He himself is free from and foreign to, all willing and all needs, in the quiet comprehension of the Ideas. (Schopenhauer, 1969, 204-5)

In postmodern literature, similar echoes are found in the writings of Nancy, Lyotard or Deguy. They all accept the fact that sublime is a move beyond the limits. Although they do not explicitly refer to any concept that implicates “transcendence”, they accept the fact that sublime presents a realm which gives the insight of infinity. Nancy (1993) asserts that “sublime is the feeling of the infinite (149)” and “nature is...sublime in those of its phenomena the intuition of which arouses the Idea of its infinity” (ibid.) Young (2005) claims that sublime lets us have a taste of “immortality”, which is a matter of not “existing throughout time but of timelessness” (139). Being independent of time and space is the antithetical effect of the second part of sublime in contrast to the first one. Just like Schopenhauer’s “eternal subject”, the pleasure of sublime is justified in the “loss of the personal self” and finding it to be “in different degrees of completeness...with the transcendent Reality” (Otto, 1928, 36). William James (2008) says that “what I felt on these occasions was a temporary loss of my own identity” upon describing a sublime experience (262). Harmon (2013) also calls denial of the

identification “with a narrower desiring self” but rather it is the “becoming” of “the eternal serene subject of knowledge” which is a state of peace and true happiness (71). The identity moves beyond this particular flesh and bone and becomes a “totality”. “Flowing out of the ego” is experienced where one comes “to live a thousand-fold” (Young, 2005, 103).

We feel ourselves elevated because we identify ourselves with the powers of nature, ascribing their vast impact to ourselves, because our fantasy rests on the wings of the storm as we roar into the heights and wander into the depths of infinity. Thus we ourselves expand into a boundless natural power. (Whyte, 2011, 9).

3. Environmental Implications of Sublime

In the first phase of sublime the otherness of nature is realized, nature as independent, autonomous and different than us; and in the second phase, an oceanic feeling surpasses the subject, the expansion of self is experienced revealing our interconnected relation with nature. Hence, sublime is both “at once daunting” and “attracting”; as Otto puts it (1928) “it humbles and at the same time exalts us, circumscribes and extends us beyond ourselves, on the one hand releasing in us a feeling analogous to fear, and on the other joining us” (57). This would have various environmental implications of the dual character of sublime both establishing a sense personhood that nature can be seen as “Other”, feel “respect” and “humility” and at the same time acknowledge the interconnected relation with every existent being. Each phase balances the other, each time reminding its own power and effect, giving proper amount for “quieting” the “ego” (Bauer, 2005, 7). “A self-identity” is obtained which is “not excessively self-focused but also not excessively other-focused...an identity that incorporates others without losing the self” (Bauer, 2005, 8).

“What is that light which shines right through me and strikes my heart without hurting? It fills me with terror and burning love: with terror inasmuch as I am utterly other than it, with burning love in that I am akin to it.” (Augustine, 1998, 227)

3.1. The Non-pleasurable Part: Seeing Nature as “Other”

3.1.1. Humility

In the first phase of sublime subject feels an overwhelming grandeur or power of nature in which his/her self seems finite, insignificant and little; however, this overwhelming confrontation with nature unveils nature's independent identity. Cronon (1995) describes this feature as the “radical otherness of nature”; it is a statehood in which nature is “forever beyond the borders of our linguistic universe” (56). This “radical otherness” becomes an entity that has to be acknowledged and accepted as the way it is. This otherness creates “an indispensable corrective to human arrogance” (Hitt, 1999, 606) which is “humility”. It shows that the non-human nature exists as a “world we did not create”.

It is the perfect description of “humble state” where the ego will be “quietened” as Bauer calls it (7). What is more, Pascal (1958) in his *Pensees* asserts that “a discourse on humility” is a deed “a few men do” (107, sect. 377). According to Martin (2012) Pascal enforces the duality of “*sublimis-humilis*” relation and proposes that the “individual's smallness in the cosmos” is bounded upon the phenomena of sublime (85). Pascal (1958) indeed states that “with space the universe envelops me and engulfs me like an atom, by thought I comprehend the world (97/sect. 348) and “man is great in that he knows himself as miserable” (107/sect. 397). The humbling state of Pascal in which man feels himself “miserable” reminds us Schopenhauer's (1969) portrayal of sublime as “vanishing nothingness” (204). Martin (2012) interprets Pascal's ideas on humility as a case of sublime experience in which “nothingness, the infinite and the divine” is realized, akin to the feeling of being “lost in this corner of the universe” (85). Young (2005) interprets it as realization of “the nothingness of our tenure in space and time, the blink-of-an-eye-ness of our existence, the almost-here-ness of death” (138).

It is important to mark that with humility, the self gains not a derogatory status of being but a sincere relation. Humility shall not be confused with lack of self-esteem or “humiliation” (Exline, 2005, 55). Hence, it is not pejorative in the sense of being inferior to others but able to realize that the self is “a relatively small part in a larger scheme of things” (Exline, 2005, 56). In that respect, Spinoza (1665) describes humility as a feeling mingled with pleasure to the “extent that a man knows himself by true reason” (107).

He “understands his own essence” (ibid.). When we realize “our own potency, and our active relation to nature we get joy first, from the recognition of our own power no matter how small, which gives “us *acquiescentia in se ipso*, self-respect and contentedness”, second, from the awareness of an “increased personal, active knowledge of things” which are far more “greater than we are”, and third, from the realization of “active interaction” which “defines us in the total field of nature” (Naess, 2008, 130). With a humble attitude an “empirical connection” will be established between “experiencing nature and overcoming self-importance” (Hill, 1983, 221). Natural surroundings stimulate us to see ourselves *as the way we are* in nature, overcome the anthropocentric prejudices and acknowledge that “we are one among many”, not exclusive or specific, but just a small speck.

3.1.2. *Respect*

The second virtue linked with acknowledging the otherness of nature is respect. In respect, we recognize the existence of the *other* and its difference from us. Respect is a feeling that is “other” directed in which nature is seen “as a world we did not create, a World with its own independent, nonhuman reason for being as it is” (Hitt, 1999, 606). Kant is the first philosopher pointing out the close relationship between sublime and respect. In the feeling of respect, a similar transition of displeasure to pleasure takes place like the case in sublime.

He resembles the negative pleasure felt in sublime to the feeling of moral law. Just like the moral law attacks “satisfaction with oneself” and “strikes down” the “self-conceit” (CroPR, 5:73) of the subject, so does the sublime. At this point, we part ways with Kantian sense of sublime and respect because, it is directed only with human beings due to the common share of reason; however, I would like to integrate respect in a nonhuman world as well. Nevertheless, the inadequacy of Kant’s theory towards the non-rational beings shall not lead us to undermine the close relation he reveals between sublime and respect.

Some contemporary scholars tried to overcome Kant’s deficiency and proposed amendments. For example, Brady (2003) stated that no matter Kant’s theory is criticized to be “human-centered”, it shall not lead us to undermine the “interesting ways” sublime can illuminate, where “a distinct-

ive aesthetic relation between humans and nature” (38) exist.

It is a mistake to construe Kant’s remarks as making ontological and normative claims about humanity’s place in relation to nature. Through experience of the sublime in nature, we recognize that reason gives us the ability, in our freedom, to transcend our phenomenal selves, which belong to nature... it is in that sense that we are not, in the end, overwhelmed by the phenomenal because we have resources beyond how it limits us, but we are also not above or superior to nature. (Brady, 2003, 38)

In short with sublime, “a meaningful connection to nature” is excited in which we recognize the “magnitude and might” (Brady, 2003, 39) of nature independent of our beings. Nature stands with its mysteriousness as a “wholly other”, “canny” and “awful”, “filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment” (Otto, 1928, 40). Seen this way, nature cannot be used “as a means to an end” (ibid.). The distance between the “appreciator and environment” is acknowledged and “the appreciator is placed in a certain way-aesthetically-in relation to an environment” (Otto, 1928, 121). We “become aware of our limits” and recognize the borders where “the other” starts (Taylor, 1986, 105). We accept the distance and difference *as the way it is*, we view them *as the way they are* and “appreciate them in their own terms” (Saito, 2007, 151).

One kind of definition of a good person or a moral person is that person does not impose his or her phantasy on another. That is he or she is willing to acknowledge the reality of other individuals, or even of the tree or the rock. So to be able to stand and listen. That to me is a moral capacity, not just an intellectual one. (Saito, 2007, 151)

This ability to “stand and listen” is a sign of respect. Respect demands “a willingness to submit to nature’s guidance” and listen to “nature’s own story”. Appreciating things as the way they are demands us not to impose our own story upon them and take our view central (Saito, 2007, 152). Taking mountains, deserts and flowers with a “reality apart from our presence, with its own story to tell” demands sensitivity and acceptance (Saito, 2007, 163).

The proper “responsible” behavior towards any creature different than us can take place as long as there is space for its independent identity. Sublime shows us how to value wilderness, a realm where humans are out of its descriptive state. This “liberates” not only “nature” but also ourselves because, we are conscious of our self, we do not overestimate and exaggerate our own power. We do not oscillate between the poles of narcissism and self-debasement. In short, by means of respecting nature, we accept every existent being has certain ends to be who they are, the nonhuman world has an independent status from our standpoint. We understand that we have to “honor” it, “remember and acknowledge the autonomy of the other” and maintain an attitude of “critical self-consciousness in all of our actions” (Cronon, 1995, 89).

3.2. The Pleasurable Part: Seeing Nature as an Extended Self

3.2.1. Attentiveness and Sensitivity

In the second phase, the emotions of astonishment, awe and wonder help us to see nature in its totality and acknowledge its grandeur. This acknowledgement of nature as an “extended Self” will lead one to regard each existent being, living or non-living, attentively or sensitively. Sensitivity and attentiveness are close terms in their consequences; however, attentiveness has broad references and specific scope of extent akin to “mindfulness”, as the Buddhist terminology describe. In amazement and wonder, we reach *that* being, either call it “the heavens”, “the supernatural realm”, *noumenal* or an “expansion of self”, we join and be aware of that bigger “I”. Soelle (2001) goes even further and asserts that “the beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living” (91).

Just like the way an arm cares for the other arm for the aim of cooperation in the body, sublime by means of raising feelings such as amazement, astonishment or wonder may lead us to be more “attentive” to nature to “hear, see, feel and know” its story. One will care to know how to live “in the midst of other lives” (Soelle, 2001, 111). It would remind us that we are not alone, we are more than we know because the world is “a community of all living beings bound one to the other”. Any damage on someone necessarily will “avenge itself” (Soelle, 2001, 112). This “awareness” acts as bedrock for many other virtues. Rolston (1987) claims that “there is no

value without awareness” (189) and the rate of awareness marks the rate of sensitivity one has towards others such as animals, plants and non-living beings with respect to “connection, appreciation” and feeling of “awe” (Leary et al., 2005, 142).

Being “attentive” demands a place to be “unreservedly” present, *right now* and *here*. In that moment of “now” all the sensory perceptions has to be awake with unprejudiced openness. The Zen story of Master Ikkyū takes “attentiveness” as the “highest wisdom” one can have (Soelle, 2001, 176). The mystical relationship of attentiveness to time and other existent begins is to be “present to the people and things you love”. It demands an identification with what you do, how you do as who you are. As C. S. Lewis puts it, it can be summarized as “I am what I do” (Soelle, 2001, 177). Someone with full attentiveness cannot overlook the grandeur of thousand celled eye of a dragonfly or the delicate pattern on a conch shell. Attentiveness demands not just looking but seeing, not just hearing but listening. It demands one to be “there” fully with a total consciousness and awake perception. Therefore, the ecstatic feelings of sublime will lead one to wake up from slumbers of life filled with work and consumption within a limited scope of vision. It takes every kind of ordinary experience to an extraordinary level that is “exclusively unique” (Soelle, 2001, 178).

In an age of exploitation, commodification, and domination we need awe, envelopment, and transcendence. We need, at least occasionally to be confronted with the wild otherness of nature and to be astonished, enchanted, humbled by it. Perhaps it is time that we discover an ecological sublime. (Hitt, 1999, 620)

3.2.2. *Compassion and Love*

Compassion and love are two distinct feelings that can be felt for the “Other” with the concern of their well-being. It is based on an assumption of a common identity, feeling as if the other is also a part of “me”. The second phase of sublime, which leads us to realize the commonality between nature and us, engenders the feelings of compassion and love. Primavesi (2004) asserts that this pleasure we feel upon experiencing sublime phenomena causes us to realize that “things are ultimately intelligible only in terms of each other” (64). In such a conception of the world, “each

is seen as part of an immense complexity of subtly balanced relationships that, like an endless knot, has no loose end from which it can be untangled and put in supposed order” or in other words as if we all are “an island” composed of “the mainland...and the sea surrounding” it (ibid.). In a symbiotic relationship like this, since nature is our “extended self” no one can harm the other”, it will be as if harming oneself. This would be nothing but an instance of the well-known sentiments of, “goodwill and sympathetic and compassionate love for others” which proves that sublime induce in us an affective wisdom (Ardelt, 2005 223). It is obvious that we exist “in” this planet rather than “on” it. (Litfin, 2010, 210).

Ardelt (2005) asserts that in such a state when the ego is quietened, the result is a feeling of sympathetic and compassionate love for others (223). The “thoughts, feelings and behavior of people” are like “me” as well as the non-living things that seem to be without “thoughts” or “feelings”. Then on, each can direct his/her interest “toward the benefit of all beings rather than only themselves and their loved ones” (Ardelt, 2005 231). Leary et. al (2005) mention the notion of the feeling of unity under the rubric of “*allo*-inclusive identity”. They define it as a state in which the “identity goes beyond one’s individual, relational and collective identities”, an embracement of the other, i.e. *allo* means other (137). The idea inherent in this philosophy “is the inclusion of other entities in one’s self-concept instead of merely an identity that extends beyond the individual him or herself” (ibid.).

Maslow (1973) also described transcendence in a manner that has an *allo*-inclusive quality, “behaving and reacting as ends rather than as means to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature and to the cosmos” (292). Therefore, in sublime we feel a “sense of kinship with all living things”, this is a “meta-personal self- scale” in which “no matter” where we are or what we do, there is the intuition that “we are never ever separate from others” (ibid.) which would bring compassion and love.

4. Criticisms and Defenses

4.1. Historical

4.1.1. Criticisms

The first objection is that sublime is no more a valid concept for appreciation of nature but rather its proper object is art. Elkins (2011) is one of the major critiques who supports such oppositions. He claims that sublime shall not “apply to nature but art objects” (77). He argues sublime is a concept that can be used within the “trans-historical category”; it no more satisfies appreciation except in some “particular ranges of artworks” generally made in the 19th century (ibid.). What is more, Elkins (2011) thinks that sublime and other affiliated terms such as “awe, wonder” are used unthoughtfully in the history of philosophy so many times that they lost their significance for appreciation. They are like “blank coins” as if “rubbed by thousand fingers” till they have become “nothing but thin blank disks” (89). Therefore, he suggests to drop the concept altogether from the language and try to define the following peculiar experiences, being “ambushed by the tremendous appearance of the Milky way, pouring from one horizon to another, with Cygnus gleaming in its middle” as the way he sees it with “words as sharp as” he can “manage” (ibid.).

Brady (2002) talks about the same historical oppositions against sublime. The argument states that we are less “awed” and appalled by nature because, we are “less fearful” due to our ability to “control and exercise power over much of nature” with “our developed technological means”. It states that neither the great mountains nor the wide deep oceans “evoke” any “edgy feeling of the sublime” and its “anxious pleasure”. The 18th century concept is an old-fashioned term for the contemporary world since our relationship with nature is less “troubled” than before (174).

4.1.2. Defenses

The first step of the argument is to refute the claim that artifacts, namely the artworks, are the proper candidates for sublime experience. I claim that the original sublime is nature and Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* is a major support for this. Clewis argues that (2010) artistic sublime has a justified role as a proper object. In contrast, Abaci (2008) claims Kant is justified

to dismiss the idea of artistic sublime and acknowledge nature as the “pure sublime”. Kant in his 3rd *Critique* differentiates two types of sublime just like two types of beautiful: impure and pure. Impure sublime are the ones that are “intentionally directed towards our satisfaction” (KU, 5:301), the deliberate act of creating something with a final purpose or end previously had in mind. On the contrary, when the object of appreciation is devoid of any “intentional content” then it is “pure” (ibid.). Taking these into consideration, the impure judgments become the artifacts that are man-made versus the pure ones that are natural. That is why, for Kant the proper object of appreciation in aesthetics is nature rather than art, because pure experience can only depict the necessary elements of aesthetic judgment. Furthermore, both Brady (2002, 173) and Guyer (2005) support the same attitude I defend, that artifacts cannot be “true examples of sublime” since they are “too finite to induce a genuine experience of the sublime” (158).

Moreover, the knowledge we have about nature does not necessarily lead to an impoverishment. In contrast, exploration and invention lays bare the marvels of nature and fascinates more. The impetus behind any scientific discovery of nature is a feeling of wonder. Wonder as Hepburn (2000) denotes is a feeling that does not exhaust itself upon comprehension (203). In contrast, curiosity is a transient feeling vulnerable to temporality. Hence, any information gained about nature, the height of mountains or depth of oceans does not diminish the impression they leave on us. The scientific discoveries do not exhaust the experience but rather pumps up the interest fervently. Nature is not a phenomenon that can be exhausted at any point. A microscopic observation might reveal the millions of cells making up just a single eye tissue; a telescope makes us connect to billion light years far-away stars and galaxies. All these encounters make us realize nature’s power, grandeur and magnificence. In short, the discoveries and inventions lead us to continuous astonishment and amazement that never ends.

4.2. Metaphysical

4.2.1. Criticisms

The second objection is metaphysical with the worry that sublime is a religious term from the discourse of theology, as if a proof of God. Elkins

(2011) in his work *Against the Sublime* asserts that sublime has to be abandoned since it is a concept that “is used principally as a way to smuggle covert religious meaning into texts that are putatively secular” (77). When we look once again to the history of sublime, it is true that in the history of philosophy sublime has been hand in hand with religious discourse and implications. For example, Monk (1960) admits that the particular emotions of “admiration and delight” are actually “passions that are excited by religious contemplation” (80). For Shaftesbury (1996) sublime is not rooted in style but “in divinity”. It is a manifestation of “divinity” in the “mighty nature” and which reveals itself in “that all-loving Deity’s” cosmic and terrestrial oeuvres (72-4). The contemporary scholars such as Greig (2011) also indicates that the *mysterium tremendum* feature of sublime shares a common root with the religious experience; sublime is the feeling of “spiritual rehabilitation” igniting the “inner spark” of the soul, making it fit for a “spiritual enquiry” (109).

4.2.2. Defenses

First counter-argument is the natural possibility of association of ideas and the connection between feelings. It is a well-known fact that ideas can have connections and associations with one another. For example, one idea can “attract” another and the other can call something else into consciousness (Otto, 1928, 57). The same fact is valid for feelings. Sublime has many affiliated emotions, each resembling, having connections with one another such as terror to dread, awe to amazement, elevation to ecstasy, etc. If any association demands equal uniformity *in toto* then we can assert that sublime feelings *are* religious feelings. However, we have to distinguish between similarity and equal uniformity. I accept that religious feelings have connections and resemblances with sublime; however, they are not the same. The two realms share feelings but the two realms are distinct from each other, one is “aesthetic” and the other is “religious”. Their scope of knowledge and purpose vary significantly from one another. The former is related with the sensory pleasures; the other is related with the acceptance of a divine being and related practices.

The second counter-argument is that sublime is an aesthetic concept. The differentiation of sublime from religious context had a deep demarc-

ation with Kant. Kant strictly noted that sublime is an aesthetic concept that needs no presupposition of a divine being. Brady (2002) also indicates that although some 18th century theorists “associated” sublime with “God’s power symbolized in nature”, with Kant we had a totally “secular” sublime (175). Aesthetic judgments for Kant are “purposive without purpose”, meaning although they seem to be designed as if to have a form or a concept actually they lack one (KU, 5:221, 5:236). It is the function of the subject to unify his/her mental capacities with imagination and understanding and this job of unification causes pleasure/displeasure. Therefore, Kant calls it “subjective purposiveness” rather than “objective purposiveness” (KU, 5:226-7). The aesthetic judgment is significantly distinct from the determining judgments which have a concept or form already presupposed. In this sense, attributing the name of God as the underlying cause for the aesthetic judgments is an attempt of mixing these two judgments. In other words, the underlying reason for the sublime or any natural phenomena can never be God or any kind of divine being in an explicit way of equivalency.

What is more, Elkins’ criticisms are actually a support for our argument, that sublime substitutes religious sentiments within a secularized agenda, without being grounded on a divine being. The scientific discoveries and inventions in astronomy, physics, chemistry and geology gave way to this transformation in the 17th century. Elkins is not aware that his criticisms point that sublime came to the fore due to a “paradigm shift” after this scientific revolution; hence, making peace with sublime and letting its existence enrich our discourse is preferable over rejecting it. We can regard sublime as a secularized substitute of religion without any necessary dependence of a divine being. Brady (2002) explain this with borrowing Hepburn’s term of “metaphysical imagination”. According to Hepburn, metaphysical imagination is the aesthetic experience when we encounter a natural scene and by means of our imagination we connect it with metaphysical feelings and terms. In other words, it is an “aesthetic transcendence” that “precipitate a new, felt awareness of our place in the World”. Sublime affords us to have an “opening out of the felt experience” to other sensory dimensions through an “anxious exhilaration” (177) without any dependence on a divine being.

4.3 Ethical

4.3.1 Criticisms

The first criticism of sublime is anthropocentric. However, this criticism's target is Kantian sublime mainly. In Kant it is the human mind, rationality and freedom that is sublime, not natural objects. This creates a serious problem in environmentalism, giving way to an "*anthropocentric*" view, which leads to a "monstrously megalomaniacal view of the world in which human beings regard themselves as the lords of nature and think of nature as whole as existing only for their sake" (Wood, 1998, 203) or in other words, to an instrumental standpoint entailing a species chauvinism, that humans are superior to other species whose results can be discerned in the ferociously devastating attitudes of the modern technological society.

For example, Godlovitch (2007) criticizes any kind of aesthetic appreciation as anthropocentric that accepts the right of point of view due to having a center of consciousness or apperception. Therefore, he advocates a new theory of acentralism in aesthetic appreciation where there is no such thing as the "point of view of the recipient". As a result, it extends beyond "centers of consciousness and apperceptions" and confers moral perspective even to "mere things" (134). There is no moral differentiation between animate and inanimate; it attributes an "unusual non-perspectival universality". In sublime, there is the centrality of human perception and valuer. Hence, it is experienced from one particular and determinate point of view in contrast to appreciating nature "from any of an infinite number of points of view from which the viewer and, generally, by parity, we do not matter at all". In the same vein, Saito (2007) argues that any appreciation that takes humans in the center for appreciation is anthropocentric; because, it gives them a distinct role with a godlike and "impersonal" position. She proposes an alternative model called "Zen-Buddhist type of non-anthropocentric appreciation" aiming to preserve the unity and continuity between man and nature and overcome the created boundaries (158). In this sense, although she does not clearly refer to sublime, she criticizes extensively the idea of having a central role of perception in aesthetic appreciation which according to her is nothing but imposing our own stories on nature and creating boundaries between nature and human mind.

4.3.2. Defenses

Against the first opposition, I need to emphasize that my argument does not adopt a totally Kantian viewpoint. I defend the view that sublime is a concept that shows our limits, I do not argue that it is a praise of rationality in a similar vein with a Kantian view. So, it is true that sublime is related with *us* rather than nature in the first glimpse. This can be interpreted to be *self-regarding* and *human regarding*, but this self-regarding is not a hierarchical and depreciative view over nature. In contrast, the acknowledgment of our limits brings humility “through which we feel insignificant in the face of powers that exceed us” (Brady, 2002, 179). In other words, it presents a reflection of us. We become conscious of our “self-reflection” (ibid.) by means of looking at nature. The self-regarding is a process of seeing ourselves in the mirror of nature. We become a mere ingredient in the landscape but we are at the same time aware of ourselves as overwhelmed and humbled by particular qualities on nature (Brady, 2002, 181). My thesis might be said to be in Kantian spirit in many ways but differentiates significantly from such emphasizes of rationality and freedom. For example, I do not assert that the commonality we find with nature is only rationality *per se* nor freedom but something that shows our nature-hood. This concept of nature-hood is close to Otto’s concept of creature-hood, however it is different from creature-hood in the sense of being not only created but also being alive. It marks the ability of being conscious and aware that one is “living” right at this moment and place just like any other existent being. It is the feeling of being aware that you are *one* among many. Therefore, although the rejections against Kant may have some right, I think one can still give an account of sublime by being strictly committed to a rational background and save it from the accusations of anthropocentrism.

Against the second objection that sublime takes human perception at the center similar to an “impersonal” or godlike gaze, I claim this is not *anthropocentric* but rather *anthropogeneric*. *Anthropogeneric* means that judgments are human-generated, and shall not be confused with *anthropocentrism*, being human-centered. Aesthetic judgments are response-dependent which means that by definition they demand a creative dialectic between humans and nature. Having a creative dialectic shall not lead us altogether

to discard the existence of a human appreciator. This is like throwing the baby with the bath water. The claim that aesthetic judgments are *anthropogeneric* underlines the fact that it occurs within a human perspective. In that case, disinterestedness involves *anthropogenericism* as a necessary feature of aesthetic judgment which necessitates the human-valuer.

Against Saito's "Zen-Buddhist type of non-anthropocentric appreciation" theory, and Godlovitch's "acentricism", I argue that, *anthropogenericism* indicates the necessity of "subject generator" in an aesthetic appreciation. Aesthetic appreciation in nature is always relational; there is a creative dialectic between humans and nature. Since any philosophical view or ethics without humans does not make sense, it is the same case in aesthetics. Humans *ignite* aesthetic appreciation. Appreciation itself even assumes it by definition, in order for that act to take place, an appreciator has to exist. This is the same case for ethics, we try to find a proper ethical theory or an answer to the question "how *we* shall live" or "how *I* shall act". These questions are directed to particular *subjects*.

To say of any natural thing *n* that *n* is valuable means that *n* is able to be valued, if and when human valuers, *Hs* come along. There is no actual beauty autonomous to the valued and valuable forests cirque lakes, mountains, sequoia tress, sand hill cranes there is aesthetic ignition when humans arrive, the aesthetics emerges relationally with the appearance of the subject generator. (Rolston, 2007, p. 328)

Reminiscent of Thomas Nagel's book (1986), there is not a "view from nowhere", the view is always from somewhere (2). Therefore, we can adopt a kind of aesthetics that can help us appreciate nature without imposing our practical needs, desires and wishes. In other words, I suggest that with disinterestedness, we can both accept the *anthropogeneric* nature of each proposition and appreciate nature's beauty without falling into a relativist discourse. Then, our aesthetic judgments would include a standard for a "universal voice" (Kant, KU, 5:216) without assimilating or imposing our self-concerned interests. Moreover, even the call for "impartiality" and being devoid of self-motivated concerns indicate that disinterestedness is not *anthropocentric*. In contrast, it urges us to detain from imposing our own practical desires and needs. In other words, the otherness of nature and *anthropogenericism* are not one and same even though they might look like. The latter is the ontology of how we *make* judgments. Adopting nature's

otherness does not necessarily lead us to have a hierarchical, *anthropocentric* relation with nature.

In short, maintaining the subject-object dichotomy does not entail objectification of nature nor detachment from it. In contrast, aesthetic and other modes of valuing nature can assist “thorough-going absorption and a sympathetic and respectful attitude towards the environment” (Brady, 2003, 70). Accepting “a degree of distance,” does not necessarily lead to an elitist, alien relationship. As Brady puts it, via preserving nature’s “otherness,” in sublime, humans could set a “close relationship,” with nature but at the same time enable others to be themselves. This is the way how “enough distance,” is preserved in any friendship (Brady, 2003, 142). Friends have to let the other to be who they are without assimilating them, otherwise it would not be a friendship but slavery.

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The Cruelty of Form?

Notes on the Social-Theoretical Aspects of Adorno's Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I draw attention to the social-theoretical underpinnings without which Adorno's views on modern art and the nature of aesthetic experience cannot be understood. These underpinnings are crucial to Adorno's aesthetics, a fact that is often overlooked by his critics. At the same time, fleshing out the premises that Adorno's aesthetic theory rests on provides a starting point for more thorough and valid criticisms of his views. More specifically, this starting point consists of questioning the idea of "domination of nature" as the pseudo-transcendental foundation of societies and, by mediation, of artistic labour.

1. Introduction

Adorno's aesthetic theory has received rather constant attention since the end of the 1990's. This newest wave of reception has moved away from the influence of post-structuralism, but still considerations on Adorno's social theory, an *a priori* condition of his theory of art, remain largely marginal. Paying attention to this social-theoretical background helps to clarify our understanding of the conditions, and hence of the scope and actuality of Adorno's aesthetics. Bringing forth some of these underlying assumptions at the same time reveals certain limitations of Adorno's theory of art. These limitations, however, do not so much call for a replacement or dismissal of his view of the essence of art in modern society as a continuation of it, and in any case offer useful points of departure for rethinking the sociality of art.

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2. From Social Theory...

Before writing *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the joint work with Horkheimer where the modern condition is put into a speculative historical perspective, Adorno's views on social reality emerge as part of his sociological essays on music. The texts from this period, beginning with "On the Social Situation of Music" of 1932, are worth paying attention to because their social-theoretical insights explain the direction that Adorno's analytic relationship to society and sociology came to take.

2.1. "On the Social Situation of Music"

Adorno begins "On the Social Situation of Music" by providing a picture of society as a totalized closure and music's position in it. The bourgeois practice, still alive in the 19th Century, of "domestic cultivation of music" has been swallowed by "the dialectic of capitalistic development" which has ended up, on the one hand, in a total rationalization of music and, on the other, in the complete social alienation of modern music. In other words, music in the present is either a direct extension of the social order without the mediating effect of home and family or so autonomous that it has the character of complete asociality. The alienation of autonomous music, a "social fact", "cannot be corrected within music but only ... through the change of society."¹ That is, it is not modern music that is to be, in a sense, "blamed" for being so impenetrable, but this contradiction is caused by a society that is hostile to genuine individuality, experience and expression. Society, in short, is so unsatisfactory that autonomous artistic expression necessarily retreats into a state that seems one of hibernation.

However, Adorno does not address the stated change of society, the essay's positive pole contra "capitalistic development", in political terms, as a concrete, positive possibility. Rather, he presents societal change only as a regulative idea that is gained through a negation of what exists, as a form of liberating non-communication. This, indeed, is what autonomous musical composition is about: societal change is a non-concrete utopian possibility, an experience that seems to be open somewhat exclusively to and within art. The present pinnacle of autonomous music for

¹ Adorno 1932/2002, pp. 391–2.

Adorno is Schoenberg's twelve-tone system, through which he articulates the performatively critical power of music as non-communication and non-expression. By this Adorno means that only the "immanent problems" of the musical "material" – meaning both the concrete sounds and their mediation through musical tradition, especially the diatonic principle – are worth bringing into a piece of music.² It is through such an immanent, self-enclosed and riddle-like existence that music can create a reflective experience where a subject can see its alienation and unfreedom in society. The outcome of such artistic experience is not a model for social change but an upheld possibility of such a thing.

Because true societal change is only conceived by Adorno as a regulative idea, he categorically rejects both the artistic intention and possibility of the rise of a proletarian "class-consciousness" through music. The proletariat itself is so thoroughly "suppressed" that any music produced on the terms of its consciousness would simply reproduce the proletariat as it is under the present condition of "class domination".³ Against this tendency, Adorno's insistence is to uphold the gap between autonomous music and the proletariat so long as the proletariat remains ideologically tied to the capitalist order, i.e. well into the foreseeable and imaginable future. Interestingly, use of the term "class domination" with reference to the social sphere seems rather rudimentary in light of what follows in the text: an equivalence drawn by Adorno between bourgeois and proletarian satisfaction in the aesthetic sphere. There is a quick shift from "class domination" to capitalism as a total system of domination that, in a sense, forms the economic base of fascism just as much as that of "light music" which "satisfies immediate needs, not only those of the bourgeoisie, but of all of society."⁴ In other words, Adorno assigns this totalized context of light satisfaction – both of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie – to the dialectic of capitalist production, which is ideologically internalized by both and thereby controls the fulfilment of their desires from above, allowing no escape.

After this, Adorno introduces terms like "bourgeois rationalization"

² Adorno 1932/2002, p. 399.

³ Adorno 1932/2002, p. 410.

⁴ Adorno 1932/2002, p. 425.

and “bourgeois rational society”⁵. He uses them to refer to the process by which liberal capitalist competition necessarily leads to monopoly capitalism, and the equivalent phenomena of this process in the sphere of music. Adorno claims that it “is the decisive factor in the history of recent vulgar music that the ... growing vacuity and banalization of light music corresponds exactly to the *industrialization* of production” and that the “authors of light music were forced into mass production by inconceivably intense competition”.⁶ This, Adorno claims, ended in a trust system, typical of monopoly capitalism, creating a technologically superior production procedure that eliminated, together with competition, the last aesthetically progressive remains from light music. The same is true of jazz, which Adorno thinks is perhaps even more standardized in its levels of production.⁷ The general argument here is that it is essentially the relations of production (capitalist competition) accelerated by the mode of production (industrial techniques) that is the origin of light music’s totalization into vulgar music.

All in all, Adorno paints the picture of a highly developed, increasingly rationalized capitalism that, as inherently proto-fascist, controls the desires of both the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat. In the field of music this control can be resisted only by the musical avant-garde and those who are able to appreciate this avant-garde properly as a specific relationship to the social present, articulated through the immanent problems of musical form that open up an emancipating space of non-communication and non-identity. However, the “dialectic of capitalistic development” that Adorno presents as the root of the social totality seems to be subordinate to a larger historic-philosophical context that provides a certain silent backdrop of the essay. Especially the introduction of “class domination” appears close to redundant, because the larger context is in any case viewed as a self-enclosed totality, where the bourgeois is just as much unconscious as the proletariat. Although Adorno presents some valid and interesting observations about the negative effects of modern capitalism with regard to music, especially the other pole – a genuine form of aesthetic experience – seems to presume something more as its justifying backdrop than capital-

⁵ Adorno 1932/2002, p. 427.

⁶ Adorno 1932/2002, p. 428; italics in the original.

⁷ Adorno 1932/2002, p. 430.

ist development and indeed has a theological tinge to it. Because of what is hereby still left unsaid, the essay is a sharp, if rather one-sided, verdict about the social situation of light music, but the social situation of progressive music and especially the driving motivation of the text, the aim and hope of social change, remain vague. In short, due to his strong sense of society as a closed totality, Adorno presents the unsatisfactory aspects of music as a social force with much greater clarity than the progressive ones. The progressive force of music as a possibility for social change – the only valid justification for the practice of art – is more akin to idealistic vagueness.

2.2. “*On Jazz*”

In important respects, “On Jazz” from 1936 repeats the argument in a similar way, but the essay is more detailed in its musical analysis than “Social Situation” and focuses more on the aspect of subjective experience. It can, therefore, be understood as an elaboration on the formal qualities of light music presented in the 1932 essay.

Of these formal qualities, Adorno especially emphasizes the appearance of different rhythmic gimmicks that wish to appear raunchy while still remaining absolutely tied to the eight-bar period. However, he also detects “the same simultaneity of excess and rigidity”⁸ in harmony, melody and sound, too. He analyses these features as parts of the “marketability” and the overall commodity-character of jazz and views it in a quasi-Bourdieuian light, as a sort of social capital for both “the well-trained upper class, which knows the right dance steps” and the “proletariat” that identifies with its oppressors: both share the same “mutilated instinctual structure” that jazz appeals to.⁹ This amounts to jazz being “pseudo-democratic”, in which it is a reflection of “the current political sphere”; it is obvious that Adorno has fascism in mind when he states that “the more democratic jazz is, the worse it becomes.”¹⁰ Throughout, the view that marketability and commodification have a fascist tendency is implicated. This is to be understood against that fact that Adorno was writing from his exile in

⁸ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 471.

⁹ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 474.

¹⁰ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 475.

Oxford, England because a shift from capitalism to fascism is essentially what had just happened in his home country. Not surprisingly, then, Adorno repeats the basic claim of his “Social Situation” essay by connecting jazz *qua* capitalist commodity to a totalized order that subjective experience is doomed to repeat. He implicitly grounds the “mutilated instinctual structure” of the proletariat on the presumably sado-masochistic character of the workers who wish to identify with their oppressors. This Oedipal loop is offered to explain the ensuing musical totality of a thwarted democracy, and the popularity of jazz among the working class. In this situation, Adorno claims, the “primordial”, or bodily-instinctual, effect of jazz is merely a calculated moment of modern commodity production, and the result is: “With jazz, a disenfranchised subjectivity plunges from the commodity world into the commodity world; the system does not allow for a way out.”¹¹

Further, Adorno sees the pseudo-democratic nature of jazz also exemplified in the production process of a song with its division of labour into the composer(s), the author of the text, the arranger and the band. This, Adorno claims, is not testimony to a systematic and thoughtful attitude to musical production, but rather to an amateurish procedure which “merely outlines the parody of a future collective process of composition.”¹² Here, a specific social-theoretical stance is present. Fascism is essentially treated by Adorno and his peers as a false reconciliation of the contradictions of capitalism, a spectacle of a revolution; and some years later Adorno writes that the “rising collectivist order is a mockery of a classless one.”¹³ This omnipresence of token forms of a right state of spontaneity, freedom and collectivity testifies, on the one hand, to the utopian longing present in people’s subjective structure and, on the other, its realization in a form distorted by the relations of production or, more generally, by social reality. This echoes Horkheimer’s view on the progressive potential of egoism that was distorted by a corrupt process of civilization.

By appealing to a mutilated, unfree instinctual structure, jazz, according to Adorno, not only closes the way to a utopian future, but it is also a way of forgetting the past through watered-down treatment of its own mu-

¹¹ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 478.

¹² Adorno 2002/1936, p. 481–82.

¹³ Adorno 1974, p. 23.

sical influences such as impressionism: “Even yesterday’s music must first be rendered harmless by jazz, must be released from its historical element, before it is ready for the market.”¹⁴ Jazz, that is to say, allows nothing else but the present, just like it allows nothing to escape from its rigid idioms regarding rhythm, harmony, melody and sound. It is a mockery of true happiness and instinctual freedom.

Finally, jazz is for Adorno both pseudo-archaic in its appeal to a “primitive” or “natural” side of subjectivity and pseudo-modern or pseudo-individual in its simultaneous mobilizing of formalist experimentation and a completely ossified structure.¹⁵ This general insight of a false reconciliation of two musical traits remained important for Adorno; in 1963 he writes that the basic strategy of popular music is “a mixture of streamlining, photographic hardness and precision on the one hand, and individualistic residues, sentimentality and an already rationally disposed and adapted romanticism on the other”.¹⁶ At this point of the jazz essay, Adorno proceeds to point to the march-like elements in jazz’s rhythmic and instrumentation and refers to its popularity both in Italy and Germany.¹⁷ Here the logic is crystal-clear: jazz is a phenomenon of consumer capitalism and commodification, from which it follows that it is prone to quasi-military elements, which again makes it usable to fascism. The commodity form, then, is always already violent, militaristic and fascist.

However, an important point is that the historical implications go much further back than the capitalist commodity form, to the archaic mankind, and this sheds light on the unstated aspect of the “Social Situation” essay, too: “Insofar as dancing is synchronous movement, the tendency to march has been present in dance from the very beginning; thus jazz is connected in its origins with the march and its history lays bare this relationship.”¹⁸ Adorno detects a similar, archaic element of social control in the verse-chorus structure, in which “the single lead singer or principal dancer” first makes their individual observations about the world “in order to be con-

¹⁴ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 484.

¹⁵ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 485. Only the “more advanced” elements of jazz that “the layman cannot understand”, Adorno points out, were banned by the Nazis (ibid.).

¹⁶ Adorno 1975, p. 15.

¹⁷ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 485.

¹⁸ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 486.

firmed and socially objectified in the chorus”, a structure which expresses the identification of the individuals in the audience with the social whole. Indeed, Adorno’s anthropological conclusion here is that the principal dancer or lead singer is “nothing other than a – perhaps superseded – human sacrifice.”¹⁹ Adorno thinks that “the subject of jazz” has taken onto itself this function. This subject wants to be an “eccentric” and abandon the social norm, be “potent”, but realizes that the only way to be potent is actually to “be castrated”, assimilated into the community – in other words, the subject ostensibly rejects exterior censorship but internalizes the exact same censorship in order to “be ‘able’”.²⁰ In short, jazz is the music of “oppressed peoples” and stands for “a mechanism of identification with their own oppression”, an “amalgam of a destroyed subjectivity.”²¹

One of the common denominators of these early essays is how they constantly hint at the fascist essence of capitalism and, vice versa, the nature of fascism as an appendage of capitalism. This is illustrated both on the level of social structures and on the more micrological level of experience (like that of a jazz enthusiast) and subjective positions (like the status of the composer in “New Objectivity”). There are, of course, fully justified reasons for drawing such connections – the connections between omnipresent entertainment, capitalism and fascist tendencies, is very clear in our time as well. However, those of the essays’ elements that remain more definitive for Adorno’s later work are of an anthropological sort. For instance, “On Jazz” reveals that which is left between the lines in the “Social Situation” essay by adding into the mixture archaic barbarism, with human sacrifices and assimilation into the collective. Here the question arises what, exactly, is the role of capitalism for Adorno’s views. There is a logic that appears to suggest that capitalist production brings no qualitative difference into the practices and socio-psychological mechanisms that jazz embodies and animates. Rather, it is the quantitative enhancement of moments that have characterized human communities all along. Accordingly, the relationship of social classes is not carefully addressed. It is merely stated that the classes’ forms of enjoyment converge in that they are mutilated and controlled by the forces of production, and, with the

¹⁹ Adorno 2002/1936, pp. 487–8.

²⁰ Adorno 2002/1936, pp. 490–1.

²¹ Adorno 2002/1936, p. 491.

help of Freud, that the dominated identify with the dominators. Again, both the ones in control and the dominated seem to have no hope since everyone, and the whole that they form, is somehow kept together by its own immanence, the source of which Adorno does not at any point claim to be capitalism specifically. This brings with it the question whether the power of the commodity form is really so strong, and where does this form originate.

2.3. *Dialectic of Enlightenment and After*

Considering this generalizing anthropological tendency, it is not surprising that the Marxist language of these early essays waned with the publication of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), where seemingly socio-political analysis gives way to the writers' famous and much discussed anthropological perspective on the condition of humanity.²² This condition is not viewed by Adorno and co-author Horkheimer to be a matter of specific societies and politico-economic organization, but a matter of the corruption of reason in the history of civilization. Reason, as the attempt to identify that which is non-identical, is the common factor that runs through mythical constructs and organized religion all the way to modern science, and this has been reflected in human praxis, too, which has developed towards ever more rigid domination of both the inner and the outer world. More precisely, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, reason is equivalent with the domination of nature, both that within and outside subjects, and this is the immutable, anthropological matrix connecting all of humanity.

Here a short but illustrative historical excursion is in place. Namely, the moment when Adorno explicitly distances himself from Marxist critique of capitalism seems to be precisely the editing process of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. James Schmidt compares the early 1944 version of the book (printed as a mimeograph for internal use at the Institute for Social Research) with the 1947 Querido print version, which Adorno prepared for publishing without Horkheimer. Adorno's editing boils down to switching specifically Marxist concepts and references to capitalism to more general concepts and references to modern social structuration. Schmidt's itemization is revealing:

²² Horkheimer and Adorno 2002.

'[E]xploitation' becomes 'enslavement' ... 'capitalism' becomes 'the economic system' ... 'exchange value' becomes simply 'value' ... 'class society' becomes 'society' ... 'exploitation' becomes 'injustice' ... and 'capital' becomes 'economy' ... The 1947 text is making a claim that applies to all societies at all times. The 1944 text is making a rather specific claim about class domination.²³

Schmidt's conclusion is correct, but an addition must be made: such a mechanic move in terms of the object of criticism could not have been possible in the first place had the original text not inherently enabled it. (The process is ironically close to what Adorno and Horkheimer scorn the culture industry for, namely, the switching of details while holding on to the same standardized structures.)

After the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the writers' intention of producing another book that would provide both a more detailed material theory of the post-war, administered exchange society and a positive concept of enlightenment was never acted upon. Rather, Adorno concentrated on cultural critique and aesthetics. Further, in his sociology lectures he precisely made a point of *not* attempting to define the concept of society, lest the concept become undialectical.²⁴ With this, Adorno gave up the task of formulating a material theory of society.²⁵ Moreover, Adorno never backed away from the view that the essential condition of modern humanity is defined by a form of reason that has developed since the dawn of civilization. Regarding the positive concept of enlightenment, there are only hints in Adorno's writings to one notion: reconciliation with nature. Adorno never defined this notion clearly, but it is obvious that such a notion entails the concept of nature as *good* nature; in *Negative Dialectics* (1966) he speaks, for instance, of "the impulse before the ego", the "archaic" in the subject that is distorted by reason.²⁶ Herbert Marcuse was perhaps merely more open about his romanticism when he, in *Eros and Civilization*, defined the concrete possibility of utopia in terms of reconciliation with the drives.

²³ Schmidt, 1998, 813–14.

²⁴ Adorno 2000, 38.

²⁵ Wiggershaus 1994, 599–600.

²⁶ Adorno 1973, 221–22.

Hereby, the social-theoretical background of Adorno's cultural critique and negative aesthetics is foregrounded only provisionally. It remains more a negative anthropology under the topos "domination of nature" than a theory of, say, high capitalism. Reading *Aesthetic Theory* with this in mind, many of its seemingly obscure notions become more tangible.

3. ... to Aesthetic Theory

This anthropological background indeed haunts *Aesthetic Theory*. Examples, again, are many, but maybe the most interesting section in these terms is the one where Adorno addresses the concept of the ugly. For Adorno, the presence of the ugly in modern art is inherently tied to the cultic and archaic origins of art. However, it is not the case that the archaic simply returns in modernity as a forgotten, positively redemptive form of life and being. This would imply a form of anti-modernism that calls for a "return" to an imagined past as a nostalgic connection with (human) nature. Rather, it is the negativity and violence already present in the archaic itself that makes its way into modern art's consciousness as something inherent to aesthetic production. In Adorno's Marx-derived understanding, aesthetic production never got rid of the antagonist, violent relationship of nature and social labour, and this consciousness silently shakes the basis of classical beauty and finally makes classicism flip into modernity. That is, the past haunts modernity, not as something suffocated and suffering in the iron grip of modern rationality (like a new age-explanation might run), but as itself already something suffocating and indeed a prologue of reason. Here *Aesthetic Theory* repeats the logic of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: there is no hope in the past other than in remembering it as a prelude to, and a cause of, the present.

Before explaining Adorno's stance in more detail, it is useful to make an initial distinction between three levels of ugliness that are implied in his treatment. First, there is ugliness as something represented, in the object that the artwork portrays – for example, the frightening deities and demons of tribal art. Second, there is ugliness on the level of the formal configuration of the artwork, such as dissonance in music. Third, there is the domain of artistic labour itself. As peculiar as it may sound to consider the very category of aesthetic labour from the perspective of aesthetic con-

cepts, this is Adorno's route, because he is interested in the large question of art's validity and role for humankind: what can be achieved by aesthetic labour in terms of the very fate of humanity? Part of his answer is that there is something ugly and barbaric in aesthetic labour as such, and that art therefore must criticize itself – but this should be done immanently, through the categories of autonomy and aesthetic experience because they represent a valid but, in view of history, failed ideal.

Adorno begins the section on ugliness by claiming that, obviously, the category of the ugly cannot anymore be conceived of as merely the negation of beauty. This challenge to aesthetic theory is not put forward only by modern art and its tendency toward ugliness but, Adorno points out, “[a]rchaic and then traditional art, especially since the fauns and silenoi of Hellenism, abound in the portrayal of subjects that were considered ugly.”²⁷ The presence of this ugliness should be understood, and as a true dialectician, Adorno's method is to look at the present – modern art – in order to understand the past. There is a link, a historical continuity, that connects the ugliness of modern art to archaic ugliness, and Adorno regards them as essentially the same ugliness, only transformed and reconfigured by the progress of civilization.

If this is to hold true, Adorno must explain the position of ugliness within classicism – the reign of beauty – as well. Indeed, he illustratively underscores that Hegel, as a representative of classicism and the ideal of beauty, does not equate beauty with harmony.²⁸ Rather, Hegel thinks that a beautiful work must include an underlying tension by hinting at its other, at what the aesthetic appearance conceals by its very appearance. Beauty is not a static relationship of perfect forms but a tension, or a distance; implied here is a materialist perspective, from which spirit can only be understood to be present as an absence created by the work. Adorno proceeds to point out that the ugly is even more deeply seated in artistic creation than as a moment of beauty or moment of form in general. In a sense, ugliness is present in the very labour that initiates the artwork. Here, Adorno refers to the relationship of humans and nature as a violent one: “The impression of ugliness of technology and industrial landscapes cannot be ad-

²⁷ Adorno 2004, 46.

²⁸ Adorno 2004, 46.

equately explained in formal terms, and aesthetically well-integrated functional forms, in Adolf Loos's sense, would probably leave the impression of ugliness unchanged. ... In technique, violence toward nature is not reflected through artistic portrayal, but it is immediately apparent."²⁹ That is, for Adorno ugliness is inherent to technique as such, and hence to artistic production insofar as it shares on a very basic level the same principles as other forms of production. The very act of forming material into something that it is not, something whose aim is not reconciled with nature, is violent. This, and only this, is why modern artworks and industrial landscapes are tied to ugliness in Adorno's view: human praxis *qua* violence radiates through both (and in artworks as self-conscious). "Domination of nature", therefore, is art's "original sin"³⁰. At the beginning of *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno indeed claims that aesthetic production and production in the social sphere both share in "the dialectic of nature and its domination", and artworks, although they are "windowless monads", "resemble [the dialectic of nature and its domination] without imitating it."³¹ More specifically,

[t]he aesthetic force of production is the same as that of productive labour and has the same teleology; and what may be called aesthetic relations of production – all that in which the productive force is embedded and in which it is active – are sedimentations or imprintings of social relations of production.³²

Such an account of course implies that if the aims, the underlying teleology, of the social sphere does not change, art will necessarily carry with it ugliness, and the more social reality is alienated from nature and violent toward it, the more insistent the presence of ugliness will become. Art cannot be redeemed of its guilt, of its ugliness, without the redemption of the whole that it is part of, i.e. there is no emancipation without that of society.

So, if this element of violence-as-ugliness is at the very root of the artistic process, modern art is art that constantly brings itself to ques-

²⁹ Adorno 2004, 46.

³⁰ Adorno 2004, 50.

³¹ Adorno 2004, 6.

³² Adorno 2004, 6.

tion. It does not make ugliness an aim in itself, a juvenile gesture of shock against bourgeois aestheticism, but lets the inherent ugliness of the artistic process and the immanent problems of artistic labour unfold and become part of the work. Regarding this objective status of ugliness, Adorno is very clear-cut: "Ugliness would vanish if the relation of man to nature renounced its repressive character, which perpetuates ... the repression of man."³³

Immediately after this, Adorno connects ugliness to what is historically older, the archaic. As stated above, for him the historically older is part of the very anthropological context and historical continuity of the domination of nature that led to the present. In this theory, consciousness and civilization have from their very beginning been preconditioned by alienation from nature, first through a fear of nature, which was dealt with by mimetically re-enacting the terrifying otherness of nature in rituals. Then, as humans through technical innovation were enlightened about their own prevalence over nature, art began to depict the mythical forces as something to be negotiated and tarried with, even fooled.³⁴ That is, art became a vehicle for the enlightening transition whose message is that humans are the masters of nature, that ideas understandable to humans precondition *fysis*, and not the other way around. Beauty, again, became possible only as a form of this mastery. However, this mastery, according to Adorno's modulation of materialist history, is illusory. Nature is still the master of humans as inner nature, as the impulse toward freedom that animates subjectivity, and underneath all socially mediated distortions it really aims at the reconciliation of inner and outer nature. Aesthetic labour is, for Adorno, the most obvious and powerful way to momentarily realize or at least anticipate such reconciliation of the inner nature of subjects with outer nature. But in social reality the older, mythical consciousness is preserved as the fear of inner nature. The aesthetic parallel to this is that ugliness cannot be left behind as long as such fear and domination are the guiding forces of social reality as a system of identities, language, meaning and subjective intention. Ugliness remains alive at the most basic level, as the founding principle of the labour in aesthetic production, as the myth-

³³ Adorno 2004, 47.

³⁴ Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002, 35–62.

ical flipside of beauty. At this point, it becomes clear that Adorno thinks of beauty as in fact the negation of ugliness – both in the historical development of culture and in the genesis of subjectivity. Beauty is gained as domination of nature.

To illustrate his point, Adorno refers to the myth about the birth of Pegasus, in which Perseus (the male representative of humanity) slays Medusa (representative of the Other, the non-identical, raw existence), whereby Pegasus (representative of beauty) is born.³⁵ Adorno interprets the myth as revealing something essential about civilization's relationship to beauty. The moral, according to him, is that Pegasus cannot forget its origin in this act of killing. Therefore, "[c]ruelty steps forward unadorned from artworks as soon as their own spell is broken"³⁶, that is, as art itself destroys its self-proclaimed autonomy that constitutes the possibility of beauty. Modern art, in other words, shows that in its heart of hearts, beauty was ugly all along:

As Nietzsche knew, art's own gesture is cruel. In aesthetic forms, cruelty becomes imagination: Something is excised from the living, from the body of language, from tones, from visual experience. The purer the form and the higher the autonomy of the works, the more cruel they are. ... What art in the broadest sense works with, it oppresses: This is the ritual of the domination of nature that lives on in play.³⁷

In short, for Adorno a modern artwork is a way of remembering the violence present in aesthetic labour and, thereby, in human labour *in toto*. Hereby a subject can, through an overwhelming experience that reverberates "with the protohistory of subjectivity, of ensoulment"³⁸, recall both its own subjective genesis and history as something violent, recall the blind spots of socialized subjectivity that have not been enlightened. Artworks initiate such experience by turning the instrumental reason of society into aesthetic labour and thereby reflect society's contradictions in their forms. Ugliness is part of artworks in that they become ever more technical and

³⁵ Adorno 2004, 65.

³⁶ Adorno 2004, 65.

³⁷ Adorno 2004, 65.

³⁸ Adorno 2004, 112–3.

rationalized together with society and thereby dialectically negate what Adorno terms “the mythical terror of beauty”³⁹.

This is why artworks appear as instances of sensually mediated reason throughout *Aesthetic Theory* and therefore must become auto-critical assemblages of disintegrating forms; this is how they emphasize their own corruptness and anticipate redemption as reconciliation with nature, the non-identical. For instance, reinterpreting Stendhal’s definition of art as a *promesse de bonheur*, Adorno claims that, as opposed to the products of the “culture industry”, art “must break its promise in order to stay true to it.”⁴⁰ Following this line of Adorno’s paradoxical formulations, it could be said that aesthetic experience is the experience about the impossibility of aesthetic experience, of something that is legitimately and only aesthetic. Artworks are saying: *I am not free, and your freedom is possible through an experience of the unfreedom in my appearance of freedom*. Artworks appear for Adorno as suffering, and through an experience of this suffering, as the end-product of the aesthetic spectacle, the formal possibility of freedom for the experiencing subject is maintained. Essentially, the redemptive aspect of artworks hinges on the instability of artworks’ formal configuration, the appearance of their wholeness. From this perspective, for instance, Mark Rothko’s monumental late works cannot be taken as positive reminders of the eternal, where all is reconciled; rather, they must be turned against themselves and viewed as wholly human and valid but failed attempts to articulate such a state, which must remain utterly other. The same would go for, say, Ernesto Neto’s recent works with their comforting, womb-like spaces crafted solely from soft, natural materials. As peaceful and tranquil they can be, from Adorno’s perspective they should be experienced through their un-truthfulness and seen as painful reminders of how far we are from having the right to dwell in such inertia. This change of perspective follows precisely from Adorno’s view that form is inherently an element of cruelty, of forcefully imposing coherence, meaning and spirit where there in fact is nothing but mediation. This is the aspect of the “domination of nature that lives on in play”. Logically, then, if artworks are to be justified with regard to their function to the fate of humanity,

³⁹ Adorno 2004, 65.

⁴⁰ Adorno 2004, 311.

there must be in them a negative relationship to this cruelty, and this cannot be achieved positively but only by going through the suffering present. If, as Adorno claims, form is the element that makes artworks part of the present social reality, then the dissolution of form, or at least cracks in it, represent hope, that which is beyond the present.

4. Conclusion

From what has been presented above, it should be clear that Adorno's theory of modern art holds on two conditions. One, if we accept that the fundamental condition of modern social reality is a structure of reason that predates and transcends different forms of modern societies; and two, if we accept that the yardstick for the ethical progress of human thought and praxis is reconciliation with nature. This basic structure in Adorno's thought brings forth specific possibilities for reassessing the sociality of art. First, if one questions the prevalence of dominating reason as the pseudo-transcendental foundation of societies, it becomes arguable that the principle of artistic labour is always-already compromised as a form of domination. Second, if one doubts the implicit link between a reasonable social reality and nature (for example, why not think about utopia as a technologically advanced state) then the negativity of artworks becomes undermined and their discursive aspects can be appreciated more delicately. In both cases, Adorno's emphasis on the formal organization of artworks becomes arguable, and representation is allowed more space as a valid aspect of art's social character.

However, this does not completely undermine a possibility, or even a need, for a dialectical understanding of an artworks' autonomy, its essence as a shaky construction. It is just that there is no need to ground this shakiness on a concept of aesthetic labour as domination of nature, as Adorno does. But it is indeed doubtful that even the most heteronomous art, like straightforwardly political art – such as Banksy's graffitis depicting missing Latino women – could be conceived without a certain element of sadness about the justification of the work. It is, after all, only a representation, only a symbolic configuration. This does not mean that the work in question is unambiguously corrupt, but it does immanently pose the question about art's essence and its right to exist – the very question that opens

Aesthetic Theory. After all, if we simply consider pictorial art to be, in an unambiguous way, a depiction of an idea, we might lose the paradoxality, evasiveness and self-awareness that make art art. Here, we might find help from taking Adorno's challenge seriously.

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Beauty Before the Eyes of Others

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ABSTRACT. This paper pursues the philosophical significance of a relatively unexplored point of Platonic aesthetics: the social dimension of beauty. The social dimension of beauty resides in its conceptual connection to shame and honour. This dimension of beauty is fundamental to the aesthetic education of the *Republic*, as becoming virtuous for Plato presupposes a desire to *appear* and to be admired as beautiful. The ethical significance of beauty, shame, and honour redound to an ethically rich notion of appearing before others which corresponds to a public conception of virtue. I suggest how this dimension of beauty in Plato – particularly the emphasis on beautification – proves fruitful for reconsidering the scope and the nature of aesthetic experience.

Inquiries into the concept of beauty in Greek antiquity quickly find themselves in foreign territory. The ancient concept (*to kalon, kallos*) is not – and could not have been – centrally related to categories of art and nature, the fine arts and taste, or autonomous aesthetic experience that have inflected the concept of beauty since the eighteenth century. This observation has often been marshalled toward the conclusion that *if* ancient Greeks possessed a concept of beauty at all, it must be incongruent with or even less developed than its modern cousin. Several philosophers and classical scholars have recently inverted the terms of this argument, however. Rather than presupposing the boundary lines now thought to demarcate beauty, these thinkers have appropriated ancient discussions to criticize what they regard as overly narrow or abstracted modern notions of beauty and the aesthetic. Others have relied on Platonic criticisms of poetry or the relation between the beautiful and the good to show the contiguity of aesthetic and ethical evaluation. Still others have reinvigorated Plato's

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view that beauty is the object of erotic love, particularly as against disinterested judgment.¹ I would like to explore the connection for Plato between beauty and shame and honour to evoke the *social dimension* of beauty.

I.

I begin from a programmatic passage in Book 3 of the *Republic*. Here we find Plato acutely aware that material culture – buildings passed, clothes worn, prayers sung, music heard – imperceptibly and gradually moulds character. Not only poets, Socrates states, but painters, architects, and all other craftsmen embody images of character in their crafts (*Rep.* 401b). His point is that all corners of a culture decisively impact the kind of person one admires and aspires to be, or can even imagine as a viable way of life. This horizon constitutes a foundational sense of what is beautiful (*kalon*) and ugly (*aischron*), from which one's attractions, aversions, beliefs, values, and self-image will grow. The aim of musical-poetic education is to direct this sensibility to what is *genuinely* beautiful:

... we must seek out craftsmen who have a natural talent for capturing what is truly beautiful and graceful (*tēn tou kalou te kai euschēmonos phusin*) so that our young, dwelling as it were in a healthy place, may be benefited from all over. Something of those beautiful works will strike their eyes and ears (*tōn kalōn ergōn ... ti prosbalē*) and, like a breeze bringing health from good places, will bring them unawares (*lanthanē*) right from childhood on to likeness, friendship, and concord with beautiful reason (*eis homoiotēta te kai philian kai sumphōnian tō kalō logō agousa*).² (*Rep.* 401cd)

¹ Incongruence and underdevelopment: see notably Croce 1995, pp. 156-66 and Kristeller 1951, pp. 498-506, whose continued influence is felt in Kosman 2010. Halliwell 2002, pp. 6-13 excellently outlines the critical strategy and its need. Hanson 1998 provides an exemplary defence of a Platonic view that ethics and aesthetics are contiguous, Nehamas 2007 that beauty is the object of love; but see Murdoch 1970 for a stimulating, if idiosyncratic, attempt to unite Platonic *erōs* and Kantian disinterest.

² All translations are my own. 'Beautiful reason' for *tō kalō logō* at *Rep.* 401d is meant to convey both a substantive conception of reason, on which one acquires rational capacities, and associations of *logos* with proportion and order. A difficulty here is that the phrase looks forward to *logon* and *tou logou* at 402a, neither of whose senses is obvious. Many take *tou logou* as *the* reason or explanation why something is beautiful and ugly. Even

Socrates assumes that one will recognize, be attracted to and emulate the beautiful character of a virtuous person if and only if surrounded by what is truly beautiful. Part of the reason why *beauty* should be privileged is that it makes virtue – more specifically, an ideal of a ‘graceful’ *kalos kagathos* – sensible and attractive. Beauty is particularly apt for structuring one’s most elemental perceptions, pleasures, and desires toward a good and flourishing human life. But this explanation, though correct, is limited. To invest interest in beauty in its relation to virtue and the good is to pass over what is distinctive about this concept and perhaps most illuminating for us: its social character.

The classical Greek concept of beauty (*to kalon, kallos*) is a thick, not a thin, evaluative concept. By this I mean that it fuses description and evaluation and, more significantly, that its content and force depend on its role within concrete social practices.³ One function of the concept is to mobilize admiration (and, by contrast, disgust), envy, and emulation, all of which in this conceptual scheme bring ethical evaluation under the rubric of shame and honour. This connection to shame and honour has been thought to take us too far from beauty indeed, either because we are now on ethical terrain or because we do not call deeds or deaths ‘beautiful’ so readily as Pericles would call them *kalon*. Most therefore designate the *kalon* as the *fine, noble, or admirable* – and *beautiful* only derivatively in erotic or ‘aesthetic contexts.’⁴ But we might instead consider the fact that Socrates moves from a clear concern over beautiful environs *without changing step* to the claim that if an older male lover does not consort with his beloved “for the sake of what is beautiful” (*tōn kalōn charin*), he will be reproached as “uncultured through music and poetry and inappreciative of beauty” (*amousias kai apeirokalias*, *Rep.* 403bc), for want of the acculturation Socrates was just discussing.⁵ We are uneasy claiming that the older

so, emphasis should rest on the notion that one ‘embraces’ reason as such if and only if already familiar with or akin to it (*di’ oikeiotēta malista*, 402a).

³ Here I follow Williams 1985, pp. 128–9, 141, 218 n7 and, before him, Geertz 1973, pp. 3–30.

⁴ This position has become standard in translations and commentaries. See for a defence Woodruff 1982, pp. 110–11 and Konstan 2014, esp. p. 39. Kosman 2010 presents well the conceptual difficulties.

⁵ Cf. the rare noun *apeirokalia* (lack of experience or appreciation of beauty) again at *Rep.* 405b: this aesthetically and ethically vulgar condition disposes one to a petty and

male should act for the sake of the beautiful, and unsure about what this could mean. But that is the point. The point has little to do with pederasty and everything to do with the fact that we insist on a border between the aesthetic and the ethical that Plato does not draw. That border is particularly problematic when we feel at home on one side but not the other, and so unclear how we might get across. What is needed is to recover a concept of beauty rich enough to support the kind of considerations that bind it to shame and honour.

What kinds of considerations are those? Primarily concerns over preserving self-image and status. We may come to this point by noticing that the principal target of the aesthetic education is what Plato calls spirit or the spirited element of the soul, *thumos* or *to thumoeides*. The many powerful manifestations of spirit, such as anger, shame, pride, and competitive desire, organize around a sense of shame and honour. On account of spirit, adult human beings aim to *stand out* and to be admired as beautiful and not to be considered ugly and thus shameful. This they do first and foremost in terms of *shared* norms of beauty that circulate throughout a culture and that underlie their identities as members of that culture.⁶

I want ultimately to pose the question of what, philosophically, we might learn from this historical connection between beauty, shame, and honour. But I must first develop its contours and its significance for Plato's ethical psychology, at least in the *Republic*. I will suggest that the use of beauty to educate primarily spirit reflects that an ethical life requires identities that centrally involve self-presentation; and that this is ultimately so because virtue is a public affair. Beauty, on this picture, does not simply make virtue sensible and attractive. It is the currency of a fundamentally human activity to live in community and contest *before the eyes of others*.

shameful life exploiting legal loopholes.

⁶ Spirit and love of honour: *Rep.* 545a, 548cd, 550b-551a, 553b, 554e-555a; anger, shame, and high-mindedness structured: 439e-440d, 549d, 550b, 560a, 563d; primary target of primary education: 376ab, 401e-402a, 410c-412a, 429d-430c. On this view, the *kalon* is the formal object of spirit. This is to appropriate yet contest a tradition in which honour is eminently *kalon* and spirit the seat of social emotions structured by honour-based institutions; cf. Renaut 2014, pp. 26-46, 182-97, 249-60, despite his neglect of the *kalon* in this connection.

2.

One passage of the *Republic* makes particularly vivid the conceptual tie between beauty and shame. Socrates tells the tale of Leontius (appropriately named ‘Lion-like’) to introduce spirit as a third source of human motivation distinct from reason and appetite. Notice, please, the central theme of vision and visibility:

But I once heard a story, and I believe it, that Leontius, the son of Aglaion, was going up from the Piraeus along the outside of the northern wall when he saw some corpses lying at the executioner’s feet. He desired to look at them but at the same time he was disgusted and turned himself away (*duscherainoi kai apotrepoi beauton*). For some time, he struggled and covered his face (*parakaluptoito*), but finally, overpowered by the desire, with eyes pushed open wide he rushed toward the corpses and said, “Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight! (*emplēsthēte tou kalou theamatos*)”

Glaucon: I’ve heard that story myself. (*Rep.* 439e-440a)

Leontius is ashamed at wanting to gaze at the corpses, as suggested by his attempt to hide (*parakaluptoito*) and more clearly by his disgust with himself, or with his eyes. Scholars have by and large groped for a sexual explanation of his psychology, according to which Leontius feels shame at being titillated by the pallor of the corpses or by the prospect of necrophilia. More promising, I believe, is that Leontius savors the morbid thrill of the public execution, as one might a car crash, but finds it indecent to linger over the sight. The corpses, after all, are exposed for people to notice, but *only* to notice, what happens to the worst offenders in imperial Athens.⁷

The precise details of his motivational conflict need not detain us, however. What merits our attention is the complex role that beauty plays in

⁷ Cf. *Rep.* 605a, 606ab for a link between appetite and theatrical spectacle. My interpretation is closest to Ferrari 2007, p. 181, who adapts the excellent insight of Allen 2000, pp. 245-46, 251-52 into the historical legal context. The traditional interpretation depends on sexual desire being the best fit among paradigmatic appetites, but a paradigmatic appetite is not compulsory.

the mechanisms of shame, focused in Leontius' bitterly ironic and indeed very *public* cry that his eyes take their "fill of the beautiful sight." There are two inseparable aspects of his shame. The first faces Leontius himself. Leontius feels he has done something beneath himself. His ironic use of *kalon* labels not just the corpses but his desire to gaze at them ugly. This is to say that his shame discloses values that delimit the boundaries of his practical identity – what he can and cannot live with – and his shame motivates him, though ineffectually, to live up to that self-image.

The concept of beauty is central to these mechanisms. It introduces discriminations among pleasures. Beauty is pleasurable but also normative. It excludes certain pleasures as not to be pursued, particularly those one has been brought up to distaste as ugly. But such discriminations serve primarily to ennoble, to elevate. A beautiful self-image in shame attracts one toward those aspects of oneself with which one is identified or wants to identify. If properly reared in beauty, Socrates hopes, an ennobling self-image in shame can lead one closer toward developing a fully human nature, whatever that may be.

The self-directed aspect of shame reinforces a point that Bernard Williams argued with characteristic incisiveness in *Shame and Necessity*, that the Greek understanding of shame was too psychologically complex and ethically rich to be considered "unacceptably heteronomous, crudely dependent on public opinion" (Williams 1993, p. 97). Williams wanted to reject the view, which remains prevalent, that shame depends on fear of 'external' sanctions such as the reproach of witnesses, and so is less ethically mature than guilt, supposed to rely on an 'internal' individual conscience.⁸ Williams objected that the charge that shame is heteronomous presupposes a problematic notion of autonomy that ignores the way in which our identities are contingently formed by and necessarily situated in concrete social formations. Chiefly relevant for us is that the nature of spirit registers this point, not only because spirit is particularly sensitive to cultural upbringing but also, and more significantly, because its charac-

⁸ This view was expressed with particular intensity in classical scholarship by Adkins 1960. Adkins followed E.R. Dodds in taking the importance of shame at Athens to signal an early stage of ethical development, with Plato and Aristotle as intermediate figures in the 'discovery' of specifically *moral* notions of autonomy, responsibility and duty centred on the concept of the will.

teristic expressions of shame and honour are not adequately described at the level of individual psychology. These attitudes disclose a self-image, but the relevant conception of the self essentially refers to how one stands in relation to others.

Plato ensures the point is not lost. For the story of Leontius is about the eyes of others as much as his own. Notice first that when he rebukes his eyes, the executioner would have been in mind and perhaps literally in view. It does not matter whether Leontius actually notices the executioner or anyone else for that matter. As Williams duly emphasized, shame does not essentially involve fear of being seen by actual witnesses. It suffices to *imagine* how one would seem to someone, often someone whom one respects, for just the reason that one shares or aspires to share her standards of evaluation. The imagined other could even be a more abstracted ethical reference point or role model, figured perhaps – to take some choice examples from the *Republic* – as a mythic hero or god, the graceful *kalos kagathos* embodied in the cultural imagination, or, like the executioner, the instrument of Law. But what is absolutely critical to the phenomenology of shame according to Williams is that the other in shame must be genuinely other, and that means somebody who is “not just a screen for one’s own ethical ideas but is the locus of some genuine social expectations” (Williams 1993, p. 98).⁹

These psychological complexities, I propose, help us understand why Leontius cries out publicly, and in the language of beauty. Leontius is concerned with how he *appears to* some real or imagined others. Thus he humiliates himself by his outburst. He is in effect trying to save face by declaring, through his ironic use of *kalon*, that he knows what he is doing is shameful.¹⁰ More than that, the concept of beauty figures crucially because its outward vector as *appearance* captures the outward-facing aspect of his shame. This element of publicity assumes greater significance when we note, finally, that Plato has carefully framed the entire episode by

⁹ This paragraph draws also from Williams 1993, pp. 81–4.

¹⁰ Here I develop a suggestion of Burnyeat 2006, p. 11, though I disagree that Leontius is presented as being seen opening his eyes wide. It suffices to associate wide eyes with shamelessness, as does Galeottus Martius, for example, in his 1490 *De homine*, a.iii: “if the white of the eye is widely extended and visible all round, this shows shamelessness.” (Quoted in Baxandall 1988, p. 58.)

the eyes and ears of others. He stresses at the start that Socrates heard the story from somewhere, at the end that Glaucon had heard it too. Whether Leontius himself, the executioner, or someone else spread the tale (as we now do further: poor Leontius), this framing device trains *our* gazes onto the way in which self-images are informed by and presented to the evaluations of others.

This last insight brings home the full force of the conceptual connection between beauty and shame. So tight is this connection that Sophocles' Ajax, to cite an example of Williams', could express his shame at the thought of returning home stripped of glory – naked, in his words (*gumnos*, *Aj.* 464) – by proclaiming, “the noble man must either live *kalōs* or die *kalōs*”; we might now venture to translate, ‘live beautifully or die beautifully’ (*all' ē kalōs zēn ē kalōs tethnēkenai ton eugenē chrē*, 479-80). The words of Ajax remind us that Leontius's fear of disgrace takes its bearing from an honour-based aspiration to perform beautiful deeds. To perform beautiful deeds means, in this context, to be and to *seen* to be outstanding. These are not two separate motivations but one, complexly structured. If we clinically prise apart the self- and other-directed aspects of shame or honour, we risk obscuring a profound reason why these attitudes, and hence beauty, should hold such significance for Plato.

A firm sense of shame and honour is vital to becoming virtuous for Plato. I have already intimated one reason for this, namely that its absence results in an indiscriminate pursuit of any and all pleasure. But in the conceptual background behind this negative reason lies a more positive and I believe fundamental reason. Plato assumes, following a long tradition stretching back to Homeric glory, that a fully human life must be lived in concert with others and before their eyes. The ethical importance of beauty, shame and honour thus redounds to a *public* conception of virtue. Indeed, classical descriptions of virtue alight on its beauty to stress how virtue shines forth, is *manifest* or *displayed* to an *audience* struck with *delight*, as Phaedrus does for example when he praises Alcestis for sacrificing her life for her husband's, Admetus:

her deed was judged so beautifully done (*to ergon... kalon edoxen ergasasthai*) not only by mortals but even by the gods that, although the gods have given the prize of sending the soul back up from Hades to

but a select few of the many who do very beautiful things, they sent *her* soul because they were delighted (*agasthentes*) by her deed. (*Symp.* 179cd)

The idea in this passage, sounded more loudly in funeral oration, is that virtue is in some sense *incomplete* if there are few or no eyes to see it. The salient point is not so much that all should ideally see, and be educated to have eyes to see, the “most beautiful sight”, as Glaucon calls it, of a virtuous person (*Rep.* 402d). Nor that spirited bonds of shame and honour create the social space in which beautiful deeds are to make their appearance. It is that, if virtue is a public affair, one *should* be concerned to some degree with the regard of others, rather than unconcerned or positively *not* concerned with it. That is a job of spirit.

3.

It may seem there should be greater distance between the idea that virtue is such as to be seen and the idea, altogether less savory to the moralist, that a virtuous person should care whether her virtue is seen. The thought owes its urgency to a modern private conception of virtue. Some variants of this conception treat the social as a realm of appearances in opposition to reality, on the one hand, and to an interiorized and moralized conception of the self, on the other. It bears repeating that this framework does not belong to Plato. His lines between appearance and being are drawn in rather different places, and not in dichotomy. He admits in turn a less morally inflected, more nuanced, more ethically significant notion of *appearing before others*.¹¹ Frank Chapman Sharp hit upon this crucial difference between tendencies of classical Greek and modern ethical thought

¹¹ Plato could not have made, or not made decisive, the same set of distinctions that Kierkegaard, for example, was at pains to make when he asked in his *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, “What is it to be more ashamed before others than before oneself but to be more ashamed of seeming than of being?” (Kierkegaard 1993, p. 53). Plato does not have, ultimately, the relevant distinction between inner and outer. There is in this area a difficult question to what extent Plato thinks the ‘other’ in shame or honour should become identified with one’s own reason and so lose its tether to social reality. I would suggest the agonism which circumscribes a philosophic life (cf. esp. *Rep.* 403e, 608bc) tells against a strongly affirmative answer, *contra*, e.g., Williams 1993, pp. 98–100, 159–63. The model of an ‘objective-participant’ self in Gill 1996 is also relevant.

when he lamented in 1893 that “the ability to gaze upon our own superior moral excellencies with all the calm self-complacency with which a Beau Brummel might contemplate the beauties of his attire in the glass, this is gone, and we instinctively shrink back at the very idea of making an attempt in this direction...” Our ruling principle, Sharp continues, is now “Above all, no posing – not even to one’s self!” (Sharp 1893, p. 99).

I shall not pursue the question of whether we should want to inject into our contemporary climates some of the (idealized and misrepresented) grandeur and ease that Sharpe found in antiquity. I would like to consider instead whether and how the strand of Platonic thought I have been explicating might illuminate aspects of the reach of beauty beyond art and nature and into the whole of our ethical, social, and political lives. There is often a gap between what we think about beauty – how it figures in our experience – and what we *think* we think about beauty – how it figures or is disfigured in reflection, philosophical or otherwise.¹² Plato can throw some useful light on this gap. Perhaps nowhere more so than on the significance of *beautification*, arts of making and enhancing beautiful appearance.

We began from a point about the beautification of a culture, a concern we preserve, if in more local and democratic forms, through street murals, architectural design, green spaces, public parks and the like. I have wanted to emphasize how natural it was for Plato to develop from this point a line of thought about the beautification of oneself. It betrays a deep prejudice that I am tempted to qualify immediately that we are not speaking about cosmetics but the performance of beautiful deeds. It would also betray a simplistic interpretation. For the social dimension of beauty in Plato is oriented from the fact that concepts of beauty and ugliness which inform our self-images are grounded in quotidian practices of beautification, of cosmetics and costume, learned from images in movies and magazines with titles such as *Self*, *Essence*, and of course, *Beauty*. We tend to distrust this arena – what Arthur Danto termed the Third Realm of aesthetics between Art and Nature – as artifice, vanity, or worse (Danto 2003, pp. 61-80). Distrust is warranted when issued against corrupt beauty norms, as well as the debilitating sense of shame that too often they produce. Plato too is

¹² This image owes to Williams 1993, pp. 7, 91.

deeply concerned about the prevailing norms of beauty in Athenian culture; the *Republic*, especially the early books, may be profitably read as an attempt to weaken their hold. But it is worth noting that Plato's critique does not arise *per force* from a general prejudice against appearance or appearing before others, a prejudice which I have suggested goes hand in conceptual hand with moralized views of shame, of the self, and of private virtue. Plato rather takes to heart an insight that Danto found in even diminished forms of beautification, that "we look into the mirror not merely to see how we look, but how we expect others to see us, and, unless amazingly self-confident, we attempt to modulate our appearances in order that others shall see us as we hope to be seen" (pp. 69-70). If the mirror was for Sharpe a site of calm self-complacency, Plato and Danto – and all of us perhaps – know it to be far more fraught. Yet these thinkers remind us not to distort the character and complexity of our psychological lives by reducing the ethical importance of beauty in our socialized modes of self-presentation.

One shape that this complexity takes subtends an important difference between the Platonic social psychology of beauty and dominant models of aesthetic experience inherited from the eighteenth-century. The difference is not in relating beauty to sociality. This relation was, of course, dear to British sentimentalists such as Hutcheson and Hume, German thinkers such as Kant and Schiller, and French theorists such as Rousseau and Voltaire, all of whom engaged beauty in an Enlightenment project to cultivate cultural taste and the communication of sensibility. But this social role often begins from a concern to make private sensation and taste communicable in the first place. It does not begin, as does Plato, from a concept of beauty already socially transacted. This is a consequence of not yet having the early modern framework of subject and object, and there is a consequence in turn for the structure of aesthetic experience. Plato does not privilege the standpoint of a spectator but concentrates equally on the agential standpoint from which one performs beautiful deeds. Beauty in this scheme does not belong primarily to an object. It belongs to a subject, if I may use that term, appearing to other subjects. I have emphasized that the concept of beauty must be sufficiently thick to accommodate the fact that this psychology draws on, negotiates, or contests live norms of beautiful appearance which implicate the perspective of another. Both

the social situation of beauty and these psychological dynamics may prove fruitful points of departure if we wish to consider, or as some have recently urged, to reconsider the nature and scope of aesthetic experience. The internal connection between beauty and shame and honour for Plato might then help us render more clearly the complex ways in which we live under the sign of beauty before the eyes of others.

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Toward an Aesthetics of New-Media Environments

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I suggest that, over and above the need to explore and understand the technological newness of computer art works, there is a need to address the aesthetic significance of the changes and effects that such technological newness brings about, considering the whole environmental transaction pertaining to new media, including what they can or do offer and what users do or can do with such offerings, and how this whole package is integrated into our living spaces and activities. I argue that, given the primacy of computer-based interaction in the new media, the notion of 'ornamentality' indicates the ground-floor aesthetics of new-media environments. I locate ornamentality not only in the logically constitutive principles of the new media (hypertextuality and interactivity) but also in their multiform cultural embodiments (decoration as cultural interface). I utilize Kendall Walton's theory of ornamentality in order to construe a puzzle pertaining to the ornamental erosion of information in new-media environments. I argue that insofar as we consider new media to be conduits of 'real life', the excessive density of ornamental devices prevalent in certain new-media environments forces us to conduct our inquiries under conditions of neustic uncertainty, that is, uncertainty concerning the kind of relationship that we, the users, have to the propositional content mediated. I conclude that this puzzle calls our attention to a peculiar interrogatory complexity inherent in any game of knowledge-seeking conducted across the infosphere, which is not restricted to the simplest form of data retrieval, especially in mixed-reality environments and when the knowledge sought is embodied mimetically. I suggest that this puzzle calls us to consider what would be a viable logic of virtual discovery.

In recent years there has been an upsurge in discussions of various forms of computer art. Quite expectedly, the recent literature has chiefly focused on the need for, and the ensuing difficulties in, demarcating computer art

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as *sui generis*, that is, on the challenge of arguing that computers provide a new *medium* for art, rather than simply being a new *vehicle* for displaying art. Standard debates concerning the value and the art-status of such purported works of art follow naturally from such attempts to answer the classic ‘what is it?’ question.

I have no quarrel with the current debate concerning computer art as it stands. Rather, in the first part of my paper, I would like to tease out of this present concern yet another concern, which I believe to be more fundamental and, dare I say, more forward-looking.

There is common agreement on the pivotal role of the notion of computer-based interactivity for any complete understanding of computer art. According to Dominic McIver Lopes, ‘computer art works exploit the technology of computing in order to achieve interactivity. [...] Computer-based interactivity is the special feature that distinguishes computer art from digital art and indeed all the other arts’ (Lopes 2010, p. 27).

However, there is a tinge of technological essentialism in Lopes’ underscoring of ‘computer-based’ in the phrase ‘computer-based interactivity’, one which I would like to resist right at the outset. By technological essentialism I mean the tendency to identify the specificity of a medium with its underlying technology. Lopes uses the following working definition for interactivity as pertaining to computer art: ‘a work of art is interactive to the degree that the actions of its users help generate its display (in prescribed ways)’ (Lopes 2010, p. 37); hence ‘a user interacts with a work of art just in case he or she acts so as to generate its display in a prescribed manner’ (ibid.).

I believe that an air of technological essentialism generates some confusion here about the purported newness of computer-based interactivity as designating the specificity of the computer art medium. We ordinarily speak of computer-based interactivity quite literally, as consisting in physical interaction—real or simulated—between the user and her gadget: pressing a button, choosing a link, cutting, pasting, dragging an icon and so on. Yet, as Lev Manovich has pointed out, classical as well as ‘old’ modern media—literary and dramatic narratives, visual and three-dimensional representations, works of music, architecture, and cinema, to adduce the most obvious examples—are all interactive in the sense that they invite or hinge upon cognitive processes of filling-in, hypothesis form-

ation, recall and identification, etc. (Manovich 2000, pp. 55-61). In this sense, computer-based interactivity is not that different from what we have long been familiar with, and restricting ourselves to technological newness amounts to taking a one-sided view of a much richer picture—that of the enmeshment of our minds and lives in the technology. Involved here is a wholly different sense, indeed a wholly different scope of newness.

One should be reminded of the prophetic words of new-media pioneer Douglas Engelbart, who on the brink of the digital revolution advised his peers to transcend technological essentialism. ‘We do not speak of isolated clever tricks that help in particular situations,’ Engelbart wrote. ‘We refer to a way of life in an integrated domain where hunches, cut-and-try, intangibles, and the human “feel for a situation” usefully co-exist with powerful concepts, streamlined terminology and notation, sophisticated methods, and high-powered electronic aids’ (Engelbart 1962, p. 1).

So with regard to Lopes’ starting point there is actually another difficulty, which is broader and deeper. Information and communication technology (ICT), in which computer art inheres, is currently in a state of flux, surging toward and perhaps even past the threshold of what Luciano Floridi identifies in a recent book as ‘the fourth revolution’ (Floridi 2014). According to Floridi, the upheavals caused by the transformative insights of Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud have now been followed by a fourth revolution, associated with the work of Allan Turing, who ‘displaced us from our privileged and unique position in the realm of logical reasoning, information processing, and smart behavior’ (93). Floridi writes:

We are slowly accepting the post-Turing idea that we are not Newtonian, stand-alone, and unique agents, some Robinson Crusoe on an island. Rather, we are informational organisms (inforgs), mutually connected and embedded in an informational environment (the infosphere), which we share with other informational agents, both natural and artificial, that also process information logically and autonomously. (94)

To understand any technology, Floridi reminds us, we need to acknowledge its characteristic of ‘in-betweenness’ (25-34). Any technology is always situated between an interacting user and a prompter—that which prompts the user to interact with the technology. (Note: a prompter

is a patently environmental concept. This will become important as my discussion unfolds.) This ‘in-betweenness’ can be of the first, second, or third order. When technologies are in-between human users and natural prompters (e.g., an umbrella), we may qualify them as first order. Second-order technologies are those relating users no longer to nature but to other technologies; that is, they are technologies whose prompters are other technologies (e.g., an engine which provides energy to other technologies). Third-order technologies, the hallmark of the current revolutionary leap, relate technologies-as-users to other technologies-as-prompters. This is where ‘we, who are the users, are no longer in the loop, but at most on the loop [...] Or perhaps we are not significantly present at all, that is, we are out of the loop entirely, and enjoy or simply rely on such technologies as (possibly unaware) beneficiaries or consumers’ (30).

Against the backdrop of this threefold analysis of the very idea of technology, Lopes’ working definition of interactivity as pertaining to computer art appears to be a truncated conception. There is no reference to prompters at all. Of course, in Lopes’ notion of ‘a prescribed manner’ there is an implicit reference to the artist as prompter. Yet if the artist of a computer artwork stands in the same relation to her creation as that of the computer programmer to her software, or that of an engineer to her machine, then this will not do. When we use information and communication technology (of either the first or the second order) the prompter is either nature or another technology, not the person (or persons) who engineered it. The latter idea sounds a bit like Molière’s famous gag in *The Imaginary Invalid* that opium induces sleep because there is ‘a dormitive power’ in it.

Either way, Lopes’ working definition seems to be distancing itself from the idea of first-order ICT. After all, we visit museums and otherwise artificially circumscribed venues to experience (that is, to use) computer art. Yet there remains ambiguity concerning the notion of a ‘user’ between second- and third-order ICTs. Unqualified, we can see that the revolutionary shift from second- to third-order ICTs would ultimately assimilate computer art, thus defined, into the very fabric of the informational environment to the exclusion of human agency—the user can be a technology and the display can be machine-readable data. But then, is it *art*? And for *whom*?

Of course, this is in itself just a *reductio ad absurdum*. Clearly, Lopes wishes to retain human agency in the loop, and so do we.

Still, if we wish to retain human agency in the conception of computer art, then under the conditions of the ‘fourth revolution’ we must consider the vast changes to the very conception of human life which ensue from the fundamental anthropological fact that ICTs have positioned themselves from the get-go as technologies of the self, deeply affecting the informational patterns in which increasingly larger domains of our life inhere (Floridi uses the catchy term ‘onlife’)—our informational nature, our activities, our memories or narratives. Our *onlife* experience presupposes that we are our own information, and this brave-new-world idea has already had extensive repercussions concerning embodiment, space, time, memory and interactions, perception, health, and education.

So, again: if we wish to retain human agency in the conception of computer art, *and also* introduce the counterpart notion of a *prompter* in addition to that of a user, as necessitated by a proper analysis of the notion of technology, then, under the conditions of the ‘fourth revolution’, the theoretical onus in aesthetics is bound to shift to the onlife experience, to the enmeshment of human life in ICTs, that is, to an aesthetics of new media *environments*, rather than an aesthetics of discrete occasions of what we might call ‘art’ or, alternatively, even unwittingly, ‘technology’. In the last analysis, an onlife conception of computer art is patently environmental.

Given the aforementioned concerns, I draw some inspiration, and also courage, from John Dewey’s famous qualm concerning what he called ‘the museum conception of art’ (Dewey 1980), by which he meant the compartmentalization of the aesthetic so that it was separate from real life, remitted it to its own realm, remote from vital ordinary interests. I suggest that an *offlife* conception of computer art (to adduce an ad hoc antonym to Floridi’s notion of *onlife*), which Lopes’ book exemplifies, is analogous to Dewey’s notion of ‘the museum conception of art’. From the perspective of the ‘fourth revolution’, indeed from the vantage point of those born after 9/11 who belong to so-called Generation Z, an offlife conception of computer art would appear quite constrained, a relic of a receding paradigm. It rests on cultural conditions that have been rapidly eroding over the last seventy years with increasing acceleration and with no sign of abating.

I conclude this part of my paper by saying that over and above the need to explore and appreciate the technological newness of computer art works, there is a need to address the aesthetic significance of the changes and effects that such technological newness brings about, considering the whole environmental transaction pertaining to new media, including what they can or do offer and what users do or can do with such offerings, and how this whole package is integrated into our living spaces and activities.

I proceed now to the second part of my paper: a suggestion for an aesthetics of new-media environments, which I can sketch here only briefly.

In any aesthetics of the new-media environment, a man-made environment must be the object of aesthetic appreciation, an environment which consists in and emerges from a gradual integration of new media. It is what Floridi calls the ‘infosphere’—the ever expanding and converging digital ‘encyclopaedic macrocosm of data, information, ideas, knowledge, beliefs, codified experiences, memories, images, artistic interpretations and other mental creations’ (Floridi 1999, 8) which has been gradually evolving since the 1950s along three fundamental vectors: (a) toward multimedia information and virtual reality; (b) toward graphic and immersive interfaces; and (c) toward integration and convergence of the global network (Floridi 1999, 14–15). According to Floridi,

The infosphere is the whole system of services and documents, encoded in any semiotic and physical media, whose contents include any sort of data, information and knowledge, with no limitation either in size, typology or logical structure. Hence it ranges from alphanumeric texts and multimedia products to statistical data, from films and hypertexts to whole text-banks and collections of pictures, from mathematical formulae to sounds and videoclips. (8)

Minimally, infosphere denotes the whole informational environment constituted by all informational entities, their properties, interactions, processes, and mutual relations. It is an environment comparable to, but different from, cyberspace, which is only one of its sub-regions, as it were, since the infosphere includes offline and analogue spaces of information. Maximally, infosphere is a concept that can also be used as synonymous with reality, once we interpret the latter informationally. (2014, 41)

Significantly, this means that in any aesthetics of new-media environments, aesthetic concerns, properties, and values are essentially wedded to the philosophy of information. Yet, to adapt a stance from Arnold Berleant, such environmental aesthetics does not concern gadgets and data-bases alone. Rather 'it deals with the conditions under which people join as participants in an integrated situation' (Berleant 1992, 12). Thus, aesthetic value is related both intrinsically to the user's experience and extrinsically to the quality of information.

Yet I would like to argue further that the main, most important aesthetic category pertaining to the aesthetics of new-media environments is that of the decorative. That is, my claim is that ornamentality is the ground-floor aesthetics of new-media environments (Guter 2010). This requires some elucidation.

The category of the decorative is ordinarily applied to a variety of patterned artifacts, and also to certain aspects of arts or crafts not normally thought to be necessarily or primarily decorative, such as architecture and furniture-making. In a broader sense, ornamentality need not be limited to the production of particular artifacts as such; it also includes the layout and interrelations of arrays of objects in the design of lived environments. In a yet broader sense, ornamentality also encompasses certain processes involving the transformation of the self, including not only the adornment of the body but also the shaping of one's manners, modes of speech, conduct, feelings, motives, and thoughts (Alperson 1992, 218).

This broad, inclusive sense of ornamentality is capable of broaching the multiform complexities and dynamics summoned and exhibited by onlife experience within the infosphere, wherein narratives are refracted, interlaced, restructured, and restored; environments are constantly being adjusted across the online/offline divide as the virtual trails off seamlessly into the real. Unfolding in time and spread out graphically in virtual space, bits of information, plucked from the onlife flux, are set in elaborate, dazzling designs, traversing a whole range of transformations and dislocations of established media, like precious stones set in a glittering multi-dimensional piece of jewelry. This broad, inclusive sense of ornamentality is ripe for placing the human user in the theoretical limelight and also for accounting for the user's important characteristic of being a world-maker, not just an onlooker.

So why, how, and when are new-media environments ornamental? One answer, taken squarely from ordinary experience, readily suggests itself: at least some of these technologies are conducive to audio-visual styling; hence they serve a clear decorative purpose as fixtures in our everyday lives, both online and off. The activated technology often becomes part of the space in which it inheres in quite a straightforward sense, satisfying the decorative aim of creating or adjusting one's ambience. Such a transitive aspect of the decorative pertains to one of main characteristics of the new media: their dispersal, or the interweaving of such technologies into our everyday experience at the levels of consumption, production, and participation.

Yet there are further reasons to support the claim that new-media environments are ornamental, regarding not just their multiform cultural embodiments but also their logically constitutive principles—namely, interactivity and hypertextuality.

Here I would like to turn to Kendall Walton's theory of mimesis as make-believe, which offers an exceptionally insightful account of ornamentation in terms of the inhibition of participation in games of make-believe (Walton 1990). According to Walton, decorative designs present us with fictional worlds in which other fictional worlds are embedded. This puts us at a certain psychological 'distance' from the embedded world, since we participate only in the first-order game of make-believe while imagining that there is another game we could participate in. In Walton's words: 'We stand apart from the internal fictional world and observe it through its frame' (284).

Insofar as a representation is ornamental, we inevitably find ourselves withdrawn to the point of being merely spectators, rather than participants in a game of make-believe. We oscillate between the tempting fictional richness of the internal world and the overpowering sparseness of the framing world, which consists of 'scarcely more than the work itself together with, by implication, its artist and his creative activity' (287).

We may readily see how Walton's theoretical apparatus can be adapted and deployed for our purposes here. For the sake of argument (admitting that a full-fledged argument is required), let us assume that we may in the present context replace at no significant cost the term 'fictional' with the term 'virtual', which (it would be instructive to recall) simply means 'not

actually, but just as if'.

Most of our onlife experiences can be described quite unproblematically in terms of using props in a variety of games of make-believe, perceptual or other, wherein such props can be, for instance, other network users (real or fake), texts, visual images, pop-ups and interactive graphics of all sorts, computer icons, navigational objects, sound effects, audio-visual clips, live feeds, and other such stuff as new-media dreams are made on. Our various games of make-believe with these props generate virtual truths about the props themselves, about virtual worlds, which they inhabit, and about us, the participants, or rather *users*. Furthermore, insofar as our onlife experiences are exclusively mediated by the human-computer interface, information patently takes the form of a display—whether via words, sounds, graphics, visuals, or even, in certain immersive environments, kinesthetic sensations.

The observation that the new media are conducive to audio-visual styling and hence to decoration readily maps onto Walton's idea that ornamentality is to be explicated in terms of the inhibition of participation in games of make-believe. For styling simply draws one's attention to the way the display is actually produced, hence away from any virtual truth it may generate. This is clearly the case with the radical kind of audio-visual styling which is rampant in the new media.

Furthermore, even in the realm of mere text, we can observe pervasive styling, namely, hypertextuality, undoubtedly one of the key features of new-media technology, which has already lent itself to artistic use in the form of hypertextual poetry and prose. Insofar as hypertextual styling empowers the user to determine the format of the text, thereby deflecting her back to the manner in which the text is generated by the user's own performance of reading, it inhibits participation in games of make-believe.

Hypertextual navigation is an instance of interactivity, which can be defined as the user's ability to directly intervene in and change the display being accessed. Interactivity amounts to a world-building activity, which means that when we digitally interact with the medium, we patently refer back to the features of the medium itself—we are withdrawn to the way the display is actually produced. In this sense, I suggest, interaction in general, and hypertextuality in particular, inhibit participation in games of make-believe.

Taking a step further in my argument, I would like to tap once again into Floridi's important emphasis on computer technologies as technologies of the self, that is, technologies which enable and empower the user to conduct inquiries within and across the infosphere, which are self-generating, self-dislocating, or self-modifying. I would suggest that Walton's dual game-world formation may afford a theoretically fruitful angle concerning one of the most puzzling aspects of onlife experience: a deepening sense of the dissolution of the barriers between the real and the virtual.

It may be instructive to employ here a valuable distinction, introduced by R. M. Hare, between the *phrastic* and the *neustic* aspects of an utterance (Hare 1970). By the phrastic, Hare means the propositional content of the utterance. The neustic is what Hare calls a sign of subscription to the speech-act that is being performed: it is that part of the sentence which expresses the speaker's commitment to the factuality, desirability, etc., of the propositional content conveyed by the phrastic. Simply put, the distinction between the phrastic and the neustic is between the content and the mood or force of a sentence.

My point is this: the features of the medium—which eventually deflects the user back to the features of the actual display, hence inhibits her participation in games of make-believe with its content—perform a neustic function; they deeply affect the mood or force of the content of a given display. Thus ornamentality in general hinges upon the neustic—it concerns not what we say in the sense of coded information, but how we gesture toward ourselves and others. I suggest that this coheres with Walton's claim that decorative designs pull us back to a more 'objective' perspective, which might yield more significant connections with our lives.

Now, as Hamlet says, 'there's the rub'.

If the new media are ornamental in this broad, inclusive, pervasive sense, then, insofar as they are self-modifying, they are ornamental in a sense very different from, let's say, flowery wallpaper or Persian rugs. New-media ornamentality uniquely exemplifies ornamentality without abstraction. A pinkish wallpaper flower may be an abstraction of a particular flower, exemplifying all flowers of its kind yet no one flower in particular. On the other hand, new-media ornamentality, insofar as it is self-modifying, is all about particulars: names, faces, and events—the elements

of a story.

Granting this, we can now put Walton's theory to an interesting use. If, as Walton says, we understand ornamental designs in terms of fictional worlds in which other fictional worlds are embedded, hence experience the effect of standing apart from the internal fictional world and observing it through its frame, that is, a second-order fictional world, which is in a sense more 'objective' or more 'real', then new-media displays—at least when they are mixed-reality displays, not thoroughly fictional—confront us with a puzzle: their internal worlds are inhabited by denizens of the real, which becomes somehow 'less real' by virtue of our withdrawal into a more 'objective' perspective.

Thus Walton's dual game-world formation enables one to explain what is often referred to in rather extravagant terms as a dissolution of the barriers between the real and the virtual in terms of *neustic* uncertainty: that is, uncertainty concerning the kind of relationship we, the users, have to the content mediated.

In ornamentally dense new-media environments, users operate behind what we might tentatively dub 'the veil of ornamentality', echoing John Rawls 'veil of ignorance' albeit in a sense importantly different from the idea Rawls conceived for his purposes (Rawls 1971). Whereas Rawls's original 'veil of ignorance' assumes ignorance of the identity of particular real-life situations, the condition of new-media ornamentality leaves them intact—carefully selected or utterly made-up—to serve as an opening move in elaborate games of self-modifying knowledge-seeking. Yet the very nature of such games—some of their definitory rules, their goals and desired strategies—would become ambiguous if the inquirer's attitude toward her information sources turns out to be ambiguous as well.

This is clearly the case in masquerade environments such as Second Life, for instance, which features extreme malleability of data by users, who can to some extent fabricate immersive environments by digital means. Within such ornamentally dense new-media environments, typically inhabited by various software applications designed to emulate human interaction and commonly involving intense role-playing, the identity of the user is patently rendered ambiguous. Sherry Turkle has forcefully underscored this point: 'In my computer-mediated worlds, the self is multiple, fluid, and constituted in interaction with machine connections; it is made

and transformed by language' (Turkle 1995, 15). In other words, onlife identity is itself ornamental.

Let me sum up briefly.

In the first part of my paper I argued that in the current epoch of ICT it behooves us to discuss such technologies in relation to their appropriate environments. Thus, an *onlife* conception of computer art is patently environmental.

In the second part of my paper I argued that the primary aesthetic category for any aesthetics of new-media environments is that of the decorative. Ornamentality is the ground-floor aesthetics for new media environments. I utilized Kendall Walton's theory of decorative design with its distinct dual game-world formation in order to sketch such an environmental aesthetics and explain the way it is wedded to the philosophy of information. At the heart of my proposition I emphasized a peculiar interrogatory complexity, which is meant to address in sober terms one of the most theoretically puzzling ideas concerning the onlife sphere: the imminent dissolution of the barriers between the real and the virtual. I called this 'neustic uncertainty'. Such complexity is inherent in any game of knowledge-seeking conducted across the infosphere, which is not restricted to the simplest form of data retrieval, especially in mixed-reality environments and when the knowledge sought is embodied mimetically.

My theoretical suggestion may pose an interesting and rather unusual epistemological challenge for aestheticians: to figure out what would be a viable logic of virtual discovery under the conditions of new-media ornamentality. At any rate, this must be an epistemology which focuses not on the classic project of justifying already acquired knowledge, but rather on how knowledge is acquired in the first place. And here, as I have suggested, aesthetic concerns would play an enormously important role.

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Medium and Materiality: Stanley Cavell's Naïvist Theory of Art

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ABSTRACT. Finding a proper account of the relationship between the medium of a visual work of art (in its aesthetic sense) and its materiality remains one of the most intractable problems of philosophical aesthetics. This paper attempts to make some progress with this problem by arguing that Stanley Cavell develops such an argument implicitly in his early writings. The first part will present the general structure of the materiality argument as I take it to be internal to Cavell's work. In the second part the paper I will relate this problematic to Cavell's identification of film and philosophy. I will show that there is indeed such an identification at work in Cavell, and that this allows us, for instance, to consider the way film engages with works of traditional art to be philosophical statements about those works, and hence as potentially establishing aesthetic claims (including the materiality of their media). Relying further on Cavell's theory of the role of perspective in traditional art, as well as Tarkovsky's filmic treatment of Quattrocento painting, Cavell's fundamental insight about the materiality of the medium is relied on to show how the artificial separation of Quattrocento perspectivism and Modernism can be overcome in favor of a naïve approach that emphasizes the identity of the medium of art with its physical basis.

1. Introduction

My complaint against the complaint against me to the effect that I am naïve about reality is that it is naïve about reality. (Stanley Cavell)

Pour échapper à l'horreur de ces apostasies philosophiques, je me suis orgueilleusement résigné à la modestie; je me suis contenté de sentir; je suis revenue chercher un asile dans l'impeccable naïveté. (Charles Baudelaire)

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The classification of works of art into naïve and sentimental might perhaps be fruitfully applied to criticism as well. There are sentimental critiques that lack only a vignette and a motto in order to be perfectly naïve. (Friedrich Schlegel)

This essay argues that the theory of the medium Stanley Cavell develops in *The World Viewed* in connection with the aesthetics of film also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to what Cavell in that book calls “traditional art.” One important consequence of this fact is that, on Cavell’s view, the medium of a traditional art form (my focus will be on painting) should be regarded as identical with its “physical basis.” I think of both Cavell’s theory, and its consequence as to the materiality of the media of art-works, as true, original, and important, but I will not be arguing directly for these claims. Instead, I will focus on establishing that Cavell is indeed committed to holding the views mentioned. This mode of proceeding calls for some explanation as it leaves open the question of why such an identification could be important for Cavell in terms of what it implies about the medium as an aesthetic concept.

What such a question about importance seems to call for is an answer to the further question: ‘What does it mean to say that the physical basis of an art is also its medium?’ What this latter question makes clear, however, is that it depends on a prior one: ‘What does it mean to say that something is a medium of art?’¹ It is because Cavell would like the answer to this latter question to take a particular form that he affirms his original thesis about the “physical basis” of film in *The World Viewed*, namely that that physical basis is identical with film’s medium.² In the case of film, this will mean that critical readings will inevitably discover that films achieve their critical depth in part by making aspects of their physical media, i.e., photography, significant. In other words, the form which Cavell would

¹ It is more or less in this form that the question first makes its appearance in Cavell’s ‘*A Matter of Meaning It.*’ (Cavell 2002), p. 220.

² Cavell defines the “physical basis” of film as a “succession of automatic world projections”, by analogy with painting being based on such a physical basis. Cf.: “The material basis of the media of movies (as paint on a flat, delimited support is the material basis of the media of painting) is [...] a succession of automatic world projections.” (Cavell 1979b), p.72. Examples for Cavell’s identifying of the medium with its physical basis are provided below in Subsection 2.3. of this paper.

like the answer to the question about the medium to take is one, in turn, which requires close engagement with individual works of art to count as an answer in particular cases, as it is only by such close reading, according to Cavell, that one may uncover or experience the identity of film with aspects of the physical medium that have been made significant by that particular film. (Any aspect may potentially count, and must therefore be tested, as we will see in what follows.) Because the claim about identity is an aesthetic, and hence, philosophical claim, Cavell would also like the answer to this question to confirm that the close-reading of film as practiced in *Pursuits of Happiness*, the sequel to *The World Viewed*, should count as a *sui generis* and legitimate philosophical activity, and one which should be much more widely practiced as a part of doing philosophy. (All of these issues are explored in much more detail in Part 2. of this paper.)

In the light of the above, I can restate the goal of this paper as one of demonstrating that Cavell is committed to the applicability of this way of engaging with films to traditional art-works, and painting in particular, (which is what engaging with their media means), and that this form of engagement is based on, and implies the materiality of those media.

The primary difficulties with the accomplishment of this goal are two-fold.

The first difficulty is that within *The World Viewed*, which is Cavell's most focused attempt at developing the theory of the medium of art (in response to such a need identified in his earlier writings), attention is restricted entirely to film and a narrow selection of works of American Abstract Expressionist painters. The second difficulty arises from the complementary fact, that although Cavell develops his theory of the filmic medium as photographic by reference to Western painting, he does not, apart from a few side remarks in footnotes, engage in any "readings" of individual works of classical painting at all (nor sculpture, for that matter) in relation to film. (For the purposes of the present essay I will use "classical" to designate works of Western painting beginning with Giotto as theorized by Vasari, and culminating with works created in the wake of Manet's establishing of modernism as theorized by Michael Fried in *Manet's Sources* – i.e., old masters and early Modernism preceding the Cubist turn towards

abstraction.)³ Insofar as classical painting figures in *The World Viewed* – as it does explicitly and implicitly in several important ways – it does so under the general heading of something Cavell calls “traditional art.”⁴

Regarding the first difficulty, we need to consider that it is only an attenuated sense that one may say about either film, or the paintings Cavell considers that they have material media in the sense traditional painting has one. Film, as Cavell says, is “as light as light” – the object that is the work of art is not a material object in the sense in which traditional art objects are, or at any rate not identical with it.⁵ The problem with the works of the painters invoked by Cavell: Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, and Frank Stella, by contrast, is that strictly speaking, they are not *made* in a sense a traditional painting is.⁶ This is part of their aesthetic purpose: they each involve a denial of the human gesture, the significance of the human hand engaged in working the material medium, they do not result from a process of exploring the resistance of the material (Wollheim). In other words, the media Cavell does consider, whether of film or painting, are distinguished from the media of traditional art precisely by the way they dis-encourage, or even repel consideration of their own materiality.

From what I said about Cavell’s motivation for raising the problem of the medium, it should be obvious why Cavell’s own lack of engagement with works of “traditional art” should pose a further obstacle, a second difficulty for the goal I set for this paper. Cavell’s aesthetics is fundamentally particularist – and subject to the principle he calls the “empirical dis-

³ This characterization is far from being innocuous (it ignores placing Cézanne as a point of transition, for instance), but as a local definition establishing a frame of reference for the purposes of discussion, it is also harmless. It also seeks to remain neutral with respect to the vexed question of the correctness of Clement Greenberg’s theory of modernism (which, by the way, Cavell rejects on more than one occasion. Cf., for instance (Cavell 2007). For Fried’s account, see (Fried 1996).

⁴ (Cavell 1979b), p.24.

⁵ This “possibility of the medium” has been most interestingly and elegantly exploited in recent work by Tarantino in *Inglorious Basterds* by making the relationship between the film and reels on which it is recorded critically significant. I will not be discussing the token-type issue in this paper.

⁶ (Cavell 1979b), p. III. (See the chapter: ‘Excursus: Some Modernist Painting’)

covery of the *a priori*.”⁷ Insofar as general laws of the medium exist at all, they need to be discovered in and by critical readings of works of art that have proven their “importance,” by having received proper critical appraisal within an equally canonical critical literature. I will expand on the importance of all of these points in the course of this paper. For the moment, what matters is that Cavell himself offers us not a single example for how one may go about applying his theory of the filmic medium to works of traditional art. It is partly for this reason that I will be following an odd strategy in my paper, which is as follows.

In Subsections 2.2-2.4 of the first part of the paper I will present the general structure of the materiality argument as I take it to be internal to Cavell’s work. This will involve presenting some evidence that Cavell is indeed committed to holding explicitly that the media of works of art in general is identical with their physical basis. I will then go on to discuss my own suggestion of “naïve realism” as a possible aesthetic attitude to artworks, a version of which I would like to attribute to Cavell. In the second part the paper I will then turn to a seemingly unrelated issue, namely Cavell’s identification of film and philosophy. I will show that there is indeed such an identification at work in Cavell, and that this allows us, for instance, to consider the way film engages with works of traditional art to be philosophical statements about those works, and hence as potentially establishing aesthetic claims. In the third part of my paper I will then apply this principle to Andrei Tarkovsky’s filmings of Renaissance paintings, and argue that Tarkovsky’s films are best understood on the basis of Cavell’s film aesthetics, and hence that Tarkovsky films establish the materiality claim with respect to a number of Renaissance paintings in terms of a contrarian reading of their use of perspective. My focus will be in particular on Tarkovsky’s interpretation in *Nostalghia* of the medium of Piero della Francesca’s *Madonna del Parto*. I suggest that it is possible to understand Tarkovsky’s reading of this painting as in turn a representative Cavellian reading of a representative work of Italian Quattrocento art.

⁷ Ibid., p. 202.

2. Naïve Realism

2.1. *Materiality and Art-Restoration*

The strategy followed in showing how Cavell is committed to holding the claim about the materiality of the medium serves a further purpose, namely to raise a question about why a seemingly obvious fact about paintings (namely that they are material entities) is also one of the most difficult facts philosophically to establish, or acknowledge about them. I would like to illustrate this by an example that is slightly activist in purpose, but nevertheless a theoretical one.

It seems that the only available philosophical position in favor of a strong notion of preservation as opposed to restoration of works of art is formulated in terms of “rights”, as opposed to the aesthetic value of preserving the work’s appearance.⁸ The problem seems to be that no philosophical defense can be offered that is strong enough to counter the crude argument of the restoration establishment to the effect that because aesthetic judgment is “subjective,” restorers must (and can) rely on increasingly sophisticated scientific procedures to assert what belongs to the original hand of the artist, and what doesn’t. Aesthetic arguments are simply disqualified from playing any role in informing the disastrous cleaning and restoration campaigns to which some of the most important works of the Western canon have been subjected in recent years.

To return to my point about the indirect strategy followed in this paper, part of its usefulness lies in shedding some light on the difficulties with developing a philosophical claim in favor of a strong notion of preservation. As I hope to show, the main difficulty is that Cavell’s position not only implies that it is nonsensical to identify any physical aspect of a work of art as belonging, or not belonging to it, in the absence of aesthetic/critical evaluation, but that this identification according to Cavell must be conducted in and by a form of conversation that denies any critical advantage awarded to scholarly or disciplinary expertise on the part of its participants.

Although this last point can only be supported properly by the entirety

⁸ See, (Beck and Daley 1996), also as the source of the ensuing comments in this paragraph.

of the argument of this paper, I would like to cite a few passages showing that Cavell is indeed committed to holding some such position, if and when we are willing to think about the media of classical painting (and sculpture, for that matter) by analogy with the medium of film. Cavell writes:

I say, in effect, that *any and every gesture of the camera may or may not mean something*, and every cut and every rhythm of cuts, and every frame and every inflection within a frame – something determined by the nature of film and by the specific context in which the gesture occurs in a particular film. I call such possibilities of the physical medium of film its automatisms. They are the bearer's of the filmmaker's intentions – like syntactical or lexical elements of a language. Unlike speakers of a language, film-makers⁹ can construct not merely, as it were, new sentences, but new elements of sentences. *This intentionality of film's automatisms dictates the perspective from which a critical understanding of a film must proceed.*¹⁰

Although Cavell talks specifically about film, I think it is quite obvious when one puts it together with how he uses a concept of “traditional art” that he intends to describe a property of any medium of art, a property we might describe as relationally saturated. In any case, if the property of the medium identified here is real, it follows, on condition that the medium of a painting is material, that restoration cannot be based on scientific observation. And this is not merely or simply because of the reason that every

⁹ What are – by analogy – the bearer's of a painter's intentions? First of all, I think Cavell is right that we need first to decide whether a particular gesture is significant or not. So we cannot know this *a priori*. But the point is that in a painting *everything* is deliberate, even if some of the things can be legitimately called automatisms (a term from *The World Viewed* which I discuss in Part 3.). It is within these “automatisms” that the painter makes decisions, and then executes them – partly not knowing what the result will be, or, rather, the result being the result of an interaction. It is Andrew Harrison who has developed the fullest account of the “non-justificatory” conception of rationality involved in the process of making. (Harrison 1978), see esp. Ch. 2. ‘*Thought in Action and Thought About Action*’ (and Ch. 5 ‘*Designing While Making*’).

¹⁰ (Cavell 1979b), p. 186. My emphasis. Cf., Cavell: “Good directors know how to mean everything they do. Great directors mean more – more completely, more subtly, more specifically – and they discover how to do everything they mean.” Ibid., p. 188. Cavell is relying on a conception of intentionality fully developed in his earlier essay, “*A Matter of Meaning It.*”

detail might matter¹¹, but because of the view of the medium that is implied by this quote, which is probably the heart of Cavell's theory, namely that *you cannot know* what a medium of art is without assuming the intentionality of the work of art. Accessing this intentionality is a matter of engaging with the work of art in an interpretative mode for Cavell, which is also experimental, and whose results may actually change. Here is what he says about criticism as an experiment:

The conditions of the aesthetic power of film, as with the exercise of any human power, cannot be known in advance of a certain criticism, or say critique, of that power, and a conviction in the architectonic of the critique – a satisfaction in the placement of concepts within the structure of importance – is not had apart from its application in individual cases. Sciences call such application experimentation; humanities call it criticism. If we say that what organizes or animates the results of experimentation is mathematical discourse, then we might say that what organizes or animates the results of criticism is philosophical discourse.¹²

As I mentioned, my hope is that the reason why these seemingly common-sense insights about art and materiality are as difficult to articulate by philosophy, as to accept for non-philosophers, will emerge precisely by an understanding of how these views about the filmic medium apply to works of traditional art based on Cavell's own argument.

2.2. Naïve Realism as Aesthetic Attitude

The goal of this subsection is to develop a general sense of what is implied for Cavell's philosophy of art as a whole by the assertion that

[...] in a philosophical frame of mind one says that a medium of an art is the physical basis of that art (e.g., that the medium of painting is paint, and the medium of writing is words, and the medium of music is sound [...]).¹³

¹¹ Cf., Cavell: "The moral of art, as of life, is that you do not know in advance what may arise as significant detail." (Cavell 1979b), p. 145.

¹² (Cavell 1985), p. 120.

¹³ (Cavell 1979b), p.105.

My aim will be to show, first, that this claim is in earnest, that it means what it says, and, second, that it is a component of a philosophical position about the materiality of the medium I am here attributing to Cavell.¹⁴ This latter position is one that justifies what I propose to call a form of naïve realism within our normal mode of engagement with artworks, towards their materiality in general, and towards the way materiality functions in classical painting in particular. In essence, the view comprises two separable claims: first, that according to Cavell, any genuine engagement with a work of art qua work of art (both “modernist” and “traditional”) will *ipso facto* constitute, or involve, an acknowledgement of the work’s status as a physical object, and, second, that this acknowledgement is further articulated by the way in which the significance of the work is *accessed* by such an acknowledgement, or rather, that the acknowledgement of the materiality of the work constitutes a definitive element of that access, and is essential to any critical perception. On this view, a work of art comes into being within a physical medium by making certain material aspects of that medium directly meaningful. To quote an incidental remark of Cavell’s neatly summarizing both components as part of a single position: a painting is a “meaningful object in paint”.¹⁵

Acknowledgment is of course one of the key concepts of Cavell’s philosophy (and of his aesthetics) and its relevance to painting as an art is in turn acknowledged and summed up by the following beautiful passage:

Painting, being art, is revelation; it is revelation because it is acknowledgement; being acknowledgement, it is knowledge, of itself, and of the world.¹⁶

My goal of articulating Cavell’s identification of the medium with its physical basis can be further articulated in turn as an effort at clarifying the

¹⁴ I will employ the phrase “naïve realism” both as the description of the attitude (or stance) expressed by the passage cited above (taking it as expressing what we “say” about an experience of the medium as material), and also as the name for the philosophical view confirming the legitimacy of this attitude, and implying its role for critical engagement with works of art that I take to be the heart of the theory. (I propose allowing the ambiguity to take care of itself, unless the context in which I use the term requires more careful articulation.)

¹⁵ (Cavell 1979b), 21.

¹⁶ (Cavell 1979b), p. 110.

relationship of this identity to Cavell's concept of acknowledgement as pertaining to art in general, and Western painting in particular. As part of this effort, the interpretation of the passage just cited will be the subject of Part 3. of this paper in relation to Andrei Tarkovsky's reading of *Piero della Francesca's Madonna del Parto* in his film *Nostalghia*.

The preceding sketch of Cavell's materiality thesis clearly stands in need of further development if it is to survive a test that I would like claim for it, namely that rather than implying a rejection *überhaupt* of analytical approaches to the ontological identity of works of art, it is in genuine dialogue with them and represents a *sui generis* alternative within the array of approaches to theorizing the medium of art by analytical philosophy

As such it involves a second order claim. Naïve realism as an epistemological position expresses the belief that our primary, everyday relationship to reality, unchallenged by skeptical arguments, is in fact a justified one even in the light of those arguments, and hence it is the one we should adopt reflexively. Naïve realism as an aesthetic conception is also a second order position in that it confirms and transcends the initial encounter with the work as a physical object within the aesthetic attitude, and hence also implies a degree of reflexivity (identifying a work of art as such involves negating, or recognizing its own negation of its "objecthood," to invoke Michael Fried's notion.)¹⁷ However, there is an important difference in naïve realism understood as an aesthetic attitude compared to its epistemic counterpart. The difference consists in the way in which the initial encounter with the work as material object in the epistemic mode returns, or is re-established within aesthetic perception to take the form of an implicit acknowledgement within the aesthetic experiencing of the ways in which the work makes aspects of its material properties *significant*. This implicit acknowledgement may or may not be awarded articulate recognition within the aesthetic experience itself, which suggests one reason why it is meaningful to call it naïve (there are others). It is not in and of itself dependent on such explicit recognition, and it may flow in and out of the process of our conscious aesthetic engagement with the work. It is this meta-stable dynamic of reflexivity and naïveté within the experiencing of works of art as I understand it to be central to Cavell's conception

¹⁷ (Fried 1998), p. 151. Fried developed this idea in conversation with Cavell.

of both philosophy and art that is the focus of Part 2. of this paper.¹⁸

By suggesting that we treat Cavell's theory of the medium as depending on analytically presentable arguments, I do not mean to suggest that Cavell's development of a philosophical position does not, on his own view, seek to transcend the limits of what can be achieved by analytical philosophy. However, it would be a mistake to regard Cavell's intentions in invoking analytical arguments as somehow ironical in this respect, which is a reading of his work he himself protests against on innumerable occasions. This is not the place to discuss in detail Cavell's efforts to preserve key aspects of analytical philosophy in his thinking. But to give an example that might be helpful for those familiar with Cavell's work, the mistake would be similar to the mistake of regarding the final sentence of Cavell's essay *Knowing and Acknowledging*: "–I know your pain like you do." as if it somehow involved a claim arrived at by the preceding intricate argumentation of that seminal essay, but neither quite following from it *in the mode of that argumentation*, nor quite necessitating it, as if the presence of this closing sentence, introduced as it is in Cavell's text by a hyphen, were a mode of annulation of what went before. If anything, it is more like a peculiar form of Hegelian *Aufhebung*, a term which Cavell himself considers in some ways to be the best description of Wittgenstein's idea of "leading words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use"¹⁹.

¹⁸ My finding helpful the deployment of Sartre's concept used by him to explain the ontology of *mauvaise foi* is not meant to suggest that such a form of bad consciousness may be involved in our perception of art for Cavell. Cavell, to my mind would clearly be averse to Sartre's idea as a whole. However, first, the state of consciousness it describes so well evokes Kierkegaard's discussion of innocence in *Repetition* in a way that is relevantly cognate with naïveté understood as a positive attitude involving reflexivity. It seems to me that Cavell's endorsement of certain aspects of Kierkegaard's method in 'Must We Mean What We Say?' furnish sufficient ground for a justified use of this concept as a shorthand. Second, Cavell's own aim to "de-psychologize psychology" in his deployment of the concept of acknowledgement is perhaps most importantly aimed at uncovering the precise dangers which the ever possible withholding of such acknowledgement represents not just for other minds, but the way a work of art invites being treated as a "person." (Cavell 2002), p. 189. (from: 'Music Discomposed') Hence, some form of "bad consciousness" is indeed a threat to our relationship to art for Cavell.

¹⁹ (Cavell 2002), p. xxi. Cf. also Cavell:

I had to describe the accommodation of the new music as one of

While I am ready to admit that Cavell is not entirely helpful in this regard, sometimes branding his own brilliant analytical insights as “rigmarole,” no careful reader of *Knowing and Acknowledging* could possibly take this idea seriously. One way of understanding my attribution of naïve realism as a critical view of art to Cavell would be that this conception of the materiality of the medium stands in a relation to Cavell’s *philosophy* of the medium as whole, *mutatis mutandis*, as the final sentence of ‘Knowing and Acknowledging’ stands to the argument of that essay as a whole.²⁰

naturalizing ourselves to a new form of life, a new world. *That a resolution of this sort is described as the solution of a philosophical problem, and as the goal of its particular mode of criticism, represents for me the most original contribution Wittgenstein offers philosophy. I can think of no closer title for it, in an established philosophical vocabulary, than Hegel’s use of the word Aufhebung.* We cannot translate the term: “cancelling,” “negating,” “fulfilling” etc. are all partial, and “sublate” transfers the problem. [...] Of course, we are no longer very apt to suppose, with Hegel, that History will make us a present of it: we are too aware of its brilliant ironies and aborted revolutions for that. But *as an ideal of (one kind of) philosophical criticism* – a criticism in which it is pointless for one side to refute the other, because its cause and topic is the self getting in its own way – it seems about right.” (Cavell 1969a), p. 85.

²⁰ Here are Cavell’s own comments on the “use of the dash”:

“A further idiosyncrasy is especially noticeable in the later essays [of *Must we Mean What We Say*], the use of a dash before sentences. Initial recourse to this device was as a way of avoiding the change of topic (and the necessity for trumped up transitions which a paragraph break would announce, while *registering a significant shift of attitude or voice toward the topic at hand*.)” The plainest use of this device is an explicit return to its old-fashioned employment to mark dialogue. – But there are so many justifications for not writing well.” (Cavell 2002), p. xii.

It is the nature of this shift applied to doing philosophy as a whole that I want to describe in Part 2., as Copernican turn for Cavell in transition to the naïve mode, exemplifying within Cavell’s philosophical procedures the manner in which Cavell intends to make “the problem of the medium of philosophy [...] a significant problem for aesthetics” (Cavell 2002), p. 74.) : the necessity for taking words as they are in a conversational mode wherein

While I therefore think of Cavell's view as representing a *sui generis* alternative to most available treatments of materiality relying on notions of embodiment, I will not be addressing these specific differences in this essay, concentrating instead on the positive articulation of the view itself. However, there is one general aspect of naïve realism as a form of non-reductive aesthetic materialism worth mentioning before getting into details. It is a point related to the point about art-restoration made in Subsection 2.1. of this paper.

Part of the usefulness of the conception of naïve realism lies in its ability to incorporate (or take in stride) a certain mysteriousness about the way works of art emerge in their material media, without either taking that mysteriousness to be obviating the thrust of the claim about materiality altogether²¹, or succumbing to the pressure of ideologizing this mysteriousness. Consider the following passage from *More on the World Viewed* confirming Cavell's interest in maintaining rather than eliminating such mysteriousness:

From [the resonance that Vigo's camera, in *L'Atalante*, with wit, with accuracy, elicits from these temperaments in those actions in these settings at those times] we learn more than we knew of wedding processions, how they can feel like funeral processions, presumably because they commemorate the dying of the bride to her past; we know more precisely and memorably than we had known of the daze and remoteness of brides, of the innocence of grooms, of the daze and remoteness of a husband who recognizes that he has been no husband; we know more certainly that a man wins a beautiful young girl only when he wins her imagination with her; we realize – for the first time or the fiftieth, it makes no difference – that one's responsibility to one's desire is to acknowledge it, and acknowledge its object, i.e., its object's separateness from you. *The power of these last ideas, as they find incarnation in the image of the husband searching under water for his love,*

to understand what the sentence says “...no man is in any better position for knowing it than any other man – unless *wanting to know is a special position. And this discovery about himself is the same as the discovery of philosophy*, when it is the effort to find answers, and permit questions, which nobody knows the way to nor the answer to any better than you yourself”. Ibid. p. xiii.

²¹ As argued for instance in an important article by Christopher Perricone (Perricone 2007).

*is finally as inexplicable as the power of a phrase of music or of poetry. And the ideas are nothing without that power.*²²

Two perfectly straightforward analytical theses about the aesthetics of the medium find expression, or acknowledgement, in this passage. One is what one might call a cognitivist view of art, namely that art gives us knowledge (a thesis I will be returning to in relation to Cavell's understanding of Albertian perspective in Part 3.). The second concerns the point at hand, namely that the theory of the medium is not a reductive theory: it will not furnish an explanation (or at any rate no a complete one) of how that meaning arises in the medium. While the passage talks about the medium of *film* (the way ideas find *incarnation* in the image), my analogous point about works of art will be that the acknowledgment of the materiality of their medium in part takes the form of a certain *rational respect* that works of art as physical entities command of us in virtue of producing the effects that they do. As I would further like to claim, this aspect of Cavell's view puts it in direct contrast with what I regard as the liberal-humanistic view of materiality associated with a Hegelian view of art, but perhaps even better exemplified by the following passage from Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education on Man*:

When the artisan lays hands upon the formless mass in order to shape it to his ends, he has no scruple in doing it violence; for the natural material he is working merits no respect for itself, and his concern is not with the whole for the sake of the parts, but with the parts for the sake of the whole. When the artist lays hands upon the same mass, he has just as little scruple in doing it violence; but he avoids showing it. For the material he is handling he has not a whit more respect than has the artisan; but the eye which would seek to protect the freedom of the material he will endeavor to deceive by a show of yielding to his latter. With the pedagogic or the political artist things are very different indeed. For him Man is at once the material on which he works and the goal towards which he strives. In this case the end turns back upon itself and becomes identical with the medium; and it is only inasmuch as the whole serves the parts that the parts are in any way bound to submit too the whole. The

²² (Cavell 1979b), p. 177. *passim*.

statesman-artist must approach his material with a quite different kind of respect from which the maker of Beauty feigns towards his. The consideration he must accord to its uniqueness and individuality is not merely subjective, and aimed at creating an illusion for the senses, but objective and directed to its innermost being.²³

Ways in which Cavell's position differs from Schiller's will be returned to in Part 3. of this paper.

2.3. *The Physical Identity Thesis*

Before expounding further in Part 2. on what the idea of naïve realism involves, I would like to conclude this section by citing some evidence that Cavell is indeed committed to holding at least the first element of the position, namely that one is justified in identifying the medium of an artwork with its physical basis, and that this is a philosophical claim. Although the passage with which I began Subsection 2.2. is taken from a paragraph in *The World Viewed*, the fact that Cavell is consistent (and neither tentative nor ironic) about calling the identification of the medium of art with its physical basis as both *the* philosophical position, and a true one, is confirmed by a number of further facts and claims throughout his early writings.²⁴ First of all, almost exactly the same formulation, linking a philosophical approach to art with an affirmation of the materiality of its medium, can be found in the very first instance of the problem of the medium making its appearance in Cavell's work, in the essay '*A Matter of Meaning It*' in *Must We Mean What We Say*. In this well-known paragraph (the one most often cited as the most concise statement of Cavell's view of the medium) a further qualification is introduced that seems to challenge the idea of materiality:

[...] What is a medium of art? Philosophers will sometimes say that sound is the medium of music, paint of painting, wood and stone of sculpture, words of literature. One has to find what problems have been thought to reach illumination in such remarks. What needs recognition is that wood or stone would not be a medium of sculpture

²³ (Schiller 1982), pp. 19–21.

²⁴ I see Cavell's writings as falling into two periods with *The World Viewed* and *Pursuits of Happiness* representing a Copernican turn of sorts.

in the absence of the art of sculpture. The home of the idea of a *medium* lies in the visual arts, and it used to be informative to know that a given medium is oil or gouache or tempera or dry point or marble . . . because each of these media had characteristic possibilities, an implied range of handling and result. The idea of a medium is not simply that of a physical material, but of a material-in-certain-characteristic-applications.”²⁵

Taken together with further thoughts about the medium in *The World Viewed*, this paragraph is often taken to imply a denial of the materiality of the medium. Here is a characteristic instance of such an interpretation:

Cavell’s reasonable thesis about the media of art, viz., that they only count as media once worked, does not, *as I think he supposes*, obviate the necessity of modernist works declaring their *material* conditions of possibility, indeed twice over.²⁶

While I am fundamentally indebted to Bernstein’s brilliant reading of Cavell’s view of materiality, I hope to offer a corrective to this conclusion. In fact, I would be prepared to claim that both Bernstein’s contrarian reading of Anthony Caro’s sculpture in the same essay (devised to challenge both Cavell’s reading as well as that of “his partner in modernist crime,” (Bernstein), i.e. Michael Fried’s), along with Bernstein’s critical reading of pre-modernist works of art in terms of the way they declare their materiality, such as his analysis of Pieter de Hooch’s paintings are readings Cavell would in fact be committed to agreeing with on the very terms of his philosophy of the medium.²⁷ For the moment, I would like to stay with the Cavell paragraph just cited, and briefly argue that it does not commit

²⁵ (Cavell 2002), p. 220–21.

²⁶ (Bernstein 2003), p. 128. Italics added.

²⁷ For the reading of de Hooch, see, (Bernstein 2006), p. 20–45. Bernstein associates what he calls de Hooch’s “impossible hope for realism” with a “naïveté” that, as he says, he would “want for him.” (p. 37.) While it is important that what Bernstein specifically denies is that Cavell would be in a position to invoke ways in which “modernist works declare their material conditions of possibility,” and not the materiality of the medium *per se*, I hope it will shortly become clear from my arguments how the two are related and imply each other for Cavell. In my view the nature of the disagreement between Bernstein and Cavell, be it one sided, is fundamentally ideological, and rests on an aspect central to Cavell’s philosophy of the medium that is unacceptable for Bernstein’s approach to

Cavell to the idea that we cannot identify the physical basis of an art as its medium.

Such an argument must rely on close-reading Cavell's text in a mode that Cavell himself sometimes calls necessary "rigmarole." Consider Cavell's formulation in the passage cited, according to which "wood or stone would not be a medium of sculpture *in the absence of the art of sculpture*." What this phrase asserts is that "wood or stone" *is* in fact a medium of sculpture, full stop, depending of course on the existence of the art of sculpture. Second, the enumeration of the characteristic media of traditional visual art also asserts the same thing in calling these "media". The final sentence repeats this as a conditional. To say that "the idea of the medium is not simply that of a physical material" is precisely to say that it *is* – but it is also other things, which is what the final hyphenated phrase makes clear by stating that the medium is "material-in-certain-characteristic-applications." This is in complete harmony with another key Cavell paragraph, which sheds further light on the question (returning now to *The World Viewed*):

But what is the medium of painting or poetry or music as such? One of two responses seem forced upon us, and neither is an answer to the question. A first response will be: The medium of music as such is sound as such; the medium of painting is paint as such, etc. Such responses seem to mean that all sound is music, all areas of color are paintings. But this says nothing about the nature of music or painting; it is a claim about someone's – or humankind's – experience of the world, e.g., that nature, or the passage of time or space, is for certain creatures a medium of expression. [...] A second response will be: Nothing is *the* medium of, say, painting as such. A medium of painting is whatever way or ways paint is managed so as to create objects we accept as paintings. Only an art can define its media.²⁸

While the same kind of points about an implicit affirmation of materiality hold for this passage as much the Cavell passage cited above (*viz.*, that

art. What this disagreement consists in is not easy to establish as it has to do with an aspect of Cavell's philosophy of art, which is itself difficult to articulate explicitly, namely the concept of naïveté itself, and its legitimacy for philosophy. The articulation of this difficulty is central to my present effort.

²⁸

certain *material* media are for human beings media of expression), the relationship between the two “responses” is articulated by Cavell a few pages earlier in terms of a potential problem with his use of the term “automatism”. Cavell introduces the term to name and describe (and further elaborate) the “second response” in the paragraph cited above. An “automatism” writes Cavell, is “[...] what gives significance to features of [the] physical basis”, namely “the artistic discoveries of form and genre and type and technique.” Cavell comments:

It may seem perverse of me, since [...] I am trying to free the idea of a medium from its confinement in referring to the physical bases of various arts, [that] I go on using the same word to name those bases as well as to characterize modes of achievement within the arts. I do not take the perverseness here to be of my own making. Why not just stick to terms like ‘form,’ or, as Northrop Frye uses it, ‘genre’? But *confusion here is caused by precisely the fact that this concept is justified in both places*. And it will not be dispelled by redefining or substituting some labels.²⁹

As far as Cavell’s affirmation of the identity thesis goes, this is as explicit as it gets, and I think we may consider the point settled. At the same time, those familiar with Cavell’s writings will have noticed that my quotations purposefully edit a significant context for Cavell’s claims within which all of these points about the medium are introduced, namely modernist art and film, and the relationship of both of these to each other, to philosophy, and to what Cavell in *The World Viewed* calls “traditional art,” whose central instance in that book is painting (while in *Must We Mean What We Say* it is music and drama). The editing is not merely rhetorical. I purposefully avoided evoking these complexities in order to make the point, which I think is true, and which the paragraph last cited makes explicitly, that Cavell is committed to a philosophical position affirming the materiality of the medium of art in general, implying that it is justified to identify the medium of art with its physical basis.

In due course it will be necessary to re-situate Cavell’s claim about the materiality of the medium in its native context, namely Cavell’s concept

²⁹ (Cavell 1979b), p. 105. Italics added.

of modernism, as this assumption will be found to be essential to the final step of the argument of this paper in Part 3. However, we must first turn to Cavell's conception of philosophy as exemplified by film.

3. Film as Philosophy

3.1. Introduction

This section will construct the first part of a two-step argument. My main concern will be to establish evidence for the idea that *The World Viewed* (together with *Pursuits of Happiness*) represent a Copernican turn in Cavell's conception of philosophy in identifying film's ontologically based "naïve realism" as a mode of philosophizing that Cavell's early writings articulated as the goal of modernist philosophy, a condition to which philosophy aspires to in its post-Wittgensteinian condition within Cavell's own writings.

In Section 4 of this paper I will then use this identification to argue for the surprising conclusion that film's becoming the "last traditional art" for Cavell should be understood as implicitly identifying the rise of the use of perspective in the Italian Quattrocento as a moment when painting becomes art by making one of the most fundamental aspects of its medium, namely the materiality of the work, significant in and by the construction of pictorial space on the basis of Albertian one point perspective.³⁰

As I mentioned, my support for this ambitious goal will resemble something like an existential mathematical proof: all that I will show is that in one instance of a filmic treatment of a Quattrocento work by a representative early practitioner of perspective (Piero della Francesca) such an identification may be legitimately established by a procedure I would like to think of as an instance of what Cavell calls "philosophical criticism" of a filmic reading of the same work by Andrei Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia*.

For the purposes of this section I will employ the shorthand 'Cavell's thesis' to designate the idea that film is philosophy, and I will argue that

³⁰ Cf. Cavell: "If film is seriously to be thought of as an art at all [Cavell gives reasons for his doubt elsewhere], then it needs to be explained how it can have avoided the fate of modernism, which in practice means how it can have maintained its continuities of audiences and genres, how it can have been taken seriously without having assumed the burden of seriousness. For the blatant fact about film is that, if it is art, it is the one live traditional art, the one that can take its tradition for granted." (Cavell 1979b), pp. 14-15.

this identification of film and philosophy is both *sui generis* for Cavell (employing a term used by Joseph Margolis to characterize “the human”), and that it is, indeed, ontological.

3.2. The Ontological Thesis

Describing Cavell's thesis about the identity of film and philosophy as ‘ontological’ is first of all meant to emphasize that it is more than a helpful metaphor. To repeat, it expresses the claim that film *is* in some sense identical with philosophy: that film *is* philosophy. It is this ontological identity that I am interested in making sense of, first, by clarifying what it could possibly mean, second, by identifying at least one sense in which it could be true, and, third, by saying something about how it could be important and/or helpful (as it will become apparent, I think that the separation of these tasks is only possible to a limited extent). This is a tall order, and it may be useful first to see whether it could be reasonably claimed that Cavell ever said or implied something like this “thesis”.³¹

In this connection it may be helpful to note that the conception of a strict ontological identity is often not directly attributed to Cavell, but to one of the foremost experts on his philosophical work, Stephen Mulhall, who has applied it to yield philosophical analyses of films important on their own account in his book *On Film*.³² In this book we get a version of Cavell's thesis that is almost as strong as the ontological identity I am interested in, but not quite.

Mulhall introduces his version of “Cavell's thesis” in two parts. He begins with the idea that films (the *Alien* series in particular) “philosophize”:

I do not look at these films as handy or popular illustrations of views and arguments properly developed by philosophers; I see them rather

³¹ I take it that this discussion is not closed, and in fact I know of no really satisfactory clarification of the ontological claim despite the wonderful, and by now voluminous literature on how film is philosophical both in the theoretical and the critical mode. My claim that no existing account is satisfactory (at least in conveying Cavell's precise sense) is both negative and empirical, so it admits of no conclusive proof in principle aside from a complete listing and analysis of all the ways in which this thesis has been understood. For an excellent survey of analytical construals of the identity (which omits the sense I seek to establish here) see (Wartenberg, 2008).

³² (Mulhall 2001)

as themselves reflecting on and evaluating such views and arguments, as thinking seriously and systematically about them in just the ways that philosophers do. Such films are not philosophy's raw material, nor a source for its ornamentation; they are philosophical exercises, philosophy in action – film as philosophizing.³³

This way of putting things proved fairly controversial (beyond what many perceived to be the sheer provocation of making the *Alien* series a target of philosophical analysis – and other sci-fi, such as *Terminator II*), for the sense in which films can be said to “reflect on and evaluate arguments” is not immediately obvious, especially given the *caveat* Mulhall follows up with to the effect that these arguments are not given as material in the film that the philosopher subsequently reflects on, but, rather, that film itself does this reflecting in some manner, just in virtue of its being *film*.³⁴ Subsequently, Mulhall sharpens the claim and introduces a crucial explicatory clarification regarding the form of “reflection” that seems to be at issue, namely that films philosophize in virtue of “reflecting on the conditions of their own possibility”:

[...] we could say that the [*Alien*] series as a whole makes progress by reflecting upon the conditions of its own possibility. But to make progress by reflecting upon the conditions of its own possibility is also as good a characterization as could be desired of the way in which any truly rigorous philosophy must proceed; for any philosophy that failed to engage in such reflection would fail to demand of itself what it makes its business to demand of any and every other discipline with which it presumes to engage. Hence thinking of the *Alien* series as an exemplary instance of cinematic modernism, we might also consider it as exemplary of cinema that finds itself in the condition of philosophy – of film as philosophy.³⁵

Now, it is crucial to point out that this is indeed stronger than anything Cavell ever said explicitly, for Cavell's writings are mostly highly circum-

³³ Op.cit., p 12. Italics added.

³⁴ The somewhat disheartening controversy prompted Mulhall to offer further defense of his claim in (Mulhall 2007). From the perspective of my current take, this latter essay offers nothing new. Needless to say, in my view, Mulhall got it essentially right the first time.

³⁵ emphOp. cit., p.12. Italics added.

spect in talking about the relationship of philosophy and film. Even though Mulhall's version just about falls short of enunciating the strict ontological identity that is the target of my inquiry, Cavell himself has never to my knowledge committed to print such an explicitly concise version of his thesis as the one used by Mulhall. What I intend to argue now is that we can nonetheless identify the stronger, indeed, the strongest version in Cavell, and that in fact there is a certain softening of the original version in Mulhall. How so?

3.3. *Naïveté and Self-reflexivity*

It will be helpful, if I make clear the main lines of the argument of this section of my paper at the outset. I think of Cavell's thesis, Cavell's original version of Mulhall's characterization of film, as both paradoxical and of such nature that it can only be conveyed indirectly. The latter is the reason why it is never explicitly stated by Cavell, whereas it is the paradoxical aspect that makes it elusive. In brief, I find myself largely in agreement with William Rothman, who in an excellent summary of Cavell's ideas about film formulates the connection (or identity, as I would have it) between film and philosophy within *The World Viewed* as follows:

In *The World Viewed* [...] film *is* the subject, *the* subject of the book [and] philosophy *is* the subject, *the* subject of the book [...] What makes this possible is the fact that in *The World Viewed*, as in the movies that motivate its writing, philosophy and film are not separate subjects; they are joined in a conversation so intimate as to constitute a kind of marriage of equals envisioned by the Hollywood "remarriage comedies" that *Pursuits of Happiness* goes on to study.³⁶

This is almost Cavell's thesis in the form I am after, except for this troublesome mediating term: subject. How do we get from here to my desired copula? Building further on Rothmann's observation, my suggestion is that we may find a characterization of both film and philosophy in Cavell which are ultimately identical, although procedurally, rather than explicitly enunciated, being then enacted or performed by the kind of conversational

³⁶ (Rothmann 1998), p. 354.

prose that constitutes the practice of philosophy in the pages of *The Pursuits of Happiness*. This will also help in identifying the sense in which it is important in just this respect that Cavell talks about *re*-marriage, and not just marriage (a point oddly omitted by Rothmann in the preceding passage). Just as the state of marriage ontologically transcends intimacy (which is why the essence of marriage can become a philosophical question), philosophy, rather than merely engaging film in intimate conversation, actually recognizes – call it acknowledgement – in film its visceral *other*, and as thus makes it speak with its own voice, lending it its own body, so to speak, namely language. As Cavell writes:

...if philosophy can be thought of as the world of a particular culture brought to consciousness of itself, then one mode of philosophical criticism (call it philosophical criticism) can be thought of as the world of a particular work brought to consciousness of itself.”³⁷

While this passage is about art in general, my claim is that in the case of film the “world of the work” may be described as precisely the philosophy that “brings that world to consciousness,” itself being “brought to consciousness” by philosophical criticism, that is philosophy brought back to its native medium: ordinary language. Moreover, I should like to claim that philosophy for Cavell recognizes in film not merely its other, so to speak, but its perfected self, its best realization. Philosophy approaches film, (or rather those of us who philosophize in sympathy with Cavell’s idea of it do) with a sense of awe and humility because it perceives therein the effortless and self-legitimizing realization of its own highest aspirations. The best articulation of this idea that I know of is due to Robert Pippin, who relegates the relevant remark to a footnote, perhaps in recognition of its “courting of outrageousness”:

There is something of philosophical importance at stake in pictorial achievements even if they are not – just because they are not – philosophy themselves. That is to say, the claim is not that such artworks are works of philosophy, or philosophy *manqué*, but that they embody a distinct form of aesthetic intelligibility, or an aesthetic way

³⁷ (Cavell 2002), p. 313. (The passage is from: *The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of King Lear*)

of rendering intelligible and compelling a variety of issues of the deepest importance to philosophy. [fn: The stronger claim would be that whatever makes art intelligible is something that is essential to philosophy but that philosophy itself cannot supply; the *even* stronger claim would be that art renders intelligible what philosophy tries to reveal but does so better.] (That is, they do if these works succeed, a condition that itself raises a number of problems.)³⁸

Now, given that the identity in question cannot be a literal one (film *is*, after all, different from philosophy as Pippin says, rightly), its possibility must depend on some shared conceptual characterization. The two terms I would like to propose for this shared characterization are the ones I proposed before as central to naïve realism as an aesthetic attitude, namely naïveté and self-reflexivity.

I mentioned that Cavell's view will turn out to be paradoxical, and it is easy to see how the conjoined realization of these two properties is paradoxical by simply invoking a few naïve intuitions about naïveté that intend nothing more than to explore the word's dictionary definition. Insofar as "un-reflexive" (as well as "innocent") are cognate terms with naïve, in talking about naïve self-reflexivity we seem straightforwardly to be courting paradox by invoking a kind unreflexivity as a property of reflexivity, so to speak. However, it may be helpful to point out the obvious, namely that these are precisely co-realizable properties of everyday human consciousness, or subjectivity, and their conjoining is therefore what lends the phrase "naïveté" its meaning already in Schiller³⁹ to whom the idea of applying the concept philosophically to art is due: given that naïveté is a concept that captures a human attitude and as such is dependent on consciousness (which, morally speaking, is the most serious problem with in some cases) there is no particular problem in thinking of naïveté and self-reflexivity as co-realized. Naïveté does not exclude self-consciousness, which is what makes it into a philosophical problem. On the contrary, the

³⁸ (Pippin 2014), p. 3. Pippin's book is thoroughly inspired by Cavell's philosophy of art in a number of ways both explicitly and implicitly, but the connecting of this passage to the theme at hand is my own doing.

³⁹ For Schiller we find the naïve in nature when we perceive its unaffectedness, but this depends on a mental operation wherewith we find that "nature stand(s) in contrast to art and shame(s) her". The other "naïve" is a quality of mind. Ibid. p. 2.

latter provides the “context” so to speak that makes it possible, and it is presumably something like the revolutionary characterization of human subjectivity in Kant and Fichte that led Schiller himself to the discovery of the term for aesthetics. However, naïveté by definition is also importantly an attitude that cannot really know itself, or acknowledge itself (Schlegel’s point), which is why I warned that Cavell’s conception of philosophy can only be demonstrated indirectly, much like the way an articulation of Schlegel’s conception of irony can only be based on aphorisms.⁴⁰ Let me add, that the naïveté I am after cannot quite be like that of the child’s naïveté, but somehow or other must be a more sophisticated version as practiced by “grown ups”. So the challenge is now to produce a persuasive account from Cavell’s magic hat, perhaps as a corrective to Schiller’s account, as to what a philosophical naïveté could be like.⁴¹

Of the two concepts, i.e., naïveté and self-reflexivity, naïveté is in some sense the more important one, but because there is this paradoxical twist to it, I will begin with self-reflexivity. It will lead us straight into the topic of naïveté.

My impression is that Mulhall’s joint characterization of film and philosophy, as both reflecting on the conditions of their possibilities, comes off as sitting a little bit uneasily, as if somehow tentatively made. Also, Cavell is not cited as a source. The reason may be, I suspect, that *nowhere* in the pages of *The World Viewed* does Cavell characterize philosophy itself as self-reflexive, and in *The Pursuits of Happiness* this is confined to a single side-remark. This is worth quoting:

[...] I have indicated in previous writings ways in which, as I might put it, film exists in a state of philosophy: it is inherently self-reflexive, takes itself as an inevitable part of its craving for speculation. [...] It may be felt that these properties apply, more or less, to all the ma-

⁴⁰ Perhaps this is the reason why Bernstein seems only to concede the legitimate practice of Cavell’s mode of philosophizing in relation to his use of the ‘fragment.’ See *op. cit.* pp. 137–138.

⁴¹ That the idea of naïveté regained is central to Cavell’s philosophical endeavor as an “education for grown-ups” is most often acknowledged by commentators in focusing on Cavell’s claiming for philosophy the effort to re-find the “child’s voice.” For a very interesting account of this, see Vincent Colapetrio: *Voice and the Interrogation of Philosophy: Inheritance, Abandonment, and Jazz*. In: (Saito and Standish 2012).

jor arts. In that case what I am showing is that philosophy is to be understood, however else, aesthetically.⁴²

The remark is important because, as we will see in a moment, it applies to film in general, and to the Hollywood films in particular which are the subject of *Pursuits of Happiness*. True, even here Cavell is not offering a characterization of philosophy *per se*, but film. It follows nevertheless that to 'exist in a state of philosophy' means to be 'inherently self-reflexive', and one assumes that this would apply to philosophy itself, insofar as philosophy must exist in a state of philosophy, so to speak.⁴³ What is surprising is that there is a strong and explicit sense in which, in all of *The World Viewed*, a form of art becoming self-reflexive, i.e., philosophical, is, to all ends and purposes, a mark of *decadence* (which by no means excludes artistic excellence for Cavell) of that particular art form, a state characterized as one of "modernism" wherein – to quote Cavell – its "traditions are no longer *natural* to it". Here is a very important place from *The World Viewed* where Cavell repeats this well-worn point from his earlier writings:

What needs accounting for is simultaneously that the tradition is still available to current successful films, and also that serious works are in the process of questioning their relation to the tradition, that they are moving into the modernist predicament in which an art has lost its natural relation to its history [...] When in such a state an art explores its medium, it is exploring the conditions of its existence; it is asking exactly whether, and under what conditions, it can survive.⁴⁴

And he adds elsewhere:

⁴² (Cavell 1981), p.14.

⁴³ Cf. Cavell: "If I deny a distinction, it is the still fashionable distinction between philosophy and meta-philosophy, the philosophy of philosophy. [...] I would regard this fact – that philosophy is one of its own normal topics – as in turn defining for the subject, for what I wish philosophy to do." (Cavell 2002), p. xxxii.

⁴⁴ (Cavell 1979b), p. 72. The most thorough explorations of this idea, preparing its appearance in *The World Viewed*, can be found in *Music Discomposed* and *A Matter of Meaning It* in (Cavell 2002). These explorations are among those of Cavell's early writings that, as he says, he "still uses."

[...] I have sometimes said that art now exists in the condition of philosophy, since it has always been the condition of philosophy to attempt to escape itself...⁴⁵

Indeed, *The World Viewed* states this idea even more squarely:

“Art now exists in the condition of philosophy.”⁴⁶

Given that the earlier remark specifically referred to Hollywood film, characterized precisely for its “naïveté” (Cavell’s own phrase), meaning that these films were made in a period when film managed to be a “live traditional art”, an art that successfully “escapes the modernist predicament,” we seem to be forced to conclude that Cavell’s film-books argue for *two different attributions of self-reflexivity* to film: one general, and one specific to film in entering into its state of modernism. What to make of this seeming contradiction?

There are subtle differences in these different characterizations of film (or art in general) and philosophy as self-reflexive, and I cannot now go into this matter in all its depth.⁴⁷ Instead, I offer the conclusion that they open the possibility for identifying *two different kinds of self-reflexivity* as the mark of the philosophical in art, and more specifically the philosophical condition of film. One kind characterizes art-forms moving into their respective states of modernism and self-examination. The other kind, however, marks off the art-form in question as still being in its classical or “naïve” phase and is actually a condition exhibited by what Cavell calls “canonical” works of art that establish the art-form itself (its medium) by making aspects of their “physical basis” significant.⁴⁸ There is a very important passage in Cavell’s own gloss on *The World Viewed*, the essay titled *More on the World Viewed* written in response to critics and subsequently published

⁴⁵ (Cavell 1988), p.20(From: *The Thought of movies*)

⁴⁶ (Cavell 1979b), p. 14.

⁴⁷ One has to do with film “taking itself as an inevitable part of its craving for speculation”. The other with “exploring its medium”, the third with “escaping itself”.

⁴⁸ That the idea of canonicity is central to aesthetics, and both canonical works and canonical critics are what provide the “data” for philosophical criticism is stated both in *Must We Mean What We Say*, (Cavell 2002), p. 182., and in *The World Viewed*, (Cavell 1979b), p. 9. Cavell mentions that one of the problems in working on the aesthetics of film is precisely such a lack of an agreed canon both as to films and as to criticism.

together with the first work as a single volume, which contains perhaps the most salient passage bringing out this very point about classical films:

One of the burdens of my book is that a film of such depth [such as Dreyer's *Joan of Arc*] must be giving deep significance to conditions of the medium of film itself. (This is, or ought to be, the meaning of "cinematic".)⁴⁹

My understanding of the fact that Cavell calls this principle one of the "burdens" of his original book, as opposed to an articulate thesis, is precisely that it has to do with the naïve phase of an art-form which in a manner eschews articulation apart from the discovery of such naïve reflexivity by philosophical criticism. In this phase the particular art-form has not begun questioning itself in the sense of what it is that will enable it to survive its traditions (and automatisms) becoming problematic to it; it is not trying to "escape itself" but is "still" exploring its medium in a "naïve" fashion, endowing it as much with a certain innocent glow as with an exuberant energy that informs the pleasure it provides. We find much support for this idea in Cavell, and it is explicitly connected to his appreciation of the talkies:

The movie's ease within its assumptions and achievements – its conventions remaining convenient for so much of its life, remaining convincing and fertile without self-questioning – is central to its pleasure for us. We shall sometimes think of this as film's naïveté [...]. How has film been able to provide this pleasure? How is one to explain the effect of those ordinary instances, which just seem to have been made for the industry to make? What is the power of film that it could survive (even profit artistically from) so much neglect and ignorant contempt from those in power over it? What is film?⁵⁰

⁴⁹ (Cavell 1979b), p. 181. (The passage is from: *More of the World Viewed*). For the explicit linking of this idea to what I earlier called the 'physical identity thesis,' cf., also: "I hold on to the critical hypothesis which runs through my book as well as through this continuation of it, that pride of place within the canon of serious films will be found occupied by those films that most clearly and most deeply discover the powers of the medium itself, those that give fullest significance to the possibilities and necessities of its physical basis." Ibid, p. 219.

⁵⁰ (Cavell 1979b), p. 15. Cf. also Cavell's further remarks on the "pleasure art provides" (Cavell 1979b), p. 98.

Thus, the central aesthetic question of *The World Viewed* is posed in this passage precisely in term of a need for investigating the concept of naïveté. This passage, with its almost theological inflection, implicitly contains the answer to the question it raises: it is innocence that protects one from evil, so to speak. But anyone familiar with Cavell's analyses in *The World Viewed*, and *Pursuits of Happiness* will recall how the thrust of his argument there concerns the ways in which precisely these allegedly naïve films acknowledge (i.e. reflect on) their medium as part of their meaning. One need only to recall Cavell's discussion of the manner in which movie-stardom is a specific possibility of the filmic medium, which is over and over acknowledged and thematized by the analysis of "the modest collection of talkies at [his] disposal," i.e., the films analyzed in *The Pursuits of Happiness* (as well as the hundreds of other films Cavell seems to be capable of recalling in detail). But does it also imply that these films are somehow more truly "philosophical" than some more "modernist" cinema? Wouldn't this be somehow already equivalent to arriving at the conclusion suggested in the following section of my paper that, say, Quattrocento painting is more "philosophical," or philosophical in a truer and more originary sense for Cavell than, say, abstract expressionism, Warhol's ready-mades, or conceptual art, etc.? I hope it is indeed difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is precisely what Cavell seems to be implying by his analyses, (while perhaps seeming to contradict himself by his more explicit statements about art being merely *now* in the condition of philosophy I quoted above). Difficult, that is, unless we are also prepared to identify a conception of philosophy in Cavell which makes it naïve precisely in the way these films are naïve, or at least identifying them as aspiring to this kind of naïveté, or perhaps even just constituting the condition of such constitutional eternal longing for the kind of naïveté embodied in these films. As I said, by the very definition of the "naïve" such an attitude would be incapable of giving an explicit account of itself (or reluctant to do so) – it could only manifest itself as a kind of practice – the way the practice of viewing films together may lead to conversation itself deserving the name of philosophy.⁵¹

⁵¹ Cf. Cavell's remarks on "companionship" having been essential to his own experience of film in a historical period that he regards as sadly over in the introduction to *The World Viewed*.

3.4. *Close-reading Cavell*

While Cavell articulates in many different forms and on several different occasions this idea, I hope to show how it emerges also by subjecting the following remarkable passage to an exercise in close-reading in the Cavellian spirit.⁵² It will show that this is exactly Cavell's idea of doing philosophy in the "naïve" mode (the explicit qualification being ultimately unnecessary), whose adoption in the film-books I described (perhaps a bit too grandly in the light of its associations), as representing a Copernican turn in Cavell's thinking:

I understand [that which makes philosophy - philosophy] as a willingness to think not about something other than what ordinary human beings think about, but rather to learn to think undistractedly about things that ordinary human beings cannot help thinking about, or anyway cannot help having occur to them, sometimes in fantasy, sometimes as a flash across a landscape; such things, for example, as whether we can know the world as it is in itself, or whether others really know the nature of one's own experiences, or whether good and bad are relative, or whether we might not now be dreaming that we are awake, or whether modern tyrannies and weapons and spaces and speeds and art are continuous with the past of the human race or discontinuous, and hence whether the learning of the human race is not irrelevant to the problems it has brought before itself. Such thoughts are instances of the characteristic human willingness to allow questions for itself which it cannot answer with satisfaction. Cynics about philosophy, and perhaps about humanity, will find that questions without answers are empty; dogmatists will claim to have arrived at answers; philosophers after my heart will rather wish to convey the thought that while there may be no satisfying answers to such questions *in certain forms*, there are, so to speak, directions to answers, ways to think, that are worth the time of your life to discover.

⁵² The persuasiveness of my exercise depends in part on Cavell's insistence on the very first page of *The Claim of Reason* (no accident), that a philosopher's primary task is to produce texts ((Cavell 1979a), p. 1.), by which I take Cavell to mean texts that may precisely bear close-reading of the sort that most of his own philosophical writing depends on, i.e., texts that aspire to be like "great" texts at least in the sense that the philosopher, like the artist, can be taken to be "responsible for everything that happens in his work" (Cavell 2002), p. 236.

(It is a further question for me whether directions of this kind are teachable, in ways suited to what we think of as schools).⁵³

That this remarkable little text is self-reflexive goes without saying. It is a philosophical text that reflects on its own nature: it is philosophy trying to define philosophy. At the same time it is also clearly intentionally naïve in many ways as a piece of philosophy: it does not use technical language to say what it says – it aspires, or pretends to be, straightforward, and to mean just what it says.⁵⁴ Also, what it suggests explicitly is also a definition of philosophy as a form of naïveté: it says that in some sense philosophy is no different from the thinking that ordinary human beings do about ordinary matters, except that it does so “undistractedly”, which seems to be the key phrase in this passage. However, the passage also seems to begin undermining its own pretended naïveté right from the beginning. What, for instance does Cavell mean by “ordinary human beings”? He cannot just straightforwardly mean *all* human beings. Some of them, certainly those for whom “philosophy is esoteric” because “they guard themselves against its knowledge,” i.e., “most men”⁵⁵ never have it occur to them – even as a flash across a landscape – “whether we can know the world as it is in itself”. And many of these people must be normally intelligent people by any account. So how is the word “ordinary” helpful exactly, if at all? What work is it doing?

“Undistracted” is a somewhat ambiguous word. It can mean sustained concentration, but it can also mean a kind of engrossment and self-forgetting that is characteristic of, among other things, movie going. Perhaps it is not going too far to suggest that cinema is implicitly figuring as philosophy in this little text (indeed, as I would argue, as the only means for Cavell whereby we can really learn to do philosophy “out of school”, which may in fact be the only way).⁵⁶ If you assemble the pieces provided by Cav-

⁵³ (Cavell 1988), p.9.

⁵⁴ Cf. Cavell: “[The philosopher’s] examples and interpretations have, and are meant to have, the weight an ordinary man will give them; and he is himself speaking as an ordinary man, so that if he is wrong in his claims he must allow himself to be convinced in the ways any man thinking will be, or will not be.” (Cavell 2002), p. xl.

⁵⁵ (Cavell 2002), p. xl.

⁵⁶ Cf. Cavell: “Now, what is academic philosophy? It seems significant that this question has no obvious answer. In the way it is significant that the questions, >>What is the

ell, “undistracted engrossment in the ordinary as a form of fantasy” would be as a good candidate of philosophy emerging out of this passage as any other. However, it is just as good a definition of cinema as any other. But can this be right? Isn't the text then denying its own naïveté by asserting this kind of second meaning, and denying the first? I suggest that the key to Cavell's use of the “metaphor” of the ordinary – call it that for a second in its present appearance – lies in the elaborately long sentence and its structure that constitutes the entire first half of this passage. Notice, first, that the kind of things that occur according to Cavell to ordinary human beings as a flashes across the landscape, are not at all the kinds of things that occur to just anyone: they are relatively abstruse philosophical problems. The long sentence performs this interestingly, because it moves indeed from the “ordinary” into the abstruse, and then emerges again into something we might be willing to describe as “ordinary”, for who has indeed not wondered where technology is really leading us? In other words, there is an implicit acknowledgement in this sentence that philosophical problems far from being ordinary, are in fact extra-ordinary – they may arise from ordinary reality, but they leave it behind. At the same time their purpose is to finally return there, as if from a dream, increasing our capacity for making sense of it. But is it then finally possible that this text – although suggesting that philosophy is a kind of concentrated naïveté – is not itself naïve, but God forbid, even manipulative? I think this is the point that needs to be denied, and its denial is in complete harmony with everything Cavell has written, with a particularly salient passage being his invocation of the figure of Socrates at the beginning of his own first book length public appearance as a philosopher in the foreword to *Must We Mean What We Say?*, not as a representant of irony, but of purity:

The figure of Socrates now haunts contemporary philosophical practice and conscience more poignantly than ever – the pure figure motivated to philosophy only by the assertions of others, himself making none; the philosopher who did not need to write.⁵⁷

Here is where it becomes important to remind ourselves that in *Pursuits*

audience of philosophy? Must it have one? If so, what is it to gain from it? <<, have no obvious answers.” Ibid., p. xli.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. xxxv.

of *Happiness*, perhaps his most Socratic work, Cavell is talking not about marriage, but re-marriage. These films exemplify in their very themes the kind of roundabout returning to itself that philosophy posits as its ideal of a “heightened” discourse, to quote another metaphor Cavell employs for such a practice.⁵⁸ The concept that I find helpful here is one used by Agnes Heller in a different context.⁵⁹ She argues that there is a certain philosophical attitude or maturity, associated with a kind of teaching and thinking style, that can only be described as a wager on the possibility that naïveté once lost can also be regained. That even though the capacity for naïveté (which one can also associate with wonderment) is lost

⁵⁸ Opening yet another rich field of associations for understanding Cavell’s concept of modernism as both cognate with Thomas Mann’s conception art as “intensified life,” as well as Bernard Berenson’s concept of the tactile, which also depends on precisely such a conception of modernism inspired by Adolph Hildebrand’s conception of sculpture (an example of how modernism can change the “look” of traditional art, as Cavell says, or “even change what the past *is*” (Cavell 2002), p. 184.) Both Mann and Berenson work out an anti-Cartesian conception of the human that I take to be related to Cavell’s concept of the “humane.” In fact, further work in applying Cavell’s concept of the medium to old Masters must inevitably proceed by a reevaluation Berenson’s thoroughly misunderstood and underappreciated conception of the “tactile.”

⁵⁹ (Heller 1983): *‘Lukacs’ Later Philosophy*. The relationship of Lukács’ later aesthetics, in its effort at establishing the “medium” of art in a sense that is cognate with Cavell’s work, and also in terms of its pursuit of a philosophical articulation of the “everyday” and a return to the “everyday” as a goal for both philosophy and art in *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen*, deserve further study. It might also shed some light on Cavell’s sometimes puzzling relationship to the concept of “dialectic,” and to Marxism (which goes deeper in my view than the inspiration of his early work by the student movements of the sixties). The decisive difference which almost goes without saying, lies in the fact that Lukács’ concern in his later work is a Schillerian attempt to establish existing socialism as a realm of second naïveté, wherein “culture” is possible once more, but its unwilling subjects must somehow be educated to cognize this. Cavell’s pursuit of a philosophy of the future denies any such reality for an existing new culture, aside from his Marxian inflected reference to how a University community is in principal committed to creating a utopia which “[...] enables us now to teach one thing today and learn another tomorrow, to hunt for time to write in the morning, fish for a free projector in the afternoon, try to raise money for projects in the evening, and after a seminar read criticism? To some this will not seem a Utopian set of activities, but in the meantime, and for those with taste for this particular disunity, why not have it?” (Cavell 1981), p. 265. And modernist art for Lukács ceases to have any value with Cézanne and Van Gogh, although his own studies of cinema provide further food for thought as to the affinities between his thought and Cavell’s.

through experience, what is characteristic of the philosophical attitude is the hope that one can find one's way back to this original wonderment through learning, and eventually transmitting this learning in and by conversation. Heller calls this ideal "second naïveté". One might even call it, in the American mode, a kind of self-imposed "fake it till you make it" attitude to philosophy, with the one decisive difference that it is perfectly in earnest, perfectly genuine. The intent is not irony, but the hope for a Socratic philosophical practice

It is my conviction that the only way to read Cavell's text – and indeed all of his writings on film – is just as such "wagers" on naïveté as a philosophical strategy, with full awareness that only those will really be able to follow "the philosopher as guide" who are able – by engaging the subtleties of his/her text, or the subtleties of the cinematic miracles of the talkies that engage philosophers and pupils in conversation – to rise to the appreciation and verbal reproduction of this re-doubling of ordinary experience upon itself.⁶⁰ This is not at all an unusual attitude to philosophy when one reflects on it. Cavell's philosophical heroes: Socrates, Descartes, Hegel, Wittgenstein, and the American Transcendentalists come to mind, but Kierkegaard might be the best example.

3.5. Normativity

There is one catch in all of this, namely that even if all of this sounds persuasive in arguing for a sense in which Cavell's thesis might be both intelligible and true, it may disappoint, and many have found it disappointing, for the simple reason that it is a normative thesis about film. As I understand those and only those films can be said to philosophize in this classical sense which are *great*, or canonical, precisely in virtue of representing this classical stage. To see this, it is enough to return to the way in which the term "ordinary" functions in Cavell's cinematic definition of philosophy. Given what I hoped to have established above, i.e., that Cavell cannot mean everyone by "ordinary human beings", I think the only

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. xx. For the manner in which this involves rising to the paradoxical attitude of second naïveté, as I here call it, in terms of having, in order to "educate your experience" to learn to trust your experience, but that "the education cannot be achieved ahead of the trusting," in Cavell's formulation of the paradox involved, see, (Cavell 1981), p.12.

real way to make sense of what the passage says is to realize that it is actually the willingness to philosophize (in the way Cavell understands it), that defines what human beings are *per se*, or at least those who are not cynical about their humanity, and not the other way around. In other words the notion of the ordinary in Cavell is already a normative ideal. It is a value term. This may not come as a surprise to those who are familiar with Cavell's sources, namely Thoreau, Emerson and Heidegger, among others. It is also implicit in the central piece in Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness*, which is an essay on the *Philadelphia story*, and Cavell's slightly stumbling, as if embarrassed, Deweyite concern there with "natural aristocracy", the idea that the talkie's search for this American ideal in reflecting on the condition of stardom by reference to the characters played by Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn, but also, and centrally, in terms of the way these films establish their canonical status as works of art in their search for the "new human" in terms of a search for "new woman."⁶¹

The search for how Cavell's thesis may be seen as *sui generis* inevitably leads to the conclusion that we can only look at it this way if we are also prepared to recognize it as a normative claim about the "classical" phase of cinema (and as to some degree helping to define – for those of us who have a taste for such things – the classical phase of cinema, cinematic greatness). This is in my opinion the deeper reason why Mulhall is a bit evasive about attributing his own position to Cavell. He loves the films he is talking about, and even though he mentions in passing that these are works of "cinematic modernism" – evoking thereby Cavell's second, decadent sense of self-reflexivity without properly deploying it in all its consequences, he is loath to own up to the inherent normativity of Cavell's conception, because it would involve disparaging the very same movies whose brilliance his mode of analysis really helps to establish.

Some may share this disappointment.⁶² However, I would like to sug-

⁶¹ (Cavell 1981), p. 16.

⁶² For good reasons. I think it is far too radical to imply – as Cavell seems to – that only cynics would think that "questions without answers are empty". One is certainly reluctant to share the idea that the only serious form of humanity is one, which makes the self-susceptible to philosophical wonderment, even were that capacity for that "wonderment" somehow enmeshed within our ordinary capacity to engage with reality. Part of the point of Cavell's mode of philosophizing in the form of "second naïveté" is precisely to suggest

gest at least one sense in which we shouldn't namely by recognizing in the pursuit of philosophical naiveté a pedagogical ideal, a profound way in which philosophy might be an "education for grown-ups". It provides us both a reason *for*, and a mode *of* engaging with these works that is not boringly pedantic, but in fact Socratic in the true sense. At the same time it is an ideal of preserving and transcending our ordinariness (an ideal for a truly democratic education) in dialogue with each other, and as hoping for a context of learning which is both a form of school, but at the same time somehow manages to rise beyond it.

In the final section of this paper, in returning to the thesis about materiality, I would also like to suggest that on the very terms of Cavell's philosophy, it is not merely film that opens up such possibilities for a Socratic education, but art itself in its original Western incarnation in Florentine Quattrocento painting, but also in understanding the achievements on Cavell's own terms of a filmmaker like Andrei Tarkovsky, who establishes his own genre of poetic cinema in a way that fits Cavell's ideas of canonicity hand-in-glove. These consequences, in turn raise a number of difficult questions for Cavell's philosophy which will not be addressed in this paper. One such conclusion, however, should be that Cavell's conception of normativity, the way in which the thought

[...] that works of art are valuable is analytically true of them; and that value is inescapable in human experience and conduct

is inherently more flexible in its consequences than some of Cavell's thoughts on film might lead us to expect.⁶³

a way in which philosophy can help us escape the condition of thinking that "questions without answers are empty," and thereby become invested in philosophical reflection, which precisely offer a form of transcending a Schillerian humanistic ideal of aesthetic education without rejecting the idea of humanism altogether. I would like to think of this as a possibility for a different kind of liberal education coming alive in Cavell's work. Ways in which I would also like to think about it as anti-Cartesian are suggested in Section 4 of this paper. It is important to note that Cavell is aware of the issue, and specifically addresses it in a side remark in *The World Viewed*. Cf.: "It is no failure of a human being not to be a serious intellectual." (Cavell 1979b), p. 139.

⁶³ (Cavell 2002), p. 216. (The passage is from: *A Matter of Meaning It*)

4. Cavell and the Quattrocento: Reading Piero with Tarkovsky

4.1. Introduction

To return now to the question asked earlier about why reference to classical painting persists in being absent in Cavell's writings on film, we may begin by identifying a reason that would explain it well enough. Consider the following passage from Cavell's *The World Viewed*:

Perhaps what we must be faithful to is our knowledge that distance from *nature is no longer represented by perspective, which* [places us in relation to it, places nature before or away from us, and] *falsifies our knowledge that we are lost to nature, are absent from it, cannot face it.*⁶⁴

Traditional painting is here implicitly identified by Cavell as “perspectival” painting, and further contrasted with film as the only art-form that can do justice to this existential condition with its inflection of “lostness” that is a pervasive theme in Cavell's writings, beginning with his identification of the need for philosophy to confront the “condition of modernism” from his early writings⁶⁵, through the concern with perfectionism in his later work. However, in other passages Cavell seems at least a little bit more optimistic about the resources of “traditional art,” and its powers of *representation* one inevitably associates with perspectival painting:

Is the power of representation otherwise irretrievable? Is there no way to declare again the content of nature, not merely its conditions; to speak again from one's plight into the heart of a known community of which one is a known member, not merely speak of the terms on which any human existence is given? “Who knows what the human body would expand and flow out to under a more genial heaven?” “Who knows what sort of life would result if we had attained to purity?”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ (Cavell 1979b), p. 115. Italics added.

⁶⁵ Cf. (Cavell 2002), p. xxxiii., passim.

⁶⁶ (Cavell 1979b), p. 118.

I would like to read the poetical hopefulness of this passage, resonating as it does with Cavell's call for a "philosophy of the future," as acknowledging a possibility for how film might establish its identity, at least in some of its media, by reference to classical painting.⁶⁷ The conclusion of this essay lends some support to this thought by presenting one example for how Andrei Tarkovsky's filmic engagement of perspectival works from the Florentine Quattrocento establishes his own brand of poetic cinema as an (unrecognized) Cavellian genre. This genre declares itself as such in part by aspiring to "retrieving the power of representation" of classical art, evoking the very concepts of "body" and "purity" mentioned by Cavell in the passage quoted. Before moving on to this conclusion, however, it will be necessary to say a few words about the problem of the relationship film and classical painting in general, and Florentine painting in particular, as well the how perspective should be understood by Cavell to be playing an essential role in this relationship on the very terms of his own theory of the medium.

4.2. Cavell's Critique of Panofsky

My remarks will focus on Cavell's critique of Erwin Panofsky's conception of the filmic medium developed in Panofsky's classic *Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures*. This essay is one of Cavell's examples for a rare instance of "humane criticism" of film, and the source of a number of insights about "the role reality plays in this art,"⁶⁸ fundamental for his own ontology of movies. As I will show, Cavell is in principle committed to recognizing deep affinities between film and Quattrocento painting precisely for the reasons he criticizes Panofsky's *a prioristic* conception of the medium of film.

The main point I would like to make about Cavell's critique of Panof-

⁶⁷ In essence I am offering the way to begin thinking about Cavell's call for the "internal history of the relation of painting and photography generally," (Cavell 1979b), p. 237. fn. 37 that Cavell feels altogether lacking. In the same footnote he is generally dismissive of the use of painting in film as harboring aesthetically fruitful possibilities, but the only example he gives for the "direct inaccessibility of the powers of painting to the powers of movies" *ibid.*, is *An American in Paris*. My arguments in turn depend on the conviction others have found in the use of painting by film.

⁶⁸ (Cavell 1979b), p. 165.

sky is that by accepting Panofsky's monolithic conception of "traditional art," Cavell also implicitly accepts the assumption that perspective is the key to how Renaissance art establishes the concept of "traditional art" in the spirit of a humanistic materialism I characterized by citing Schiller earlier. This latter understanding of "traditional art" involves an interpretation of the way the Renaissance itself articulates the significance of the discovery of the "technology" of perspective.

As we are inevitably reminded again and again by the exponentially proliferating literature on perspective, the technique was probably invented in the early 1400's in the Republic of Florence, and "codified" shortly after its invention by a highly atypical thinker of the period, much like Cavell himself, namely Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise *On Painting* (1452).⁶⁹ Alberti's treatise argues that due to the mathematical truth underlying perspective construction, painting has become a kind of philosophy, or knowledge in action: a mode of *sensual* knowledge: his own picturesque term for this is *la più grassa Minerva* – a fatter wisdom.⁷⁰ This is the term whose interpretation plays a key role in the humanistic theory of perspective, and the term that Cavell is in my view committed to interpreting in a manner that would allow thinking of Quattrocento painting as "invoking its

⁶⁹ The most beautiful and convincing portrait of Alberti as an atypical thinker hounded by what almost feel like modernist obsessions with self-legitimation is (Grafton 2000). Cavell's own engagement with the Renaissance is documented by his brilliant readings of Shakespeare. I cannot resist quoting what he there says about an aspect of experiencing Shakespearean drama. This remark can be read as if written in response to Quattrocento painting, and is a good indication of the way in which Alberti himself is a peculiar figure:

In King Lear we are differently implicated, placed into a world not obviously unlike ours [...] nor obviously like ours, [...] and somehow participating in the proceedings. [...] participating, as at a funeral, or marriage or inauguration, confirming something: it could not happen without us. It is not a dispute or a story, but history happening, and we are living through it; later we may discover what it means, when we discover what a life means. (Cavell 1969b), p.326.

The passage reads as an evocation of the manner in which a perspective painting determines our point of view and involves us in the event (think of Alberti's conception of *istoria*), while keeping the picture at a decorous distance from us.

⁷⁰ (Alberti 1966)

material conditions of possibility” in creating the concept of “traditional art.”

I will introduce some terminology by saying that Panofsky espouses what I would like to call the Cartesian view of perspective, whereas Cavell is implicitly committed to an anti-Cartesian view. The Cartesian conception of perspective interprets Alberti's conception of the “slice of the visual pyramid” or the “window,” as a kind of dematerialization of the work of art, insofar as it is a work of art (and it is that according to Panofsky just in virtue of the use of perspective). On the Cartesian conception, it is the construction of this window being based on mathematics, informed by a proto-scientific theory of vision that is primarily captured by Alberti's metaphor. Moreover, it is this implicit dematerialization of the painting that allows Panofsky to claim about painting in the Renaissance that it represents what he calls a “decompartmentalization of art and science” which makes this art Cartesian *avant la lettre*.⁷¹ In short, Renaissance painting, for Panofsky, is a form of proto-science – which is how Panofsky understands Alberti's calling it a form of “sensate wisdom”.

It was also Erwin Panofsky, in his classic *Perspective as symbolic Form*, who first theorized the moment of invention of perspective as the moment when what Cavell calls “traditional art” comes into being.⁷² Not surprisingly, it is this Cartesian conception of perspective that is at work in Panofsky's *Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures*, as a monolithic conception of “traditional art”, which is a thought poignantly expressed towards the conclusion of that essay:

The processes of all the earlier representational arts conform, in a higher or lesser degree, to an idealistic conception of the world. These arts operate from top to bottom, so to speak, and not from bottom to top; *they start with an idea to be projected into shapeless matter and not with the objects that constitute the physical world.* [...] It is the movies, and only the movies, that do justice to that materialistic

⁷¹ See, (Panofsky 1953). This essay is perhaps Panofsky's most concise statement of his philosophy of the Renaissance as a historical period.

⁷² (Panofsky 1997a). A great deal has been written on the way in which Panofsky's treatise is essentially Hegelian. I do think, however, that Cavell's specific critique (as implied by what follows) is original, and particularly interesting in the light of the profound affinities of his own aesthetics with a Hegelian view of art.

interpretation of the universe which, whether we like it or not, pervades contemporary civilization.⁷³

My main claim about a “mistake” or “oversight” in Cavell’s critique of Panofsky is that by accepting and adopting Panofsky’s monolithic conception of “traditional art” Cavell also implicitly accepts the assumption that perspective is the key to this transformation in the spirit of a humanistic materialism I characterized by citing Schiller earlier.⁷⁴ However the entire thrust of Cavell’s theory of the medium should suggest that the artistic use and meaning of perspective, in a period such as the Quattrocento, cannot be determined *a priori*. This is precisely the gist of Cavell’s critique of Panofsky’s principal theses that the origins of film have to do with the exploitation of “the unique and specific possibilities of the new medium” and the invention of a technology preceding the appearance of an “artistic urge,” and that could call it into being (the concept Panofsky adapts from Riegl - *Kunstwollen*). A few salient points about Cavell’s critique are worth quoting as a reminder:

[...] the aesthetic possibilities of a medium are not givens. You can no more tell what will give significance to the unique and specific aesthetic possibilities of projecting photographic images by thinking about them or seeing some, than you can tell what will give significance to the possibilities of paint by thinking about paint, or looking some over. [...] the first moving pictures accepted as motion pictures were not applications of a medium that was defined by given possibilities, but the creation of a medium by their giving significance to specific possibilities [...] To discover ways of making sense is always a matter of the relation of an artist to his art, each discovering the other.⁷⁵

⁷³ (Panofsky 1997b), p. 122. The affinity of the phrase “shapeless matter” with the Schiller passage I quoted earlier should be obvious.

⁷⁴ For Panofsky, traditional art is brought in to being by Quattrocento perspectivalism, and culminates with Michelangelo, while never quite achieving those heights following the onset of the Cartesian worldview. Cf. (Panofsky 1962), pp. 229–30. The Panofsky essay quoted earlier posits Quattrocento “decompartmentalization” as an ideal that in some sense might still guide scientific inquiry without questioning its dominance.

⁷⁵ (Cavell 1979b), p. 32., *passim*

In other words, Cavell's critique of Panofsky should imply that there is no monolithic conception of "traditional art," but insofar as there is one, the Quattrocento is special precisely in the sense that it is not yet in possession of such a conception, but in the process of discovering it, in and by the way in which particular works lend artistic significance to features of their medium. Cavell, of all people, should recognize perspective to be merely one of these features, being in and of itself no more than a "technology," even if in a different sense from photography. Individual works of Quattrocento art, insofar as the laws of the medium hold in general, should be considered exactly along the lines Hollywood film should be considered in its canonical period according to Cavell.

Although I call this an "oversight" on Cavell's part, it has profound reasons both within his conceptions of film and philosophy (as we have seen, the two are inseparable).

4.3. Perspective and Cavell's Anti-Cartesianism

It is in fact not difficult to work out a long list of affinities between, on the one hand, Cavell's conception of "canonical" cinema, which now stands before us following the efforts of Section 3 of this paper as involving a form of naïve self-reflexivity, and, on the other hand, commonly recognized characteristics of Florentine art.

First, although the scholarship of Quattrocento art is particularly subject to ideological swings, no one would contest that one of its central concerns is with identifying the sense in which the art of this period represents, or participates in, the "new creation of the human" and the "refinding of innocence" as a secular-moral ideal rather than a theological one, as do the Remarriage Comedies according to Cavell.⁷⁶ Second, much like

⁷⁶ Further to this, there is a close parallel between reading the "acknowledgement" of materiality in Quattrocento painting as an element of the search for a secular conception of innocence, and Cavell's particular emphasis in his essay on *King Lear* (arguing for the play's establishing of the genre of Shakespearean tragedy in terms of an acknowledgement of "separateness") that this problematic transcends Christian morality. Cf. Cavell:

Is this a Christian play? If Cordelia resembles Christ, it is by having become fully human, by knowing her separateness, by knowing the deafness of miracles, and by nevertheless maintaining her love

the beginnings of film in Hollywood, the proliferation of genres and adjacent genres and their canonical paths of development and gradual exhaustion also characterize Quattrocento art. Third, the Quattrocento is also the best fit for Cavell's ideas about automatisms as natural to an art in its classical phase as it learns to "create significant objects in paint."⁷⁷ It is also a period centrally concerned with the everyday and the ordinary as a basis for art, and with the ennoblement of the ordinary as its purpose. Finally, Cavell's question about the pressure and stupidity of the Hollywood movie industry is closely matched by similar questions about the pressures of patronage, sponsorship, and command over iconographical meaning in Quattrocento art. In fact these are often so addressed by historians of Renaissance art, if not often enough, unfortunately, as an aesthetic question about the power of the medium of painting.⁷⁸

and the whole knowledge it brings. [...] one glimpses the possibility of a common human nature which each, in his own way, fails to achieve; or perhaps glimpses the idea that its gradual achievement is the admission of reflection in oneself of every theme a man exhibits. [...] Yet it makes us reflect that evil is not wrong when it thinks of itself as good, for at those times it recaptures a craving for goodness, an experience of its own innocence which the world rejects. (Cavell 2002), pp. 301-309. *passim*.

All of this would need to be made good by a philosophical criticism of Quattrocento painting, demonstrating the way in which the ambiguity of these paintings as to their secular vs. theological function in their "canonical" instances (e.g., classically, Masaccio's *Trinity*) is related to the way in which they declare themselves as paintings by "acknowledging" their material conditions of possibility in their use of perspective. This, , is a matter of further work on the way Cavell's theory of the medium provides us with a reading of traditional artworks. My current essay as whole is merely focused on establishing such a possibility for the philosophy of painting, while this note merely points out that a philosophical reading of Renaissance painting may have something to say about a question that is famously impossible to decide by traditional methods of art history, with arguments weighing equally for both "secularizing" and "theological" readings. In a sense, the historiography of art-historical scholarship pertaining to Renaissance painting is nothing but the history of this problem.

⁷⁷ A quick look at the features of "automatism" thought of as naturally applying to Quattrocento art in (Cavell 1979b), p. 107. suffices to make this point.

⁷⁸ One of the likely reasons why Cavell never addresses works of classical art is in fact quite obvious. In no other field of humanistic inquiry has scholarship and audience drift-

However, one of the key reasons why Cavell resists the investigation of these facts has to do with the very terms on which he identifies film as a modernist art. At the conclusion of Section 2, I suggested that “in due course” we will have to re-situate Cavell’s conviction as to the identity of the medium of traditional art with its physical basis in its “native context,” namely Cavell’s view of modernism. One of the aspects of modernist art for Cavell is precisely that

[...] modernism only makes explicit and bare what has always been true of art. (That is almost a definition of modernism, not to say its purpose).⁷⁹

The key to how film does this is precisely what leads Cavell to ignore “perspective,” despite the fact that it is commonplace about photography that as a technology for creating an image it represents a perfected realization of the one point perspective construction of pictorial space.⁸⁰ For film can become an art for Cavell’s just on account of its ability to “overcome” Cartesian skepticism by its reliance on photography:

ted further apart than in the field of art-history, which is particularly true about the study of Renaissance painting. The very suggestion that philosophy may have something interesting to say about Renaissance painting counts as a “courting of outrageousness” on a far grander scale than the thesis that film can be philosophy. Cavell’s recurring lament that film is not a serious subject of study within the academy is precisely what distinguishes it from the study of art, which is one of the most elitistically protected fields. It may be useful to remind ourselves that Panofsky would not have agreed to this, and his reasons are not unrelated to Cavell’s identification of a capacity for criticism with a capacity for naïveté:

The interpretation of the *intrinsic meaning or content*, dealing with what we have termed ‘symbolical’ values instead of with *images, stories, and allegories*, requires something more than familiarity with specific *themes* or *concepts* as transmitted through literary sources. [...] To grasp these principles we need a mental faculty comparable to that of a diagnostician, - a faculty which I cannot describe better than by the rather discredited term ‘synthetic intuition,’ and which may be better developed in a talented layman than in an erudite scholar. (Panofsky 1962), p. 15.

⁷⁹ (Cavell 2002), p. 189.

⁸⁰ Cf.: for instance (Friedberg 2006).

At some point the unhinging of our consciousness from the world interposed our subjectivity between us and our presentness to the world. Then our subjectivity became what is present to us, individuality became isolation. [...] Photography overcame subjectivity in a way undreamed of by painting, a way that could not satisfy painting, one which does not so much defeat the act of painting as escape it altogether: by *automatism*, by removing the human agent from the task of reproduction.⁸¹

Although much can be said about this passage in connection with our topic, the point I want to make is simply that the power of film as an art is here described as being defined for Cavell by its anti-Cartesian thrust.⁸² Taken together with Cavell's implicit acceptance of Panofsky's characterization of Quattrocento perspective as essentially Cartesian, it accounts for Cavell's implicit rejection of film's kinship with Quattrocento art. Film's ability to speak to us, moderns, derives precisely from this ontological reversal enabling it to remain a "traditional art", i.e., to become truly modernist in the positive, optimistic, forward looking sense associated by Michael Fried with Manet's painting of the 1960's. *Based on Cavell's own theory of the medium, film in its "overcoming" of skepticism by coming to consciousness of itself as a modernist realization of traditional art should also reveal all "traditional art" as having been anti-Cartesian, in its recurring "classical" phases, from its very beginnings.*

The negation of a Cartesian humanism by film involved in this ontological shift is further thematized by Cavell in the way film represents a "re-

⁸¹ (Cavell 1979b), p.22. Film does not literally overcome skepticism, showing it to be false (at any rate, one of the key insights of Cavell's early philosophy is that skepticism is not merely indefeasible, but that it is really an ever present narcissistic threat by readily providing self-delusional justification for the denial of my acknowledgment of other minds), but it "makes our displacement from nature appear as our natural condition." Ibid., p.41. That is, it confirms us in our lostness to the world and tries to do something meaningful with it artistically speaking. Cf., also: "Film takes our very distance and powerlessness over the world as the condition of the world's natural appearance. It promises the exhibition of the world in itself. This is its promise of candor: that what it reveals is entirely what is revealed to it, that nothing revealed by the world in its presence is lost." Ibid., p.119.

⁸² A good summary, although again in a mode that seems slightly ambiguous, about the general anti-Cartesian tenor of Cavell's philosophy is given by Bernstein in op.cit. p. 110. (Bernstein himself calls his sketch a "caricature.")

versal of the myth of Faust” in “making displacement appear as our natural condition.”⁸³ (Film posits man as desiring to be absent from the world, and powerless, and confirming him in this desire as a natural one – quite the reverse of Faust’s desires). It is, paradoxically, precisely Cavell’s reliance on the capacity of photography to confront us with “reality” in this way, due to the ontological anomaly introduced by this technology into the world, that leads Cavell to ignore the artistic meaning of photography being so profoundly tied to the equally anti-Cartesian, because pre-Cartesian use of perspective in Renaissance painting that I would like to demonstrate in the conclusion of this section within Piero’s art by Tarkovsky’s reading.

My simple suggestion is that it would not be surprising to expect that precisely film being both the “last traditional art” and a modernist art at

⁸³ (Cavell 1979b), p. 41.

The connection between film and Quattrocento art should also be furnished for Cavell himself by his own linking of the reverse-Faustian condition of film to Cavell’s equally reverse-Faustian call for a modernist philosophical naïveté elsewhere in his work:

I would need, in accounting [for the predicament of making aesthetic judgments], to provide a characterization of this sense of incapacity *and* provide the reason for our insistence upon putting it into words. I find that, at the start of this experience, I do not want to give voice to it (or do not see what voice to give it) but only to point (to others, or rather to the fact, or the being, of others) and to gesture towards my self. Only what is there to point to or gesture towards, since everything I know you know? It shows; everything in our world shows it. But I am filled with this feeling – of our separateness, let us say – and I want you to have it too. So I give voice to it. And then my powerlessness presents itself as ignorance – a metaphysical finitude as an intellectual lack. (Reverse Faust, I take the bargain of supernatural ignorance.) (Cavell 2002), p. 263 (The passage is from: *Knowing and Acknowledging*).

It is precisely in the spirit of such a need for naïveté in philosophy that Cavell rejects the claims of Cartesian skepticism as an epistemological position for aesthetics altogether, and without any further ado in *More of the World Viewed* as “depending upon theories (of knowledge, of science, or art, of reality, of realism) whose power to convince is hardly greater than reality’s own.” (Cavell 1979b), p. 165. Yet another example illustrating Cavell’s Copernican turn towards the practice of naïveté.

the same time, and as a form of philosophy, could teach us how to look at “traditional art.” It is enabled to do so precisely in terms of its ability to remain “traditional art” in virtue of the anti-Cartesian essence it is revealed to possess, due, in turn, to its defeat of skepticism. And with this, I hope we are ready turn to Tarkovsky.

4.4. Tarkovsky's *Piero*

Although Renaissance paintings appear in each and every one of Tarkovsky's films, I consider the instance in *Nostalghia* a summation and culmination of the director's evocation of painting by film. In the typical instances of Tarkovsky's filmings of paintings, the works of art will never make their appearance as a physical object in its entirety, only in terms of some section of its painted surface filling the screen. The camera in most cases scans the painting at a pace set by classical music, interrupted and resumed by several cuts. These apparitions, as we may call them, usually take place as self-contained, one-off interruptions of the narrative, except in the case of Andrei Rublyev where his icons conclude the film.⁸⁴ *Nostalghia* is Tarkovsky's only film where we both encounter the *Madonna del Parto* in its physical presence (although in an artificially modified environment, and possibly not filmed in its original version, but as a reproduction)

⁸⁴ Film's invocation of Rublyev's original work in its closing sequence comments both on the child's, Boriska's having “trusted ahead of the trusting” in lying about having inherited the knowledge of crafting Church bells from his father (evoking a Cavellian condition of modernism by the unavailability of tradition, and having to reinvent it), and it equally figures as the result of Andrei's awakening from his vow of silence, the regaining of his “voice,” induced by his earlier witnessing of human cruelty: an achievement of a second naïveté through watching the child's work unfold. It results in a return of Andrei's faith in his own work: “giving pleasure by his painting to the people.” It is in terms of the fictional Andrei's achievement of second naïveté that Tarkovsky reads the birth of the Renaissance style in Russian painting in the real Rublyev's works. It is already difficult to say in this instance whether the painting is more of a comment on the meaning of the film, or vice versa: I think the only answer is that the two belong together in a unity, just as inseparably as Cavell's two “responses” do to the question about what a medium of an art is. The coming into being of the art of painting is here already equated with film's own search for its essence as a poetic genre for Tarkovsky. The way in which this self-recognition of film is based on exploiting a possibility of the medium which is only fully revealed by *Nostalghia*'s identification with Piero's Madonna, as I explain below.

[FIGURE 1], as well as in the “usual” mode as an apparition mediated by the lenses of the camera.



FIGURE 1. Piero della Francesca, *Madonna del parto* (detail), 1459-67, Chapel of the Cemetery, Monterchi.

To understand the significance of this doubleness, we first need to consider Cavell's acknowledgement in the *Foreword to the Expanded Edition* of *The World Viewed* of a certain Heideggerian possibility of cinema:

Malick [read: Tarkovsky, p.h.] discovered how to acknowledge a fundamental fact of film's photographic basis: that objects participate in the photographic presence of themselves; they participate in the re-creation of themselves on film; they are essential in the making of their appearances. Objects projected on a screen are inherently reflexive, they occur as self-referential, reflecting upon their physical origins. Their presence refers to their absence, their location in another place.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ (Cavell 1979b), pp. xv-xvi.

While it goes without saying that Cavell's thought is an obvious starting point for discussing Tarkovsky's pervasive and mesmerizing use of filmic still-lives, composed of commonplace physical objects and water [FIGURE 2], we also need another Cavell thought – this time about painting from *The World Viewed* – to complement how we might think about the physical presence of *painting* in Tarkovsky's films:

It could be said that what painting wanted, in wanting connection with reality, was a sense of *presentness* – not exactly of the world's presence to us, but of our presence to it.⁸⁶ [...] Photography maintains the presentness of the world by accepting our absence from it. The reality in a photograph is present to me while I am not present to it; and a world I know, and see, but to which I am nevertheless not present (through no fault of my subjectivity), is a world past.⁸⁷



FIGURE 2. Tarkovsky, Andrei, *Solaris: Still Life*, 1972.

⁸⁶ Cavell's footnoted reference to Fried's *Art and Objecthood* is confusing in the light of the fact that Cavell is talking about *classical* painting, whereas his analysis of Colour Field Painting in a later chapter of his book is a discussion of the price painting as an art had to pay in order to "maintain our presence to the world." However, it is important to remember that Fried in that essay also writes in defense of a highly traditional conception of art, which he shares with Cavell. See (Fried 1998).

⁸⁷ (Cavell 1979b), p. 23.

Besides acknowledging nostalgia as a condition of film (a “possibility of the medium” declared by Tarkovsky’s movie in its very title), Cavell is implying by this passage that paintings are very special kind of physical objects in that they are capable of confirming our *presentness* to the world. Putting this together with Cavell’s remarks on Heidegger, I think we can formulate an astounding Cavellian ontological conclusion about Tarkovsky’s filming of paintings, which to my mind describes exactly the experience of viewing them. The filming of these paintings, and the way they fill the canvas instance an almost revelatory or religious sense of oneness with the physical world: they are a kind of enhanced still life: enhanced because in the final instance their subject is not merely *physical*, but *human* reality: the only kind of reality of any real concern to art, both for Cavell and for Tarkovsky, and a specific problem for film in any of its classical genres, being based on a technology of automatism that excludes the human hand. Because film *maintains the presentness of the world* (while accepting our absence from it), but painting at the same time maintains *our presentness to it*, we can read these instances of Tarkovsky’s films as moments of ontological ecstasy: an elimination of the possibility of skeptical doubt altogether from the experience of how we are conscious of the physical reality of the world in viewing these paintings through the lense of Tarkovsky’s camera. It is as if Tarkovsky’s filmings of these images, Piero’s Madonna in particular were intended as direct confirmations of Cavell’s astounding definition of painting already quoted in Section 2:

Painting, being art, is revelation; it is revelation because it is acknowledgement; being acknowledgement, it is knowledge, of itself, and of the world.⁸⁸

Tarkovsky’s filmings discover that there is no other artistic medium besides film capable of conveying through images Cavell’s thought connecting art, revelation, acknowledgement, self-reflexivity, and the cognitive power of art. More specifically, no other possibility seems to exist than the filming of an instance of classical painting. Works of Quattrocento art become a natural subject already in this abstract sense: by being engaged in defining their media as works created under the aegis of a new ontological

⁸⁸ *emph*Op. cit., p. 110.

purpose, they exist in the natural mode of self-reflexivity foregrounding their own mode of existence as revelations in both the Christian and secular sense. However, Tarkovsky also takes the decisive next step, in a way that allows us to take the most “canonical” instance of his filmings as a confirmation of the materiality of painting itself as the specific subject of the acknowledgment painting as an art is capable of.

Piero's painting appears in the very first sequence of *Nostalghia*. The human subject of this sequence is the male protagonist's female companion – Eugenia – wondering by chance into the middle of a fictional ritual in an equally fictional church housing Piero's miracle-working Madonna for the purpose of this sequence. I read the sacristan's suggestion to the Eugenia that she should kneel down in front of the painting (whereas she merely wants to look at it: “*sono qui solo per guardare*”) as an instruction (hopeless in her case) that to find a happy marriage as a character in film, she would have to integrate her knowledge or awareness of her body with a kind of spirituality represented by Quattrocento painting, and Piero's work in particular; a condition which in turn one might describe as a re-finding of innocence. While film itself is capable of escaping the Cartesian perspectival web of columns that frame, and envelop the painting, to unite materially with Piero's Madonna, Eugenia herself remains imprisoned in obsession with her body, and ends in a “marriage” with a shady character (with some slight resemblance to Tarkovsky himself). The marriage itself is represented as a form of immobilization or imprisonment.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ For an excellent, detailed account of how the church was constructed to host the filming of the painting, as well as the whole history of Tarkovsky's encounter with Piero's work, see, (Macgillivray 2003). Unfortunately Macgillivray seems to offer no interpretation of Tarkovsky's filming, apart from what feels like a plagiarization of Hubert Damisch's suggestion that the painting represents a Freudian fetishization of pregnancy, which is “devastating for Eugenia” (Damisch is unmentioned by Macgillivray in his bibliography). Here, as elsewhere, a naïve reading in Cavellian mode is clearly helpful in escaping “embarrassed bursts of theory,” (Cavell) and coming to similar conclusions without the need for invoking concepts that are significantly more obscure than the images they are meant to explain, however multi layered. Damisch's equally testing study (which is nevertheless rewarding for its erudition) of Piero's painting originally appeared in French in 1997, but was only translated into English in 2007. See (Damisch 2007).



FIGURE 3. Piero della Francesca, *Madonna del parto*, 1459-67,
Chapel of the Cemetery, Monterchi.

Piero's Madonna is an instance of the Piero type [FIGURE 3]: a type of ideal human being of his own creation, the type for which he is sometimes described as an enigmatic painter. My reading of this type is that in being an embodied creature, youthful, ungended, halfway human, but too beautiful and distant to be entirely so, it represents the very purpose of perspective for Piero, namely to construct paintings that are underwritten by the mathematical certainty of the revelation of truth in order to represent a moral world of purity promised by painting. In other words, this painting

is a prime example, if not a culminating statement of Piero's entirely anti-Cartesian use of Albertian perspective, which both affirms the material-physical existence of the painted surface in its use of almost "sculpted" human bodies whose arrangements create the space itself. Piero is also pre-Cartesian in his understanding of the "knowledge" to be gained from perspective as purely moral, although in virtue of the embodied nature of his art, a form of sensual knowledge, call this Piero's own version, to my mind truer and more authentic than Panofsky's, of Alberti's *la piu grassa Minerva*. Piero's angelic humans are the promise of this world, and the promise of Quattrocento art to accomplish the "new creation of the human" that the modernist art of film in its classical phase continues directly in a different medium.

Piero's explicit perspectival efforts (with significant exceptions) are almost entirely taken up by the representation of the human body, and in that sense the *Madonna del Parto* – which is a highly self-reflexive painting indicating itself as the revelation of the space painting is capable of, a divine revelation of Mary's presence, as well as the revelation of her mystical pregnancy – is as much a statement about perspective, or the meaning of perspective as any superficially more Cartesian looking work, where all the transversals, orthogonals as well as the vanishing point remain highly visible.

To mention just one more detail about Piero's painting: the two angels are mirror images created by the flipping of the cardboard schema prepared for transferring the design to the wall. I would not put it past Tarkovsky to have also discovered the meaning of the two mirrored angels, *in this particular painting for this particular film*, as standing for the inverse relationship of painting and film itself – one pre-Cartesian, the other post-Cartesian – engaged in the same kind of "revelation" of the somatic miracle of an art capable of renewing our conception of the human.

That Tarkovsky's film finds its inspiration to engage with this painting precisely on account of its anti-Cartesian aspirations finds its confirmation in the quest of the protagonist: Andrei. The writer-director-hero embodies the very condition of film: nostalgia and a privacy whose fantasies he finds impossible to make "public". His quest takes him to Italy, to Bagno Vignoni, where he encounters crazy Domenico, a former maths teacher, who – being a half-wit – is clearly the victim of a failed anti-Cartesian ex-

periment represented by the complete negation of any necessity of a mathematical world view in the form of a giant inscription of $1+1=1$ on the walls of his dilapidated house where he kept his children locked away from the world [FIGURE 4].



FIGURE 4. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Nostalghia*, 1983.

Domenico's House: $1+1=1$.

It is this house that Andrei must visit, and survive the visit without being tempted to follow Domenico into madness but still learn something: to understand how to mend his broken trust in film as an art. As he enters Domenico's lair the camera takes over for us to identify our vision with his, and what we see is both a window, and an overgrowth of moss, water, and mud leading up to it [FIGURE 5].

It looks like a landscape, and the camera's take on it is such that I can only read it as an image of Leonardo's famous advice to budding painters on how to observe cracks in the wall, and other such random products of nature to learn how to project images into paint. It is an acknowledgment of the material medium of painting. What Andrei is learning and we

learn with him is just the kind of Heideggerian significance for film, and for painting, of sheer materiality that Cavell articulates. What Andrei learns is that to overcome his fear of visiting Piero's Madonna he needs to understand precisely the intrinsic relationship of film and Quattrocento painting in terms of their anti-Cartesian affirmation of materiality. We also learn what it was that Eugenia failed to learn or understand about painting, but which only film can reveal to us. If Andrei Tarkovsky's fictional namesake necessarily fails to transpose his insights into creative work, the film ends with a promise that his quest to re-find some kind of faith in art – some form of second innocence or naïveté has not been completely rejected, but that it is certainly only film, and what film can teach us, that could carry the flame of this achieved hope to its final destination.



FIGURE 5. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Nostalghia*, 1983.
Domenico's House: The "Landscape".

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The Notion of ‘Qi Yun’ (Spirit Consonance) in Chinese Painting

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ABSTRACT. ‘Spirit consonance engendering a sense of life’ (Qi Yun Sheng Dong) as the first law of Chinese painting, originally proposed by Xie He (active 500–535?) in his six laws of painting, has been commonly echoed by numerous later Chinese artists up to this day. Tracing back the meaning of each character of ‘Qi Yun Sheng Dong’ from Pre-Qin up to the Six Dynasties, along with a comparative analysis on the renderings of ‘Qi Yun Sheng Dong’ by experts in Western academia, I establish ‘spirit consonance’ as the rendering of ‘Qi Yun’. By examining texts on painting by significant critics in Chinese art history, and by referring to specific works by painters from the Six Dynasties up to the Yuan Dynasty, I present the merits and demerits of the different interpretations by Western experts, and explore the essence of ‘Qi Yun’. Once the painter successfully captures ‘spirit consonance’ as the essential character or ‘internal reality’ of the object, and transmits it into the work, ‘Qi Yun’ further implies the expressive quality of the work beyond formal representation. Additionally, the fusion of expressive and representative functions also leaves space for further explaining the aesthetic interaction among artist, object, work, and audience. From the Six Dynasties onwards, Chinese painters have practised the expressive pursuit beyond representation on the basis of the unification of ‘Qi Yun’ (spirit consonance) and formal representation, although spirit consonance was valued more highly than formal likeness.

1. Introduction

In the writing of Han Fei (233 B.C, ECTOP: 24), a painter claimed that ‘dogs and horses are most difficult to paint’ but ‘demons and goblins’ are the easiest, and the reason for this is that the former are common and visible things whose representation demands a higher standard of formal

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likeness, while the latter are invisible things that painters can depict following their imagination. Although this seems to be the earliest evidence that the importance of formal imitation was emphasized in the artistic practice of ancient China, formal imitation is not the first aim for ancient Chinese painters. 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' (spirit consonance engendering a sense of life) as the first law of Chinese painting, had been established since the Six Dynasties, by Xie He (active 500–535?) in his six laws of painting, where the law of 'correspondence to the object in depicting forms' (Ying Wu Xiang Xing) was postulated as the third level.¹ 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' as the first and essential standard of Chinese painting has been echoed by numerous later Chinese artists during a long history. Even some contemporary masters of Chinese painting still inherit this great tradition.

Concerning 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong', experts in Western academia such as Alexander C. Soper, William Acker, James Cahill, Wen Fong, and Max Loehr offered valuable contributions towards an appropriate translation, in spite of the fact that their respective renderings are based on different interpretations. It is worth noting possible discrepancies: 'Qi Yun' might refer to (i) the character of the object depicted, which is captured and transmitted by painters beyond form, or (ii) the expressive quality or content of a work, or (iii) an innate talent which an ideal painter should possess, or (iv) the artistic style of a work, or (v) the aesthetic interaction among artist, object, work and audience.

The notion of 'Qi Yun' seems to be very hard to clarify since it implies several possibilities. Based on these different interpretations, there are various translations of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' in Western academia. Alexander C. Soper (1949: 414–423) argued against five translations by previous interpreters, and established that 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' means 'Animation

¹ Xie He's Six Laws for Chinese painting: The first law 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' means engendering a sense of life through spirit consonance; the second law 'Gu Fa Yong Bi' refers to using the brush with the 'bone method' (which is unique for Chinese painting); the third law 'Ying Wu Xiang Xing' refers to correspondence to the object in depicting forms or depicting forms corresponding to things; the fourth law 'Sui Lei Fu Cai' means conformity to type in applying colours or applying colours according to the kind of objects; the fifth law 'Jing Ying Wei Zhi' refers to dividing, planning, positioning and arranging (the composition); the sixth law 'Chuan Yi Mo Xie' means transmitting and conveying earlier models through copying. These translations are mainly based on Alexander C. Soper (1949) and James F. Cahill (1961).

through spirit consonance'.² 'Qi Yun' as 'sympathetic responsiveness of the vital spirit', is rendered as 'spirit consonance' to keep it simple; 'spirit consonance' (Qi Yun) engenders the effect of 'animation' or 'life-motion' (Sheng Dong). Soper's rendering appears to suggest that painters should capture the essential quality of the object and transmit it in the work of art. William Acker (1954: xxxiii) translated 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' as 'Spirit resonance, means vitality'. Acker suggested a new punctuation and grammatical analysis: the former two characters 'Qi Yun' and the latter two characters 'Sheng Dong' are separate two-word phrases which share the same meaning, so spirit resonance (Qi Yun) means vitality (Sheng Dong). Additionally, Acker regarded 'Qi Yun' as an ability which an ideal painter should possess: during the creation of a painting, a painter should stimulate himself into a state of being filled with vital energy ('Qi') and 'remain vibrant with energy' in order to enable his work to 'show evidence of this power and vitality' and to demonstrate a sense of life. James Cahill (1961: 372–381) argued against Acker's punctuation, and insisted that 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' is still a four-word phrase, which means 'Engender a sense of movement through spirit consonance'. In Cahill's mind, 'spirit consonance' ('Qi Yun') appears to be an aesthetic attribute shown in a successful work of art. Wen Fong (1966: 159–164) offered another new illustration: 'Qi' (breath/vitality) and 'Yun' (resonance/harmony) refer to 'the vital essence of creation' and 'the harmonious manner of execution' in a work respectively, and 'aliveness' or 'life-motion' (Sheng Dong) appears to the effect of 'Qi' and 'Yun'. Max Loehr (1973: 68–69) seems to agree with Acker's punctuation, but treated the grammatical function of the two binomial terms 'Qi Yun' and 'Sheng Dong' as two nouns; so, according to Loehr, 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' means 'spirit resonance or vitality'. What makes his translation distinct from Acker is that Loehr appears to suggest 'Qi Yun' as the expressive quality or content of a work rather than a personal attribute or spiritual state of an ideal painter as Acker thought.

These renderings contributed a great deal to the understanding of 'Qi

² Five previous translations of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' cited by Soper: Rhythmic vitality (Giles); Spiritual element, life's motion (Hirth); Through a vitalizing spirit, a painting should possess the movement of life (Sakanishi); Resonance of the spirit, movement of life (Siren); Spiritual tone and life-movement (Taki Seiichi). Sakanishi's rendering clearly shows that 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' is understood as the quality of an artwork.

Yun Sheng Dong'. My interpretation will be based on the comparative examination of relevant ideas proposed by Western academia. After exploring the meanings of 'Qi' and 'Yun' from Pre-Qin, Han up to the Six Dynasties respectively, I will confirm the meaning and rendering of 'Qi Yun' and 'Sheng Dong' as two two-character phrases and I will examine the issue of punctuating 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong'; finally I will establish the rendering of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong'. Additionally, I will explore the essence of 'Qi Yun' in the process of examining the merits and demerits of the different suggestions by previous experts. Based on the comparative analysis of previous renderings, I will review artistic texts about 'Qi Yun' by significant critics in Chinese art history, and I will carefully examine specific works by painters from the Six Dynasties up to the Yuan Dynasty. I tend to agree that there are more plausible points in the analyses of Xie He's first law by James Cahill and Alexander C. Soper; these establish 'spirit consonance' as the rendering of 'Qi Yun', and confirm the rendering of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' to be 'spirit consonance engendering a sense of life'. Merely confining the scope of 'Qi Yun' to that of the painter, or the object, or the work alone appears to be unreasonable. Once the painter successfully captures 'spirit consonance' as the 'internal reality' of the object and transmits it into the work by means of ink and brush to release his image of mind on silk or paper, 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) further implies the expressive content or quality of the work beyond formal representation.

2. 'Qi'

Firstly, the original and essential meaning of 'Qi' in Chinese ancient philosophy and literature need to be explored.

'Qi' could be translated as 'vapour' or 'steam' or 'breath' or 'exhalation' or 'emanation' or 'aura' or 'energy', or 'nervous energy' or 'vital energy' or 'life-spirit', or 'spirit', etc. Concerning the rendering of 'Qi' as spirit, I feel that both Soper and Acker contributed valuable insights. The biggest difference between these two experts relies in the controversy whether 'Qi' as spirit only exists in animate things or pervades everything (animate and inanimate). Soper insisted on the former, while Acker claimed the latter.

According to Soper (1949: 418), in Chinese ancient philosophy of nature, Qi as 'a universal concept' could refer to the fundamental quality of

everything that is animate, as vital energy gives life to humans and to any other sentient beings. Rendering 'Qi' as physical breath of human beings merely discloses its most basic connotation, while the translation of 'Qi' as 'spirit' seems to disclose its 'passion-nature' and 'psychological concept' (Soper, 1949: 418). Since 'Qi Yun' and 'Shen Yun' share a similar meaning and sometimes could replace one another, Soper (1949: 420) claimed that the kinship of 'Shen in the sense of soul' and 'Qi as vital spirit' is just 'like the kinship of psyche and nous'. Although Soper insisted that 'Qi' only resides in sentient beings, Acker (1954: xxix) recognised that 'Qi' might exist in any animate and inanimate thing as 'life-spirit', which appears to be a kind of 'electricity-like fluid' or aura flowing pervasively and mysteriously inside everything in the universe. For human beings and animals, 'Qi' as 'spirit' seems to be a kind of 'nervous energy', 'the electricity-like nerve-currents within the body', while for inanimate things 'Qi' also functions as electricity-like energy which could flow or be transmitted from or to animate things (Acker, 1954: xxix–xxx). This may sound superstitious, but it corresponds to Chinese ancient philosophy and even modern Chinese ideas.

To explore the original philosophical meaning of 'Qi', Acker appears more convincing by tracing it back to Guanzi, who offered a complete theoretical explanation about 'Qi' as the essence of everything that exists. Body and mind are pervaded by and filled with 'Qi' as life-spirit, benefiting from its nurturing or suffering from its pollution (Guanzi, cited by Acker, 1949: xxx–xxxi). Acker emphasises 'Qi' as the fountain of life energy which could be accumulated, cultivated 'under conscious control' and transmitted between different media (from animate things to inanimate things; 1954: xxxi).

Both Acker and Soper traced back the meaning of 'Qi' before the Han dynasty. By examining the adoption of 'Qi' in literature and art after the Han dynasty, Wen Fong (1966: 160) offered his distinctive translation of 'Qi' as 'vitality', regarding it as 'vital creative force' or 'vital essence of creation', determining the aesthetic attribute of a work. 'Qi' as the 'moving force' is the 'master of literature', according to Cao Pi (189–226), a leading critic and first emperor of the Wei dynasty (cited by Fong, 1966: 159). Similarly, in the commentary book of poetry during the Six Dynasties *Shi Pin* by Zhong Rong (468–518), 'Qi' is demonstrated as the moving force

of agitating objects and then further stirring humans' feelings and emotions, which would be expressed in artistic actions such as dances, songs or poems. This could also be found in the literary critical work *Wen Xin Diao Long* by Liu Xie (465–522): 'Qi' appears to determine one's 'personal inclinations', 'temperament and nature', and further acts as the dominating force that determines one's language style and literary expression effect (cited by Fong, 1966: 159). Due to the function of 'Qi' influencing writing style and quality, the nurturing, cultivation and adjustment of 'Qi' as the 'vital creative force' is significant for literature, so artists should keep 'Qi' 'harmonious and freely circulating' (Liu Xie, cited by Wen Fong, 1966: 159–160). Generally, Fong (1966: 160) focuses on the function of 'Qi' as the moving force in poetry, literature, and painting, and claims that 'Qi' constitutes 'the substance of a work'.

In general, after examining the meaning of 'Qi' from the pre-Qin Dynasties up until the Six Dynasties, the rendering of 'Qi' as spirit seems the most convincing. 'Qi' could constitute everything, appearing like a basic universal cosmic unit or force which conveys energy or spirit to everything. 'Qi' existing in inanimate things appears to demonstrate an anthropomorphic power. For the sake of simplicity, I follow Soper and Acker, and select 'spirit' as the best translation for 'Qi'.

3. 'Yun'

After establishing the rendering of 'Qi', the meaning and rendering of 'Yun' will be explored in a similar way. Although 'Yun' appears later than 'Qi', 'Yun' could also be translated in many ways: 'tone', 'overtone', 'corresponding tone', 'rhyme', 'consonance', 'harmony', 'sympathetic vibration', 'resonance', and so on.

The meaning of 'Yun' originates in music. 'When differing sounds are in mutual accord, one speaks of Ho (Peace); when notes of the same key respond to one another, one speaks of Yun (harmony)' (Liu Xie, 465–522, cited by Soper, 1949: 419–420). Since 'Yun' originally refers to the harmony of sounds, as described by Liu Xie in his *Wen Xin Diao Long*, Soper opts for the translation of 'Yun' as 'harmony' or 'concord' or 'consonance'. 'Yun' as consonance (the opposite of discordance), does not confine its use to the scope of sound. In *Shi Shuo Xin Yu* which is a collection of anecdotes

by distinctive literati in the Six Dynasties, the meaning of 'Yun' as 'consonance' could refer to the elegance, purity, loveliness or superiority of 'human personality', or personal 'manner and bearing' (Soper, 1949: 419–420). Up to this day, in the practice of Chinese classic dancing, the training of the 'Yun' of body is emphasized in order to cultivate and perfectly demonstrate the elegance of body and the harmony of its movement. However, although Xie He's law might initially and mainly refer to figure painting in the Six Dynasties, Soper (1949: 420) did not believe that 'Yun' in figure painting is confined to human qualities. When tracing back to *the Book of Changes*, especially the first hexagram in it, Soper (1949: 421) believes that the idea of *the Book of Changes* heavily influenced the meaning of 'Yun' (the 'power of mystical correspondences and sympathies'), and established 'Yun' as 'sympathetic response' to 'Qi' of every animate thing in the universe. To verify this, Soper (1949: 421) cites Confucius's explanation of the first hexagram: 'Notes of the same key respond to one another; creatures of the same nature, Qi, seek one another. Thus water flows down toward wetness, while fire aspires toward dryness; clouds follow the dragon, and winds the tiger. The sage appears, and all things look to him. All that has its origin in Heaven is drawn upward; all that has its origin in Earth is drawn downward; everything follows its kind'. In order to keep the translation simple, Soper's final suggestion for 'Yun' is 'consonance'. Tracing back the first hexagram appears convincing in terms of exploring the meaning of 'Yun', although the understanding of 'Yun' by Soper is consistent with his understanding of 'Qi' in the scope of animate things.

The rendering as 'harmony' is very close to consonance. Along with 'Qi', tracing the use of 'Yun' in literature during the Six Dynasties, Wen Fong (1966: 160–161) suggested the translation of 'Yun' as 'harmony' and regarded 'Yun' as the harmonious or elegant manner of execution in an artwork. When reviewing the meaning and use of 'Yun' in *Wen Xin Diao Long* and critical texts about painting, Fong focuses on 'Yun' as harmonious or graceful manner, the result being that of stylistic demonstration in literature. According to Liu Xie (465–522), 'Yun' as the manifestation of 'Qi' determines the beauty or ugliness of literal expression or plastic representation (cited by Fong, 1966: 159). Fong (1966: 160) concludes that if 'Qi' dominates the expressive content ('substance') of a work, 'Yun' dominates the manner of execution 'in which the substance is expressed'; both

'Qi' and 'Yun' control artistic style. When citing the meaning of 'Yun' as 'the consonant response of words of the same tone' and the connotation of 'He' as 'the harmony of words of different sounds' from *Wen Xin Diao Long*, Fong (1961: 161) illustrates the significance of 'Yun' as the harmonious manner of execution by resorting to the six defects in tones and rhymes in poetry. By citing remarks on painting by several critics, Fong (1966: 160–162) is at pains to show 'Yun' as the graceful and 'distinguished manner of representation', appearing to be the synonym for 'Ya' (elegance), and thus constituting the 'felicitous expression' of 'Qi' as 'the vital creative force'.

Acker rendered 'Yun' as 'resonance' (1954, xxxi–xxxiii). According to Acker, being consistent with the view that the commander of 'Qi' in painting ultimately refers to painters, 'Yun' was regarded as 'lingering resonance or overtone' for the painters who command 'Qi' (Acker, 1954: xxxii). Acker (1954: xxxii) notes that 'Yun' could be explained as 'sympathetic vibration' or 'conveyance' of 'Qi' (spirit) between the painter and the audience by virtue of the work of art as medium. Acker (1954: xxxii) also points out that 'Yun' could be rendered as consonance to indicate the state in which the painter gets in tune with the object depicted and releases the brush until 'a definite rapport has been established'. However, Acker (1954: xxxiii) rejects these explanations of 'Yun' without any further argument, selecting 'resonance' as the rendering of 'Yun', to refer to the transferring or 'conveyance' of 'Qi' from the painter to his work.

The painter and critic Zong Bing (375–443) once claimed that he wanted the rhythm and melody of mountains in a painting to be resonant or vibrant with the music one might perform in front of a landscape painting. There appears to be no reason for denying that 'Yun' could exist as sympathetic vibration or resonance between the painter and the object of representation, the work and the audience, the painter and the audience. The rendering of 'Yun' as consonance not only reflects its quality of harmony in music, human manners, natural scenery and artworks, but also adequately covers the possibilities of harmonious sympathetic agreement among the painter, the object, the work, and the audience.

4. 'Sheng Dong'

'Sheng' as a verb, means 'engender' or 'produce', and 'Dong' as a noun, means 'animation' or 'movement'. If 'Sheng Dong' is regarded to be a verb phrase comprising a verb and noun, then its meaning would be 'engender animation', or 'engender a sense of movement'. However, 'Sheng Dong' could also be thought of as a noun phrase, which means 'animation' or 'vitality'. The grammatical property and meaning of 'Sheng Dong' depends on determining the punctuation of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong'. Concerning the punctuation of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong', there is intense debate. Traditionally, 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' is treated as an indivisible four-character phrase, and this tradition draws from the Tang critic Zhang Yanyuan. The original sentence of Xie He's first law was punctuated as: 'Yi, Qi Yun Sheng Dong Shi Ye'. 'Yi' means 'firstly'; 'Shi Ye' has no meaning, functions as an indicative term of definition, and here suggests 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' is the first law. However, Acker's (1954, xxii-xxviii) punctuation for Xie He's first law is: 'Yi, Qi Yun, Sheng Dong Shi Ye'. Acker's punctuation derives from the claim that 'Qi Yun' and 'Sheng Dong' are two separate two-character phrases and the latter phrase follows and explains the former. That is, for Acker, 'Shi Ye' follows 'Sheng Dong', works as a noun phrase, and still functions as the indicative term of definition, explaining 'Sheng Dong'. Thus, the first law was construed by Acker: first, 'spirit resonance' means 'vitality'. Acker's rendering is very controversial, but it has been echoed by some critics such as Max Loehr (1973) and Qian Zhongshu (1979), although there might be differences of interpretation among those who accept the punctuation advocated by Acker.

Before Acker, Soper and previous experts agreed with the traditional punctuation of Xie He's first law. In Soper's (1949: 422-423) mind, 'Sheng Dong' means animation, and it is the 'reward' or effect of 'spirit consonance' (Qi Yun); so, 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' was translated as 'animation through spirit consonance'. Cahill (1961: 372) shares a similar view on the meaning of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' with Soper by confessing that Soper's interpretation of the first two laws of Xie He offers 'the soundest' exposition. Concerning the punctuation of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong', I tend to agree with James Cahill's argument against Acker, and accept Cahill's confirmation of 'Sheng Dong' as a verb phrase. As Cahill (1961: 374) interprets, 'Shi Ye'

could function as a connective between the number and the four-character phrase. On the basis of the complete and comprehensive analyses on the six laws of Xie He, Cahill convincingly argues against Acker's punctuation and insists that 'Qi Yun' and 'Sheng Dong' could not be regarded as two-character compounds which share the same meaning, in order to keep the logical consistency among each one of the six laws in terms of grammatical structure. According to Cahill (1961: 380), 'Sheng Dong' means 'engendering a sense of movement', and 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' means 'engendering a sense of movement through spirit consonance'.

My rendering is a little bit different from Cahill, by considering the fact that a sense of movement is actually a demonstration of a sense of life: 'Sheng Dong' is better rendered as 'engendering a sense of life'. As suggested in the previous section, 'Qi Yun' is confirmed as 'spirit consonance', so the rendering of 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' can be now conveyed as 'spirit consonance engendering a sense of life'.

5. The Essence of 'Qi Yun'

Concerning the essence of 'Qi Yun', previous experts' opinions seem to merely care about one aspect, in spite of offering valuable points in different aspects. The merits and shortcomings of those accounts need to be examined one by one in the process of tracing back to the writings of significant art critics after Xie He, along with examining artworks from the Six Dynasties up to the Yuan Dynasty.

In Wen Fong's (1986: 160/162–164) mind, following the Tang critic Zhang Yanyuan's comments on the six laws by Xie He, 'Qi Yun' (in contrast with formal likeness) appears to refer to the aesthetic quality of the artwork, although Fong also admits that both 'Qi' and 'Yun' can refer to the 'qualities of the depicted subject' or the 'personal, expressive characteristics of the artist'. His interpretation appears to offer valuable insights in terms of citing commentaries on 'Qi Yun' by several critics in the history of Chinese art.

According to Acker (1954, xxxiii/xlii), 'Qi Yun' is an ability of the painter. Although this could get support from the Song critic Guo Ruoxu (1080, ECTOP: 95–96) who appears to suggest that 'Qi Yun' originates in the painter's innate talent that reflects a man's disposition, Acker's opinion

merely refers to the painter's business of nourishing and controlling 'Qi', staying vibrant with 'Qi' during artistic creation, and finally demonstrating 'Qi' in the work. Guo Ruoxu (ca. 1080, ECTOP: 96) explicitly claimed that 'a painting must be complete in Qi Yun (spirit consonance) to be hailed as a treasure of the age'; otherwise, it is just 'common artisan's work', and it is actually not a painting in spite of being called a painting. Thus, 'Qi Yun' also appears to be the quality of a painting in Guo Ruoxu's mind, even though the ability to produce a painting complete with 'Qi Yun' is regarded by him to relate to the level of the painter's 'Qi Yun' as his innate talent or disposition. It is worth noting, however, that the mysterious connection between the painter and the work is obviously valuable, since the brush used by the Chinese painter could be regarded as 'an extension of [his] own body' and thus Chinese painting as brushwork 'projects a painter's physical movements' (Fong, 1992: 5).

According to Soper (1949: 422–423), since 'Qi Yun' is 'sympathetic responsiveness of the vital spirit', painters should guarantee that the spirit of the object depicted in the work would 'find and respond to its like' in the universe, so this claim seems to be providing an account of the aesthetic interaction between artist and object. Additionally, capturing the 'quintessential character' of the object and representing the essence of the object in the work as the aim of a painter appears convincing, although Soper wrongly confined 'Qi' in the scope of animate life. Following Soper's suggestion, it is not difficult to find that capturing the essence of the object has been emphasized as the unquestionable focus of Chinese painting. Before Xie He (active 500–535?), Gu Kaizhi (ca. 345–ca. 406) of the East Jin Dynasty once emphasized the significance of 'transmitting the spirit' (Chuan Shen) of the object in painting in one of his essays. It is said that Gu Kaizhi (ca. 345–ca. 406) drew the eyes after all the other parts were finished and his fame was based on his distinctive skill of transmitting spirit by drawing the eyes, which vividly reflected the necessity of transmitting spirit beyond form in painting. Transmitting spirit rather than merely depicting form is the most difficult challenge in figure painting, and the crux of transmitting spirit lies in the eyes, which are regarded to be uniquely capable of transmitting spirit most directly (Su Shi, 1037–1101, ECTOP: 225). Xie He's first law of 'spirit consonance engendering a sense of life' ('Qi Yun Sheng Dong'), which values 'Qi Yun' (spirit con-

sonance) over formal likeness seems to be a more advanced version of Gu Kaizhi's claim, and might draw on Gu Kaizhi's emphasis on transmitting spirit, although Xie He thought Gu Kaizhi's reputation on figure painting was overrated. Excellent paintings have the power of '[capturing] creation and [transmitting] quintessential spirit' and triggering observers' imagination to roam as if leading them to observe things 'on the spot' (*Xuan He Hua Pu*, 1120, ECTOP: 128). If a painting achieves formal likeness but lacks 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance), it will not be judged as a good work or even as a failure. According to the Song critic Deng Chun (ca. 1167), it seems to be wrong that 'people merely know that human beings have spirit and do not realize that things have spirit', so he applauded Kuo Ruoxu's (ca. 1080) opinion that the painting which can only imitate form but cannot transmit spirit is nominally called a painting rather than a real artwork, and thus advocated 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong' (spirit consonance engendering a sense of life) as the first law of painting (ECTOP: 132). When talking about the standard of judging the quality of a painting, the Yuan critic Yang Weizhen (1296–1370) explicitly indicated that 'there is transmission of likeness or the transmission of spirit', and the latter is 'Qi Yun Sheng Dong', i.e. engendering a sense of life through spirit consonance (ECTOP: 246).

The emphasis on 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) in figure painting during the Six Dynasties might draw upon the praise of 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) in contemporary literary works such as *Shi Shuo Xin Yu*. The superiority, purity, and loftiness of 'Qi' as 'spirit' and the elegance, loveliness and attractiveness of 'Yun' as 'consonance' being reflected in individual personality or spirituality in terms of language style, personal manner and bearing were highly praised in *Shi Shuo Xin Yu*. By mainly exploring the notion of 'Qi' and 'Yun' being used in the fashion of remarking or identifying the personality or mentality of literati during the Six Dynasties recorded by *Shi Shuo Xin Yu*, Xu Fuguan (2001:89–108) concluded that the notion of 'Qi Yun' in figure painting of the Six Dynasties as the essential character of the object refers to the second nature of human beings as the object depicted, higher than the form as the first nature, and 'Qi' tends to be sublime and even masculine, while 'Yun' tends to be graceful and even feminine. The Tang critic Ouyang Jiong (896–971, ECTOP: 224) thought that 'if a painting has 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance), but not formal likeness, then its

substance will dominate over its pattern; if it has formal likeness, but not 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance), then it will be beautiful but not substantial'. According to Zhang Yanyuan (847, translated by Acker, 1954), works by the Tang figure painting master Wu Daozi are ranked as of the divine level (Shen Pin), and nobody before or after him could compete with him, since his skills seem to match all the six laws of Xie He, and his distinctiveness especially lies in being able to transmit 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) in the work. There is no extant work by Wu Daozi; it is only through reading the comments by his contemporary or later critics who saw his original work that we can imagine his distinctiveness. Although some works by the artists of the Tang Dynasty such as Zhang Xuan or Zhou Fang (active ca.780 – ca.810) are regarded as copies by later painters, 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) in their work could also be identified through looking at the copies. For example, in the work *Palace Ladies Wearing Floral Headdresses* which is attributed to Zhou Fang, the loneliness and boredom of the ladies in the court appear to be perfectly captured by Zhou Fang, beyond the representation of the details of costumes, coiffures, decorations, postures and actions. The painting seems to reflect the elegant but melancholy mood of the Tang poet Wang Changling (698–756): 'For all her jade-whiteness, she envies a crow/ Whose cold wings are kindled in the Court of the Bright Sun.'³

According to Soper (1949: 42?), 'Qi Yun' emphasizes on capturing the quintessential character of the object, and the quintessential character would be 'the horsiness of horses, the humanity of man', and 'on a more general level', might refer to 'the quickness of intelligence, the pulse of life'. Following this illustration, the first law of Xie He would seem to suggest painters must capture the perfect ideal (perhaps in the Platonic sense) rather than imitate the mere shadow of the perfect ideal world. However, the metaphysical ideal of Plato does not appear to be the pursuit of Chinese ancient artists, since the object of art is actual rather than metaphysical for them. Since the imitation of ideal reality or metaphys-

³ Composed by Wang Changling in *A Sigh in the Court of Perpetual Faith*. Translated by Witter Bynner (*The Jade Mountain*; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920). The beautiful visage (of the ladies in the court) could surpass the splendour of jade, but faded in beauty when compared with the colour of the crows carrying the shadow of sun when flying above the Court of the Bright Sun (Zhaoyang Palace, where the emperor lives).

ical idealism is not the first aim of Chinese painting in the pursuit of spirit consonance ('Qi Yun'), Chinese artists continuously explore ways in which to perceive, capture, and transmit 'Qi Yun', which appears to be the essence of the object beyond formal imitation. Jing Hao (870–930, ECTOP: 146/159) might be the first person to use 'Qi Yun' to comment on landscape painting: he recorded that the Tang master Zhang Zao (active 8th century) 'painted trees and rocks full of' 'Qi' (spirit) and 'Yun' (consonance), and the Tang painter Wang Wei's landscape paintings were praised for the transmission of 'noble and pure' 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance); his claim of comparing reality (Zhen/Shi) with likeness (Si) or flowering (Hua) appears to imply that internal reality refers to 'Qi Yun', while formal likeness only refers to external appearance.⁴ According to Jing Hao (870–930, ECTOP: 146), a painter should grasp how to flower 'outward appearance from the outward appearance of the object' to attain 'lifelikeness', but also capture 'inner reality (Zhen/Shi) from the inner reality of the object', and should not take the 'outward appearance' as the 'inner reality'; if a painter did not understand this truth, he might attain 'lifelikeness but never achieve reality', and failing to convey spirit ('Qi') through the image will cause the image 'dead'. From his claims that 'lifelikeness means to achieve the form of the object but to leave out its spirit (Qi)' and 'reality means that both spirit (Qi) and substance are strong', it is clear that 'Qi' refers to internal reality, formal likeness refers to external appearance. Jing Hao (870–930, ECTOP: 171) also implied that 'Yun' (consonance) refers to internal reality when pointing out two types of faults in painting: the fault 'connected with form' and the fault 'not connected with form'. The former can be corrected by 'changing the forms', while the latter seems to be fatal since the absence of 'Qi' (spirit) and 'Yun' (consonance) will cause the painting to be 'dead image' or 'dead matter' which could not be improved by amending details in spite of the fact that the painter might be skilled at conveying formal likeness. Jing Hao (870–930, ECTOP: 170–171) divided four classes of painting (divine, sublime, distinctive and skilful): divine work and sublime work attain perfect achievement in grasping the 'outward appearance'

⁴ Jing Hao (870–930, ECTOP: 146) projected his six essentials of Chinese painting in a slightly different way from the six laws by Xie He: 'Qi' (spirit) is the first essential, 'Yun' (consonance) is the second, 'Si' (thought or idea) is the third, 'Jing' (scene) indicating formal likeness is the fourth, 'Bi' (brush) is the fifth, 'Mo' (Ink) is the sixth.

and 'inner nature' of objects; distinctive work appears to deviate from the 'real scene' through 'untrammelled and unexpected' brush; skilful work with 'minutiae of seductive beauty' loyally and diligently copies the outer appearance but neglects the internal reality, so it actually 'diverges from the true images', and only possesses 'an excessive outward beauty'. Lacking 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) appears to be a serious flaw for landscape painting. The Song landscape painting critic Han Zhuo (active ca. 1095–ca. 1125, ECTOP: 183) appears to inherit Jing Hao's theory in talking about the contrast between reality (Shi) and showiness (Hua) in painting: reality (Shi) 'connotes substance or corporeality', which is based on nature and 'originates in nature', and is essential due to nature being its basis, while showiness (Hua) 'connotes floweriness or ornamentation', being artificial and inessential since art is the application of nature. Here, essential reality actually refers to 'Qi Yun', inessential showiness resorts to formal likeness. Thus, Han Zhuo suggested painters to strive for 'Qi Yun' first, then formal likeness will be attained in the work 'as a matter of course'; when 'reality is insufficient', painters should stop painting, otherwise 'excessive showiness' will show up. According to Han Zhuo (active ca. 1095–ca. 1125, ECTOP: 184), for observers 'when examining paintings, the first thing to look for' is 'Qi Yun', and painters who grasp painting methods will 'comprehend the vitality of spiritual perfection, but those who study copying methods will possess the defects found in geography book illustrations'. That is, the most essential painting method for an artist is to grasp 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) rather than merely imitating form, otherwise the artist just produces geography book illustrations.

Besides Jing Hao's theory of reality, Loer's suggestion about 'Qi Yun' as the expressive quality or content of a work could be supported theoretically by the Han scholar Yang Xiong (53 BC – 18 AD) and the Tang painting master Zhang Zao (active about the late 8th century). Yang Xiong (53 BC – 18 AD) proposed 'word' as the 'sound of mind' and 'calligraphy' as the 'painting of mind', and suggested that people can identify a person to be a gentleman or a petty man according to his print of mind. As I explained earlier, although he related 'Qi Yun' to the innate talent of a painter, Guo Ruoxu explicitly indicated that 'Qi Yun' in the work as the quality of the work reflects the painter's mind. Following Yang Xiong's 'print of mind' metaphor, Guo Ruoxu (ca. 1080, ECTOP: 96) made an analogy between

painting and calligraphy, and suggested that painting is also 'mind-print', just like calligraphy '[originating] from the source of the mind', being 'perfected in the imagination', taking form 'as the traces of mind' on the surface of silk or paper, and becoming the 'print' 'in accord with the mind'; neither calligraphy nor painting can escape from reflecting 'the loftiness or baseness of spirit consonance'. The Tang master Zhang Zao (active about the late 8th century) located the secrets of art in that 'externally all creation is my master' and 'internally I have found the mind's sources' (Zhang Yanyuan, 847, ECTOP: 65). Not only is literature or calligraphy the print of mind, but mind is also the wellhead of painting, and painting is the image of mind. Similarly, the Song Scholar Wang Qinchun (about 1034–1101, ECTOP: 209) agreed that 'there is surely a single principle in literature, calligraphy, and painting'. Not only did art critics advocate this view of painting as the print of mind, but painters such as the North Song master Mi Youren (1075–1151, ECTOP: 205–206) also echoed Yang Xiong's insights and agreed that painting is 'a depiction of the mind'. To represent appears to be to express for Chinese painters, since painting as the print of mind originates from both nature and mind (Fong, 1986: 505).

Painting during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, especially landscape painting, verifies the notion of Qi Yun as the internal reality of the object and the expressive quality or content of the work beyond formal representation. In the examination of painting during Song and following Yuan, it can be seen that the aesthetic preference for internal spiritual reality rather than external materialistic reality and the tendency to favour expressionistic individuality or spirituality rather than formal representation have been inherited and developed by Song and Yuan painters, especially landscape painters. From the Song Dynasty onwards, scholars or literati started to dominate the leading direction of aesthetic taste in painting by engaging in artistic practice, and their emphasis on 'Qi Yun' enabled painting to function as a tool of self-expression beyond pictorial representation. Scholar-artists appear to arrive at a new high level in this enthusiastic pursuit and appreciation of 'Qi Yun' in painting, by advocating and practising painting as soundless poem with form that carries the subtle expression of poetic mood or lyric flavour. A poem is a painting without form and a painting is a poem with form' (Guo Xi, 1000–1090, ECTOP: 158). This idea is commonly attributed to the famous Tang poet and painter Wang

Wei (699? – 761?), whose artistic practice appears to have had enormous influence on Song and post-Song artists. ‘When one savours Wang Wei’s poems, there are paintings in them; when one looks at Wang Wei’s pictures, there are poems’ (Su Shi, 1037–1101, ECTOP: 203). Since painting is regarded as soundless poem, expressing the inexhaustible flavour and poetic mood is not only the aim of poets, but also the aim of Song and later painters. North Song critics and painters such as Guo Xi (1000–1090), Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072), Su Shi (1037–1101), Li Gonglin (1049–1105), Mi Fu (1052–1107), Chao Yuezhi (1059–1129), Mi Youren (1074–1151), and Han Zhuo (active 1095–1125) enthusiastically emphasized the aesthetic expression of poetic mood or lyric flavour in painting, and many of them successfully practised this preference on the poetic expressionism in their own artistic creation and heavily influenced later artists. Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) suggested: ‘Loneliness and tranquillity are qualities difficult to paint and if an artist manages to achieve them, viewers are not always able to perceive this. Thus, birds’ or animals’ rates of speed are easy to see (in a painting), being things of superficial perception, while relaxed harmony and awesome stillness are hard to shape, as feelings of far-reaching mood’ (Ouyang Xiu, 1007–1072, ECTOP: 230–231). That is, if a painter could delineate the ‘loneliness and tranquillity’ of a landscape, and the ‘relaxed harmony and awesome stillness’ of flowers, plants, animals or human beings, that means he would be able to capture the profound mood of poetry, since loneliness, tranquillity, relaxed harmony and awesome stillness are expressive qualities ‘difficult to paint’.

Led by the expressionistic pursuit of ‘Qi Yun’ (spirit consonance) beyond formal representation, not only did painters throughout the Song and Yuan Dynasties engage in various methods and revolutionary styles, but also critics and connoisseurs from the scholar-officer class and the court got involved in the development of aesthetic practices. Whether it was the emotional landscape advocated by Guo Xi; or the scattering perspective of ‘six distances’ developed in North Song that contributes to the construction of the image of mind; or the one-corner composition favoured by South Song painters that enables painting to show the poetic introspection by leaving much blank space for aesthetic reflection both for artists and audiences; or painting interwoven with calligraphy and poetry becoming more and more popular from Song; or calligraphic brushes merging

into painting originated by Yuan painters; all of these practices continued to contribute into the expressive charisma of 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) beyond formal imitation, and to construct the unique aesthetic traits of Chinese painting.⁵ For instance, in the work *Evening in the Spring Hills* by an unidentified artist (mid-13th century), the trees growing on the cliff merely occupy little space in the right corner, and mountains, a pavilion and trees nearby also occupy little space at the bottom; three quarters of the space is blank except for a small moon in the top-left. If 'Qi' and 'Yun' could be respectively perceived as masculine sublime and feminine grace, the poetic mood and lingering flavour of 'Qi Yun', especially the graceful charm of 'Yun' shining through this work is much attributed to the blankness in the one-corner composition, which appears to stimulate the resonance of contemplation. The lingering flavour of this work also reminds of a comment on poetry by the influential Song poetry critic Yan Yu (ca. 1192–1245, translated by Bush, 2012: 44): 'Like an echo in the void, and colour in a form, the moon reflected in water, and an image in a mirror, the words come to an end, but the meaning is inexhaustible'.

Perhaps due to the importance of 'Qi Yun' (spirit consonance) as the

⁵ Guo Xi (1000–1090, ECTOP: 152) suggested painters should represent mountains thus: 'Spring mountains are gently seductive and seem to smile; summer mountains seem moist in their verdant hues; autumn mountains are bright and clear, arrayed in colourful garments; winter mountains are withdrawn in melancholy, apparently asleep'. *Early Spring* by Guo Xi vividly exemplifies the scenes of mountains in the early spring, and the sense of life and movement implied in this work makes it an excellent example of capturing 'Qi Yun' and expressing the genteel seductiveness and smiling face of the mountains in early spring. Guo Xi (ECTOP: 170; cited by Fang, 1992: 258) gave his original illustration of the three distances: 'high distance' (Gao Yuan) refers to 'from the bottom of the mountain looking up the top'; 'deep distance' (Shen Yuan) is from the front of the mountain peering into 'what lies behind'; 'level distance' (Ping Yuan) is 'from a nearby mountain looking past distant mountains'. Later Han Zhuo (active 1095–1125, ECTOP: 170; cited by Fang, 1992: 86), summarized another supplementary three distances: 'wide distance' or 'broad distance' (Kuo Yuan) is the viewing of a spacious sweep of far-reaching distant mountains from the nearby foreground shore of a wide stretch or broad expanse of water; 'lost distance' or 'hidden distance' (Mi Yuan) is the viewing of thick 'vast, hazy wilderness mists with running streams that intersect each other' and then seem to disappear; 'remote distance' or 'obscure distance' (You Yuan) is where scenery seems to be 'vagueness and mistiness' by 'becoming tiny and disappearing in space' when 'landscape elements diminish with distance'.

essential internal reality of the object depicted or the expressive quality of the work, there has been controversy among artists and critics on the issue of whether painters should strictly value external reality and meet the demand of formal likeness, especially from the North Song Dynasty, when more literati commonly got involved in artistic practices and despised the defects of artisans such as overly emphasizing details of formal likeness and neglecting the expression of spirit consonance. For example, Su Shi (1037–1101) wrote a famous poem which appears to criticize the defect of overly valuing resemblance: 'If anyone discusses painting in terms of formal likeness, /His understanding is close to that of a child. /If someone composing a poem must have a certain poem, /Then he is definitely not a man who knows poetry. /There is one basic rule in poetry and painting; /Natural genius and originality' (ECTOP: 224). Similarly to Su Shi's poem, 'if the idea is adequate, do not seek for outward likeness' is one sentence from a poem by the Song critic Chen Yuyi (1090–1138, cited by Tang Hou, active 1320–1330, ECTOP: 261), which has been echoed among the critics and painters of the Song and Yuan Dynasties, emphasizing the significance of spiritual expressionism. Following the way laid down by Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), who called 'his creative process not as "painting" but as "writing"', Yuan masters appeared to care more about self-expression rather than loyally imitating reality (Hearn, 2014: 80). For instance, Ni Zan (1301–1374, ECTOP: 270/280) admitted his pleasure of painting lies in 'careless sketching' rather than carefully 'seeking formal likeness', and the expression and emancipation of the 'untrammelled spirit in [his] breast' when painting bamboos. It would not be hard to understand why Ni Zan liked to paint a grove of trees repetitively, or an empty pavilion on a foreground shore in a background of nearby water and distant mountains, since the expression of untrammelled spirit in the painter's breast merely needed a familiar outlet. The lingering flavour of blandness, tranquillity, isolation and detachment in the repetitive subject as emancipation of the 'untrammelled spirit' in his breast appears to mark his uniqueness, and his self-expression beyond representation is irresistibly attractive in the eyes of audiences. The poems written by Ni Zan on paintings might release the subtle differences in his mood at different times, and enhance the poetic favour of blandness, tranquillity, isolation and detachment reflected in painting. This relaxed flavour of isolation and detachment from worldly

affairs might be called 'relaxed nonchalance', which had been cherished by the elite of literati and artists in Chinese artistic history (Clunas, 2009: 136).

However, although Loehr's understanding of 'Qi Yun' as the expressive quality or content of the work can be verified by the paintings from the Six Dynasties to Yuan, he seems to make a mistake in only advocating that expressionism applies to paintings from the Yuan Dynasty. Due to both expressionistic qualities and representative elements in either Pre-Yuan art or Post-Song art, it would be hard to accept Loehr's (1970: 287–296) periodisation of Chinese painting, according to which 'a new, unprecedented, expressionistic art' suddenly and drastically sprang up in early Yuan, and subjective expressionism in Yuan art allegedly replaced objective realism in Song art.⁶

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, merely confining 'Qi Yun' to the scope of the painter, or the object, or the work appears to be unreasonable. During the process of creation by painters, 'Qi Yun' seems to refer to the essential character of the object, that is, the internal reality of the object. Once the painter releases the brush to complete a work, 'Qi Yun' becomes the expressive quality or content of the work. Confining it to a quality of the painter seems to be the most obviously partial approach, although it is undeniable that a painter should cultivate the ability to get in tune with the object, and capture 'Qi Yun', transmit it in the work, and release the image until a rapport is achieved. It also appears to be true that the expressionistic quality of a work reflects the innate talent and disposition of its painter. A painter should never seek formal likeness first, rather cultivate the image with a sense of life and naturalness in his mind, wait until the completed image suddenly and unconsciously appears in his mind, and then use his hand to respond to his mind and control the brush, so as to release the image and lodge the conception on paper or silk. 'Qi Yun', as the core concept of Chinese aesthetics, draws the painter, the object, the work, and the

⁶ I examine this issue with Loehr's periodisation of Chinese painting in my paper entitled 'Beyond Representation: Reconsidering Loehr's Periodisation of Chinese Painting' (presented at the 20th International Congress of Aesthetics, Seoul, 28 July 2016).

audience together, and promotes a fascinating interaction phenomenon among them.

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Everyday Aesthetics: Institutionalization and “Normative Turn”

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ABSTRACT. In 2015, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* published for the first time online the entry “Aesthetics of Everyday Life”, authored by Yuriko Saito. This contribution is emblematic of the institutionalization process that Everyday Aesthetics has recently undergone, and that seems to have released it from its ancillary role, by officially recognizing its “academic dignity”. But there is also a critical trend that has been developed in recent years in the field of the aesthetics of everyday life and that stresses two main aspects that greatly contribute to the understanding of Everyday Aesthetics: the will to systematize its methodological approaches through a recognizable nomenclature, and the necessity for a “normative-intersubjective turn” that would avoid the risk of trivializing the aesthetic. Aim of this paper is to address the relevance of such critical trend, in terms of the way in which Everyday Aesthetics is finally undergoing a process of “maturation” after a first stage of acquisition of a critical awareness, as testified to by the first surveys produced in this field (that will be shortly analysed in the first paragraph of this paper). Therefore the core question that this contribution aims to answer is the following: can Everyday Aesthetics be fully recognized as a growing sub-discipline, or is it rather a more general issue, or topic of philosophical discussion?

1. Everyday Aesthetics as a Growing Sub-discipline

The so-called Everyday Aesthetics is progressively gaining ground as a solid and promising line of research in the context of contemporary aesthetics. The increasingly wide literature produced in this area of philosophical investigation corroborates this point. Nevertheless, what emerges as striking is the difficulty to identify univocal coordinates that would allow the assessment of this line of research as a true and proper sub-discipline of

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aesthetics and not as a mere label or umbrella-term for otherwise totally different perspectives.

The various topics that are referred to Everyday Aesthetics by its advocates are clearly elaborated in the rich literature (essays or more voluminous publications), within which Everyday Aesthetics is indeed often connoted in diverse ways, to the extent that it is not clear yet, whether this is an approach that may have a univocal methodology or at least a sufficiently definite cluster of methodological issues. If this were not true, at most we could talk about the “everyday aesthetic” as the *fulcrum* that orientates the contributions published so far. In other words, the point that hence seems to emerge as strategic for the disciplinary understanding of Everyday Aesthetics is asking whether what matters is more the fact that the aesthetic in the everyday has become a relevant issue from various points of view, or the conviction of the necessity of evaluating the eventual pregnancy of a sub-disciplinary field properly defined Everyday Aesthetics, whose consistency, in order to be proved, would need at least some shared methodological and prospective premises, despite the numerous interpretations of it. Therefore the core question that this contribution aims to answer is the following: can Everyday Aesthetics be fully recognized as a growing sub-discipline, or is it rather a more general issue, or topic of philosophical discussion?

This is certainly not the framework in which the numerous contributions dedicated to the topic should be extensively addressed. Our main concern here is rather to verify if and how this research field is gaining, or has gained, awareness about its sub-disciplinary status. Usually, indicators of this passage are the attempts to offer a general overview of the problems that are shared by various approaches (even if mutually competitive). Where is/are the point/s of divergence between them, and what are the reasons for that? Only to the extent that these elements become methodological and theoretical motives we can presume that a research field has begun to move towards the adult stage of its life-cycle, by going beyond the simple first thematisation of a speculative problem.

Hence, an useful way to start dealing with our issue may be the analysis of those entries recently appeared in important editions of Companions, Handbooks, Encyclopedias and Dictionaries of Aesthetics. The contributions that will be considered are the following, in chronological or

der: “Aesthetics of Everyday Life” (Sherri Irvin), *Blackwell Companions to Philosophy. A Companion to Aesthetics* (2009); “Aesthetics of The Everyday” (Crispin Sartwell), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (2010); “New Directions in Aesthetics” (Paisley Livingston), *The Continuum Companion to Aesthetics/The Bloomsbury Companion to Aesthetics* (2012-15). It should be noted, though, that *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (2013) has not been taken into account in the present survey since it does not include entries nor explicit and ample references to Everyday Aesthetics. A more recent and more extensive contribution that will be analysed in the second paragraph of the paper, in a broader way though, exactly because of these two characteristics, is “Aesthetics of Everyday Life” authored for *Stanford Encyclopedia Online* in 2015 by Yuriko Saito, who also realized for the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* a shorter version of the same entry titled “Everyday Aesthetics” in 2014.

It is noteworthy that the everyday has been a central subject also in other fields of study and, in these frameworks, it has been addressed as a more general problem, certainly not ascribable to the line of investigation at issue here.¹ In Germany a certain interest towards this topic is demonstrated by the entry “Alltag/Alltäglich”, included in *Metzler Lexikon Ästhetik: Kunst, Medien, Design und Alltag* (2006: 9-12)². In this context the progressive overcoming of the opposition between “Alltag” (everyday) and “Feiertag” (holiday), and the integration in the domain of the everyday – which was coeval to the recognition of the latter as a topic worthy of academic attention – of notions such as “lifestyle”/“way of life”, “mentality” and “customs and practices” is traced back to the second half of the XX century. Another perspective which is worth mentioning is that suggested in the entry “Aestheticization of Everyday Life” appeared in the *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture* (2011: 15-18), where the aesthetic quality of

¹ Among the most important ones – although their contents are not strictly related to the goals of this paper – how not to mention also the well-known researches carried out by French semiotic tradition (from Lefebvre, passing through Barthes, Baudrillard, to Lipovetsky) and by the mainly British cultural studies tradition (from Hoggart and Williams, to Storey and Highmore).

² It must be noted, though, that a previous, yet longer and similar articulation of a discourse on the everyday in a German publication was realized by Peter Jehle, who authored the entry “Alltäglich/Alltag” for *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, 1 (2000).

the everyday, in our contemporaneity, is interpreted, with a focus on new technologies, through the lens of aestheticization meant as “the growing significance of aesthetic perception in processes of consumption and consuming” (2011: 15). However, these are cases of theoretical perspectives that do not aim at the articulation of an Everyday Aesthetics, but at an analysis of the everyday that has no intention of *programmatically* developing an aesthetics of the latter.

As already suggested, the succession of the contributions that will be considered is meant to show, so to speak, the typical development from “adolescence” to “adulthood” of a specific field. And a hint of all this is perhaps provided by the growing extension of the *body* of the texts under consideration here.

After the birth and early development phase of Everyday Aesthetics, during which the need to realize a true and proper official survey of it is understandably missing, the beginning of a process of transformation for Everyday Aesthetics in a “young adult” field of study (in which not only there is an attempt to bring the research in specific directions, but one also starts wondering about the various perspectives that are involved and that might arise as more consistent) is inaugurated, we may say, by the first of these more general “explorative” contributions: the entry “Aesthetics of Everyday Life” realized by Sherri Irvin in 2009 for *Blackwell*. It, in fact, presents a compact overview on the evolution of Everyday Aesthetics and on the various positions emerged in it. Irvin’s text is structured around the traditional (and unavoidable) references to Deweyan aesthetics and environmental aesthetics. The first is mentioned since it aimed at the overcoming of the distinction between the fine arts and everyday life, and as such has generated a crucial bifurcation in the definition of the investigation modalities available in Everyday Aesthetics. Environmental aesthetics, on the other hand, is addressed since, according to the author, it has allowed an extension of aesthetic investigations to natural and also to non-natural environments, but more importantly, an extension “[of] the attention to environments, rather than isolated objects, [that] has [therefore] led to the recognition of a mode of aesthetic experience that is complex, immersive, and multisensory, and thus readily applicable to everyday life”. (p. 138)

Irvin’s contribution has a circular structure. It, in fact, outlines the possible objections that may be raised against the essential variety of con-

tents and approaches that connotes Everyday Aesthetics, by bringing the discussion back on the one hand to the question whether Deweyan *criteria* should be accepted or refused, and on the other hand, to the question concerning the effective *models* of aesthetic experience. The latter, the author suggests, should converge in the direction of aesthetically conscious and therefore attentive ways of interacting with our surroundings, hence promoting the pursuit of an aesthetically connoted lifestyle:

even if the texture of everyday life is such as to yield aesthetic satisfactions that are relatively subtle, continual awareness of these satisfactions may offer a payoff in quality of life that is very much worth having. (p. 139)

All in all, what seems to be missing from the undoubtedly clear and solid explanation provided by Irvin, is the development of a position that may open new, fruitful perspectives for Everyday Aesthetics, that at the end of the day is analysed by means of traditional criteria and models.

“Aesthetics of The Everyday”, written by Crispin Sartwell in 2010 for *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* also presents, in its central and conclusive parts, an overview on the history of Everyday Aesthetics. In this framework, the usual reference to Dewey is followed by an analysis of the phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches to the aesthetic dimension of the everyday. In the final part of the entry, Sartwell addresses “[t]wo *loci classici* of the everyday aesthetics movement in philosophy of art” (p. 768), that is to say two volumes by Scharfstein e Berleant (see: Scharfstein 1988 and Berleant 1991), which, according to him, both contributed to the “crystallization of the movement” in transcultural terms, which the author himself advocates. The academic production of the American scholar is, in fact, strongly focused on the furtherment of an aesthetics that overcomes the paradigms provided by the Modern and narrowing western conception of art. It is also noteworthy that in Sartwell’s stance it is not hard to find ideas that have also been thematized in those studies devoted to the concept of “artification” in its various formulations: on the one hand we can identify the centrality of the dialectics between Modernism and Post-modernism as Ossi Naukkarinen (2012), Nathalie Heinich and Roberta Shapiro (2012) have also done, and on the other hand, we can find references to the well known “making special” theorized by Ellen Dissanayake

(1995). All this, though, fatally characterizes in a predominant way also the entry at issue here, that widely discusses in its introduction (from the definition of the “sources of art” to the “historical relativity of the western conception of fine art”) the centrality of a transcultural approach for Everyday Aesthetics.

The following passage seems to well summarize the author’s stance:

There is an aesthetic dimension to a variety of experiences that are common to nearly all people, but would not normally be seen as experiences of fine art. For example, body adornment is practised by all cultures. [...]

All cultures, as well, practise some arrangement and ornamentation of their immediate environment, in order to create a pleasing effect.[...]

Present-day culture is also saturated with popular arts such as popular music, web design, film, and television animation and drama. People often dedicate much of their lives to such arts, and these arts often present strikingly aesthetic aspects. [...]

Such examples are intended to demonstrate the continuity of the fine and popular arts, of art and craft, and of art and spirituality. In all these ways, the arts are incorporated into and originate within everyday life. [...] (pp. 762-764)

Nevertheless, what seems to make Sartwell’s inquiry not entirely satisfactory for the definition of Everyday Aesthetics as a sub-field of aesthetics is exactly the fact that it is here principally addressed as a methodological problem, which is certainly a necessary aspect to be developed, in order to become more aware of this line of research, but probably not sufficient in order to clarify its statute and consistency from a theoretical point of view.

“New Directions in Aesthetics”, by Paisley Livingston has been first published in 2012 in *Continuum Companion to Aesthetics* (in 2015 *The Bloomsbury Companion to Aesthetics*). This is not an entry specifically designed for Everyday Aesthetics. Nevertheless, the American scholar, facing the difficult challenge of providing a survey about new directions in aesthetics, opts for an overview on Everyday Aesthetics (that he describes as a “trend”

or subfield), of which he thus acknowledges the novelty and fruitfulness, in terms of the consideration of new topics relevant for contemporary aesthetics and the achievement of new intellectual goals (or directions), or also new ways of achieving old goals for the discipline itself.

The contribution, which is indeed extensively articulated and rich in examples, is perhaps one of the first ones realized by scholars previously not well-known in the specific field of Everyday Aesthetics. In fact, it is not surprising that the author, in order to solve some of the questions that “afflict” the best known everyday aestheticians, i.e. the overcoming of the “tension”, which is internal to the sub-discipline, turns to a thinker, who has normally not been involved in debates on Everyday Aesthetics: C.I. Lewis.

Before elaborating this last point more broadly, Livingston deals with the question of the “scope and purpose” of Everyday Aesthetics, by means of an analysis of three aspects that are crucial for it. First, the debate around the criteria for the inclusion of topics in the domain of Everyday Aesthetics depending on their being well-established or not, that brings the author to the adoption of a quite conventional solution: all everyday and familiar phenomena could be a subject matter for Everyday Aesthetics except for those related to fine art and “scenic nature”. The second point concerns *aisthesis* in the pregnant sense of the human ability of perceiving through all the five senses. Against the traditional point of view, that emphasizes the visual dimension, according to Livingston most everyday aestheticians stress the relevance of a synesthetic perception joint with belief and imagination, by denying the priority of pure contemplative vision. According to the author, however, an influential stance such as the continuistic one supported, for instance, by Thomas Leddy, reveals that this contemplative attitude still plays a crucial role in everyday experiences of the aesthetic. The third and fundamental point developed by Livingston is the question about the tension in Everyday Aesthetics. Amongst various interpretations that have been provided as concerns this last aspect, Livingston mentions, as one of the most emblematical, Yuriko Saito’s. The latter summarizes the so-called “tension in Everyday Aesthetics” in a dialectical couple composed of a normative/evaluative moment (awareness of the aestheticity of the everyday) and a descriptive one (faithful representation of everyday experiences). However, we will address this dichotomy

more in detail through the analysis of Saito’s contribution in the next paragraph.

As concerns this third point, Livingston suggests that a way to solve it is to turn to the notion of aesthetic properties.

Assuming that there is a bifurcation in the orientation of our everyday experiences, which is mainly instrumental, but not necessarily non-instrumental, Livingston acknowledges two typologies of experiences in the everyday: 1) those in which means-end rationality prevails: «Instrumental experiences of this type are predominantly anticipatory as far as their evaluative dimension is concerned, as what looms large in our minds is the anticipated risks and payoffs, as well as the plans and actions that are directly related to such “utilities.”(p. 262)»; 2) those in which an intrinsic value prevails, or “in other words, whatever makes the experience positively or negatively valued intrinsically, or for its own sake.” (p. 262) Drawing from these considerations, the author begins his survey on the issue in Lewisian terms. Following the lead of some concepts borrowed from the founding father of conceptual pragmatism, in fact, Livingston maintains that we can consider properly aesthetic experiences those which have a predominantly intrinsic value, without denying, at the same time, the instrumental value that, to a lesser extent, they still possess. It is exactly along these lines that Livingston also retrieves the Lewisian notion of immediate valence of aesthetic experiences, that lies in “the quality of something as presented or presentable” (p. 263), hence in its appearance, implying, in this way, a certain “contemplative regard” (p. 263) that cannot be reduced to mere hedonism and that at the same time does not involve a total absence of awareness.

Livingston adds a further crucial point for this aesthetic perspective inspired by Lewisian philosophy by introducing the so-called «“moralistic” condition»: such condition excludes any hint of possession of property from the realm of aesthetic experiences. He then states that nevertheless the predominant intrinsicality of an item’s aesthetic properties does not exclude at all the presence of relational properties, which may further the appreciation of the item itself and of its ability of triggering aesthetic experiences. This last point is exactly supported by the contextualist ontology, of which Lewis himself was a proponent.

Hoping to have “reduced the tension” between normative and descript-

ive moments that, being an essential characteristic of Everyday Aesthetics, is the main subject of his contribution, Livingston recognizes, however, that major difficulties, for the achievement of all this, still persist. These difficulties can be ascribed, according to the author, to the more fundamental and radical question of “how to live a good life”, that crucially fosters aesthetic investigations, and more generally philosophy. Hence, such question, which is linked to the eventual suspension of “prudential or moral concerns” [in order to] attend primarily to the intrinsic valence” (p. 267) of the items we experience is not likely to be resolved soon.

Livingston’s contribution indeed enriches the range of Everyday Aesthetics’ points of reference with an original link to pragmatism, since it transcends the usual appeals to Deweyan aesthetics. Nevertheless, it seems to be limited to the proposal of a sort of “normalization” of Everyday Aesthetics, by reducing its fundamental motives to crucial elements connoting traditional aesthetics, such as the relationship between aesthetic and ethic, or the dichotomy between description and evaluation. It is exactly for these reasons that in this text it is not easy to identify punctual indications for next steps forward, that would allow the development of those issues that actually constitute the real *fulcrum* of the specific domain of Everyday Aesthetics.

2. Everyday Aesthetics as a Young Adult Sub-discipline

On September 30, 2015, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* published for the first time online the entry “Aesthetics of Everyday Life”, authored by Yuriko Saito, one of the most important figures in the field of Everyday Aesthetics, who also realized a shorter version of the same entry titled “Everyday Aesthetics” in 2014 for the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. As compared to the previous, briefer and so to speak “younger” contributions Saito’s can be considered the richer and more nuanced presentation of Everyday Aesthetics, that has therefore overcome its initial phases. Hence, for these various reasons, her text can be considered emblematical and institutionalizing for Everyday Aesthetics, by symbolizing the official recognition of its “academic dignity”.

By means of a brief overview, the philosopher places Everyday Aesthetics in a line of continuity with the attempts, which were inaugurated in late

XX century, to broaden the domain of Anglo-American aesthetics from a discourse limited to fine arts, to the multi-faceted experiential pattern that takes shape through practices and objects that are pervasive in everyday life.

The author goes on to say that a further feature, which is typical of Everyday Aesthetics, is the effort to release aesthetics from an exclusive focus on beauty and the sublime, by recognizing the richness of a set of aesthetic qualities which, although being less “gratifying” or “impressive” (than beauty and the sublime), still essentially pervade everyone’s quotidian (aesthetic) experience(s).

At the end of the introductory section, Saito stresses that Everyday Aesthetics does not merely have an extensive approach, which tends to include new elements and qualities. She, in fact, also maintains its peculiar theoretical strength, a theoretical strength that is able to make emerge certain issues, which haven’t received and still do not receive adequate attention from “mainstream” aesthetics.

Steering hence the discussion towards what Everyday Aesthetics contents and paradigms are, Saito introduces the debate on what constitutes “everyday” and “aesthetics” in Everyday Aesthetics, which is fundamental in the framework of the apparently unlimited speculative breadth that seems to connote it.

On the one hand the term “everyday” covers a range of activities that can be considered ordinary *stricto sensu* (eating, dwelling, grooming...) or that take place occasionally (holidays, parties, sport, cultural events...). And such inclusivity questions the validity of a literal interpretation of its meaning: everydayness, in fact, is a specific contextual quality, and that which might be completely ordinary for someone, might contrariwise be a rare event for someone else. A strategy that, according to Saito, is able to solve such *impasse*, is to situate quotidianity’s intrinsic characteristics in the attitude we assume towards, and the experience that we have of, everyday objects and activities, rather than attempting to identify them through a mere inventory of the latter.

On the other hand, “aesthetics” has at least two main connotations in the domain of Everyday Aesthetics. It can concern bodily perceptions derived from sensory stimuli or various physical activities, and it can be used either in a honorific or classificatory way. The first (which is preval-

ent both in the discipline *tout court* and in common language) is oriented towards a mainly positive and gratifying conception of aesthetic experiences, the second (which is typical of academic discussions that are outside of philosophical aesthetics in the strict sense, such as aesthetics of manners and political aesthetics), is also open to the consideration of negative factors that may characterize it.

And it is exactly this dualism between honorific and classificatory use that sets the tone of the third and fourth paragraphs of the encyclopedia entry at issue: respectively “Defamiliarization of the Familiar” and “Negative Aesthetics”, from which the author starts an analysis of Everyday Aesthetics that markedly aims to highlight the nexus between aesthetics and ethics. This bond is variously subsumed in formulas such as “immediacy of the aesthetic”, “power of the aesthetic” or “aesthetic life” and plays a central role in the theoretical stance that connotes the author’s whole academic production.

“Defamiliarization of the familiar” refers to the awarding of everyday experiential material with an “auraticity” or “extraordinariness” status, in order to reveal the aesthetic potential eclipsed by its intrinsically ordinary nature. Saito maintains that by embracing such interpretation, that is to say, by over-emphasizing defamiliarization as a precondition for Everyday Aesthetics, it would become impossible to experience and appreciate the ordinary as ordinary.

The author argues that all this takes place either through the recognition of the aesthetic merit of “unimpressive” qualities that provide a quiet calm, comfort, stability and hominess, or through the denial of any aesthetic merit in the monotonous ordinariness connoting everyday life, which is thus referred to by some even as “anaesthetic”.

Saito then claims that if we instead understand aesthetics in a classificatory sense, the acknowledgment of negative aesthetic qualities in the everyday won’t be synonymous with an absence of aesthetic qualities *in toto*, but that will rather corroborate the pervasiveness of an aesthetic texture of and in the ordinary, although negatively.

According to Saito, negative aesthetics is essential for the discourse on Everyday Aesthetics, since it determines its “active” and “activist” dimension, hence contrasting the spectatorial paradigm that, on the other hand, characterizes art-centred aesthetics: when we experience negative

aesthetic qualities, we concretely react, or reflect on how to react, in order to “eliminate, reduce or transform them”, both on a personal and, most importantly, social level.

Such socio-ethical orientation also emerges in the following paragraphs of the entry, especially in those focused on three subfields of Everyday Aesthetics: Ambiance Aesthetics, Social Aesthetics and Action-Oriented Aesthetics – the scepticism towards which is ascribed by the author to western aesthetics’ tendency to consider aesthetically relevant only those experiences that can be shared and objectively evaluated (“judgment-oriented” and “verdict-oriented aesthetics”). Saito states that the overcoming of such limitation – which risks to impoverish the complexity and fruitfulness of the aesthetic and aesthetics – and the understanding of the social, and therefore shareable, origin of the numerous activities and topics covered by Everyday Aesthetics, will finally legitimize the latter. Nevertheless, what appears contradictory in the author’s argumentation, is that she responds to the “intersubjectivist limits” set by western aesthetic tradition, by emphasizing the communal and shareable – hence intersubjective – dimension of Everyday Aesthetics (see also Dowling [2010] and Ratiu [2013]).

After referring briefly to the relationship between art and everyday life, to the typical western attempt to overcome its dichotomous nature, and to the risks involved in the inconsiderate aestheticization, commodification and in-built obsolescence of some elements of the everyday, that can be contrasted only by practices guided by the idea of sustainability and by the consequent adoption of new aesthetic paradigms, the contribution approaches the conclusions.

3. Everyday Aesthetics as a Mature Sub-discipline

It is both undeniable and understandable that the entry at issue does not deal with all aspects of Everyday Aesthetics. Moreover, although Saito strives to provide an impartial and updated contribution, her socio-ethical orientation towards the topic, and her interpretation of the “aesthetic” as an open concept that doesn’t necessarily require an intersubjective engagement are evident.

However, if Everyday Aesthetics wants to become a true and proper

disciplinary field of aesthetics, it necessarily has to deal with a fundamental problem such as that of normativity.

Drawing from these considerations and aiming to address some crucial elements that Saito neglects, I will now briefly compare four essays published between 2010 and 2016 by specifically focusing on two fundamental aspects that they emphasize. The first is the will to systematize Everyday Aesthetics' various methodological approaches – by using a recognizable nomenclature – the second, the necessity for a “normative turn” that would avoid the risk of trivializing the aesthetic, by guaranteeing the possibility to intersubjectively discuss our preferences of taste. Saito, as a matter of fact, almost totally overlooks this recent and extremely relevant critical trend, with the exception of some general hints, that are nevertheless not intentionally referred to it.

Chris Dowling's “The Aesthetics of Daily Life” (2010) paved the way for the development of the foresaid trend: here the author uses a terminology and formulates a “normative-intersubjectivist” proposal that would then be retrieved, shared, partly rectified or further elaborated in three more recent essays. In this programmatic essay, “Weak Formulation” of the aesthetics of everyday life intuition refers to the attempts to define the aesthetic pregnancy of the everyday, by means of an extension of the concept of “aesthetic” usually involved in discussions on artistic value, in order to include typically everyday experiences. On the other hand, “Strong Formulation” of everyday life intuition refers to the attempts to prove how completely ordinary experiences can afford paradigmatic instances of aesthetic experience in a way that is totally unbound from “the limitations and conventions which connote, in the philosophy of art, debates on aesthetic value” (Dowling 2010: 241). Dowling, who aims to reduce the risks of the rather unsatisfying “anything goes”, principally supports a “Weak Formulation” of Everyday Aesthetics, since it generally recognizes and makes more explicit the distinction between judgments which are merely subjective and those which possess a normative aspect. The possibility to preserve the specificity of the aesthetic, and to distinguish it, hence, from judgments based on, or rather entrenched in a purely subjective pleasure stands then, according to the author, in the appropriateness, corrigibility, shareability, in the possibility of consensus or criticism (see Ratiu 2013), or, in other words, in the normative aspect, of a

judgment of taste.

This nomenclature is adopted by Dan Eugen Ratiu in “Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: on recent controversies about the aesthetic and aesthetic experience in everyday life” (2013) where he identifies a methodological tension between a Weak and Strong Pole of Everyday Aesthetics. He, too, maintains the fruitfulness of a “Weak” stance, and by doing so the author defends a normative but open model of the aesthetic and aesthetic experience, which includes both artistic and everyday life objects and phenomena, and that he places in an analytical framework constituted by three fundamental elements: the self, intersubjectivity and everyday life. These are then further developed in three main theses: 1) There is a normative aspect of the aesthetic experience and judgment which applies to both art and everyday life. Such normativity lies in an intersubjective engagement that would guarantee the non-trivialization of the aesthetic “in everyday mode”; 2) The concept of art must be regarded as an open concept, which nevertheless demands “consistency”, in order to secure a common ground for an aesthetic theory, which would entail both art and everyday life. What is moreover needed, the author claims, is to draw a distinction between the current usages of such open concept, which are oriented towards the elimination of the dichotomy between art and everyday life, and those which are instead typical of modernity, which are focused on the conventional notion of fine arts; 3) Art and Everyday life are both interdependent and interactive “in the continuous flux of experiences of an embodied self”: in other words, to the monadic-isolationist premises of the “Strong Pole”, Ratiu opposes the “Weak-Pole’s” monist ones.

It must be said that the whole recent academic production of the Canadian philosopher Jane Forsey carries out the questions of the methodological approaches to Everyday Aesthetics and that of the relationship between functionality and intersubjectivity in everyday life. In this framework, though, I will only address *The Promise, the Challenge of Everyday Aesthetics* (2014). It focuses on the relationship that exists between designed objects and individuals in everyday life and principally aims to find a “compromise”, or rather, a middle ground between the useful aspects provided by a “Weak Formulation” and those provided by a “Strong Formulation” of Everyday Aesthetics, that the author respectively labels as “Extraordinarist Stance” and “Familiarity Stance”.

In the *pars destruens* of her contribution, Forsey emphasizes a category mistake between artworks and “mere real things” that is made by the advocates of an “Extraordinarist Position”. By maintaining, in fact, that an aesthetic experience can result only from an object that stands out, and catches our attention, in its being unusual – or unfamiliar – from the flux of our ordinary perception, and by arguing that the consequent aesthetic judgment should be formulated following the art-centred traditional model, they confuse the two levels of the discourse and award everyday objects with a meaning, which is, according to the author, unnecessary in order to grasp their aesthetic quality.

In order to overcome such inexactness, Forsey introduces the distinction between aesthetic value, which is potentially everywhere, and artistic value, which is specific to artworks. Such distinction allows the author to begin the *pars costruens* of her discussion. The latter, in fact, on the one hand acknowledges a certain potential shown by the “Familiarity Stance”, which aims to build a theory exclusively based on the aesthetic relevance of the everyday *per se*. On the other hand it also identifies some critical aspects presented by the aforementioned approach, for it, in order to avoid the prescriptions of an art-centred aesthetics, presupposes an aesthetic attentiveness towards anything that provides comfort and security or a sense of belonging, and that, therefore, almost paradoxically, observes Forsey, does not require any specific receptivity from us. In this way, the “Extraordinarist” approach, too, that at least implies the positive recognition of a merit and not the acknowledgment of the latter in its being lacking (aesthetics of the “lacking”), shows a certain degree of fruitfulness.

Elaborating finally a more “balanced” version of Everyday Aesthetics which combines the useful aspects emerged from the analysis of the two methodologies at issue, Forsey formulates a proposal based on two fundamental concepts: that of embeddedness in everyday life and that of functionality. The latter, in particular, appears as indeed conducive in the light of Forsey’s critical standpoint towards the extremes of a Weak and Strong view of Everyday Aesthetics, for not only it replaces the more problematic notion of meaning, but it also seems to guarantee a certain degree of normativity in Everyday Aesthetics through the possibility of in principle sharing with others, and hence to intersubjectively communicate to others, our judgment of taste.

The last text under consideration is Giovanni Matteucci's *The Aesthetic as a Matter of Practices: Form of Life in Everydayness and Art* (2016)³. Here the author develops the debate concerning the two main approaches that constitute Everyday Aesthetics' thematic and methodological *fulcra* by emphasizing, in the nomenclature of his choice, the position they assume towards the established aesthetic theory. To a “Discontinuistic Solution”, which supports the impermeability between a level of analysis that deals with art and another that deals with everyday life, and which the author consequently disagrees with, for it doesn't pursue the resolution of the question of the various forms of aestheticity, and of the ways through which, between them, a certain conflict is generated, is opposed a “Continuistic Solution”, that presents, in its turn, two main options. On the one hand aestheticism, which attempts to transform life itself into a work of art, and that therefore does not contribute to Everyday Aesthetics' aim to make emerge the aesthetic specificity of the everyday as such. On the other hand, an interpretation of art as an intensification of aesthetic elements typically active in everyday life that takes place through, so to speak, “a Copernican revolution of the relationship between the artworld and the everyday” (Matteucci 2016: 13). This second option, the author asserts, seems more fruitful for it makes emerge the distinction between a “hyper-aesthetic” level, with aestheticizing tendencies, and a “hypo-aesthetic” level, with a strong anthropological connotation. This second level of aestheticity appears to afford the opportunity to identify some sort of normative aspect that would avoid the risk of “lassism” that is inherent in the “tendency to include” which often seems to connote Everyday Aesthetics, due to its “allergy” to every form of traditional or “mainstream” prescriptivism. To such normativity of the aesthetic, Matteucci says, would hence correspond the possibility of intersubjective dialogue about the acts through which we show our taste preferences, which are aesthetic “to the extent that they are bound to appearance and not the true and proper epistemic construction” (Matteucci 2016: 23), and have a peculiar character because the criterion that determines them is not easily identifiable, yet, it does not exclude attempts to justify, both rationally, expressively and

³ This essay is the latest elaboration of two previous papers (see: Matteucci 2013, 2015), which already contained the main issues stressed here.

actively its validity.

All in all, the four mentioned authors, by means of a systematization of Everyday Aesthetics' methodological approaches aim to make emerge the tension, or conflict, between them and hence to identify a normative aspect within such a topical discourse for contemporary aesthetics. All this also in order to avoid the risk of making Everyday Aesthetics a default theoretical venue with no specific conceptual rigor, which merely includes all those perceptually relevant objects and activities that mainstream aesthetics has hitherto overlooked.

It is evident how in this critical framework intersubjectivity plays a key role for the definition of a consistent analysis of the aesthetic, which both pertains art and the everyday (most of the authors, in fact, tend to agree with a Continuistic option of Everyday Aesthetics) and seems to have an anthropological connotation.

What is noteworthy here is that each author reaches such conclusion from different perspectives and backgrounds proving that the intersubjectivist solution can eventually guarantee a certain degree of normativity.

Aim of this paper was therefore to address the relevance of such critical trend that is emerging in the field of Everyday Aesthetics, and to show how, while the latter is finally undergoing a process of academic institutionalization, it is still needed to address and make Everyday Aesthetics' core concepts intelligible, as well as to pursue the search for a common theoretical ground on which to build its critical assessment. The fact that in this new stage of maturity different perspectives converge towards the indication of a normative turn, which is able to overcome initial and basic methodological and theoretical dichotomies, suggests that it is exactly in this horizon that this by now “adult” sub-discipline will have to take its next steps in order to prove its significant theoretical potential.⁴

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A Philosophical Reading of Brillat–Savarin’s ‘The Physiology of Taste’*

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ABSTRACT. The objective of this paper is to propose a philosophical reading of Brillat–Savarin’s *The Physiology of Taste* (1825) as the originary text of the contemporary gustatory aesthetics. I use the term “originary” here not only in the archaeological sense, but also to designate the foundational conceptual apparatus of a given discourse. Roland Barthes (in his 1975 introduction to the *Physiologie du goût*), Michel Onfray (in his 1995 *La raison gourmande*) and Carolyn Korsmeyer (in her 1999 *Making Sense of Taste*), all already claimed an originary status for Brillat–Savarin’s text, and in the current constitutive and expansive moment of the gustatory aesthetics, it is necessary to recontextualize and redefine the reasons for this identification. To this end, I will adduce ten arguments and a guide reading of this text.

I. Introduction

In the last decade, gustatory aesthetics has emerged as a rapidly expanding philosophical territory and academic discipline. The bibliography dedicated to the subject comprises dozens of titles that are giving substance to this hybrid territory at the intersection of philosophy, gastronomy, aesthetics, and political and practical approaches. These texts, which have notably been proliferating since 2005, take Carolyn Korsmeyer’s 1999 book, *Making Sense of Taste*, as their originary point of reference. The main thesis of Korsmeyer’s book is that taste is a way of world making and serves a powerful symbolic function. In terms of current discussions, it is worth

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underlining the role being played by Nicolla Perullo’s text *Taste as Experience. The Philosophy and Aesthetics of Food* (2016) as primary reference work. Perullo’s text dialogues with the whole philosophical tradition from an expanded version of Korsmeyer’s arguments to contemporary gustatory aesthetics. As explained on the back cover, Perullo’s last book:

puts the pleasure of food at the center of human experience. It shows how the sense of taste informs our preferences for and relationship to nature, pushes us toward ethical practices of consumption, and impresses upon us the importance of aesthetics. Eating is often dismissed as a necessary aspect of survival, and our personal enjoyment of food is considered a quirk. Nicola Perullo sees food as the only portion of the world we take in on a daily basis, constituting our first and most significant encounter with the earth. For Perullo, taste is value and wisdom. It cannot be reduced to mere chemical or cultural factors but embodies the quality and quantity of our earthly experience.

But Perullo does not recognize that the powerful philosophical and aesthetic true origin of all these questions is to be found in Jean-Anthelme Brillat–Savarin’s *The Physiology of Taste (Physiologie du goût, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante; ouvrage théorique, historique et à l’ordre du jour, dédié aux Gastronomes parisiens, par un professeur, membre de plusieurs sociétés littéraires et savants*, 1825), and in my view this is the originary text of contemporary gustatory aesthetics. Obviously, Perullo recognizes Brillat–Savarin’s work as being the “first” one dedicated to a kind of *gustatory aesthetics* “avant la lettre”, but he underestimates his contributions due to what is, in my view, an over-emphasis on a few arguments with respect to which Brillat–Savarin remained bound by his time and place (post-revolutionary, Napoleonic Paris), as well as by his social class, which was at the time a kind of “socially guiltless” bourgeoisie, as Roland Barthes has put it (Barthes 1975, p. 8). Barthes was an inveterate reader of Savarin, and wrote an Introduction in the form of a glossary to the 1975 edition of *The Physiology of Taste*.

In the same way as, even while recognizing it, we do not judge Hegel’s aesthetics because of its Eurocentrism or its Germanophilia, we need to liberate Brillat–Savarin from the burden of his epoch and re-establish the

place of his contributions in the history of aesthetics. Thus, in claiming that *The Physiology of Taste* is the originary text of gustatory aesthetics, I am using the term “origin” not only in the archaeological sense, but also to designate the foundational conceptual apparatus of gustatory aesthetic discourse. In this sense, I will propose a philosophical vindication of Brillat-Savarin’s text, in the way that Michel Onfray (in his 1995 *La raison gourmande*, Carolyn Korsmeyer (in her above mentioned *Making Sense of Taste*) and especially Roland Barthes (in the also above mentioned Introduction) have already done. To the contributions that they recognize in Brillat-Savarin’s work, I will add ten issues that, in my view, underlie not only gustatory aesthetics, but aesthetics in the largest sense of the term and even philosophy in general.

2. The Use of Sub-Genres in Philosophical Writing

If we consider philosophical writing as a genre, we can say that Brillat-Savarin uses sub-genres proper to the philosophical tradition: aphorisms, a dialogue, and meditations.

Certainly, *The Physiology of Taste* opens with a list of thirty aphorisms (Brillat-Savarin 2009 [1825], pp. 15-16), written in the manner of the philosophical tradition of the Pre-Socratics and Voltaire (whom Brillat-Savarin greatly admired) and anticipating what Nietzsche would do a short time later. Some of these aphorisms have enjoyed particular fame, such as:

I. The Universe is nothing without the things that live in it, and everything that lives, eats. (L’Univers n’est rien que par la vie, et tout ce qui vit se nourrit.)

Animals feed themselves; men eat; but only wise men know the art of eating. (Les animaux se repaissent; l’homme mange; l’homme d’esprit seul sait manger.)

[The well-known] Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are. (Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai qui tu es.)

Good living (*gourmandise*) is an act of intelligence, by which we choose things which have an agreeable taste rather than those which do not. (La gourmandise est un acte de notre jugement, par lequel nous accordons la préférence aux choses qui sont agréables au goût sur celles qui n’ont pas cette qualité.)

These aphorisms are followed by a brief dialogue between Brillat-Savarin and a friend, which is devoted to the need for developing a discourse about gastronomy and the possible objections that such a project could provoke. Thereafter, the text is constructed around thirty *meditations*, whose order I array into four groups, it being understood that there are intersections among them:

1. Meditations on the aesthetics on nonmetaphorical use of taste, among which *Meditation* I: «On the Senses » («Des sens») and *Meditation* II: «On Taste» («Du goût»), are particularly notable.
2. Meditations on aesthetics of gastronomy. Particularly notable are *Meditation* III : «On Gastronomy » («De la gastronomie»), *Meditation* XII: «On Gourmands » («Des gourmands») and *Meditation* XI: «On the Pleasures of the Table» («Du plaisir à table»)
3. Meditations on the physiology of taste. Particularly notable are *Meditation* XX: «On the Influence of Diet» («De la influence de la diète sur le repos, le sommeil et les songes») and *Meditation* XXVI: «On Death» («De la mort»)
4. Meditations devoted to cooking, among which *Meditation* XXVII: «Philosophical History of Cooking» («Histoire philosophique de la cuisine») is particularly notable.

In what follows, I provide a list that shows the distribution of the meditations into the four groups and that can serve as reading guide.

Distribution of the Meditations in The Physiology of Taste

1. *Aesthetics on nonmetaphorical use of taste*
 - Meditation I «On the Senses» («Des sens»), pp. 31-43
 - Meditation II «On Taste» («Du goût»), pp. 44-58
 - Meditation X «The End of the World» («Sur la fin du monde»), pp. 152-154
2. *Aesthetics of gastronomy*
 - Meditation III «On Gastronomy» («De la gastronomie»), pp. 59-65

- Meditation IV «On Appetite» («De l'appétit»), pp. 67-73
- Meditation V (Section I) «On Food in General» («Des aliments en général»), pp. 74-83
- Meditation XI «On Gourmandism» («De la gourmandise»), pp. 155-164
- Meditation XII «On Gourmands» («Des gourmands»), pp. 167-178
- Meditation XIII «On Gastronomical Tests» («Éprouvettes gastronomiques»), pp. 182-186
- Meditation XIV «On the Pleasures of the Table» («Du plaisir à table»), pp. 188-193
- Meditation XV «On Hunting-Lucheons» («Des haltes de chasse»), pp. 203-207
- Meditation XXIX «Classical Gourmandism in Action» («La gourmandise classique mise en action»), pp. 223-234
- Meditation XXX «Bouquet» («Bouquet»), pp. 337-343

3. *Aesthetics on the physiology of taste*

- Meditation VIII «On Thirst» («De la soif»), pp. 142-147
- Meditation XVI «On Digestion» («De la digestion»), pp. 208-215
- Meditation XVII «On Rest» («Du repos»), pp. 283-306
- Meditation XVIII «On Sleep» («Du sommeil»), pp. 220-222
- Meditation XIX «On Dreams» («Des rêves»), pp. 223-232
- Meditation XX «On the Influence of Diet» («De la influence de la diète sur le repos, le sommeil et les songes»), pp. 235-239
- Meditation XXI «On Obesity» («De l'obésité»), pp. 241-250
- Meditation XXII «On the Treatment of Obesity» («Traitement préservatif ou curatif de l'obésité»), pp. 252-261
- Meditation XXIII «On Thinness» («De la maigreur»), pp. 264-268
- Meditation XXIV «On Fasting» («Du jeûne»), pp. 269-274
- Meditation XXV «On Exhaustion» («De l'épuisement»), pp. 275-277
- Meditation XXVI «On Death» («De la mort»), pp. 279-282

4. *Cooking*

- Meditation VI «On Food in General: Special Foods» («Spécialités»), p. 84

- Meditation VII «Theory of Frying» («Théorie de la friture»), pp. 136-140
- Meditation IX «On Drinks» («Des boissons»), pp. 148-151
- Meditation XXVII «Philosophical History of Cooking» («Histoire philosophique de la cuisine»), pp. 283-306
- Meditation XXVIII «On Restaurateurs», pp. 313-321

The book ends with thirty short texts called *varieties* (*variétés*, Brillat-Savarin 2009 [1825], pp. 350-420) on highly diverse subjects related to recipes or gastronomic reflections. In my view, it is likely that Brillat-Savarin's use of this designation is an allusion to Paris's *Théâtre des Variétés*, which was founded by Marguerite Brunet, known as Mademoiselle Montansier, and which was much in vogue at the time when *The Physiology of Taste* was being written.

3. References to Key Philosophical Concepts

Brillat-Savarin makes regular reference to traditional philosophical concepts. At times, he does so ironically; at times, in an appropriative or anticipatory manner.

3.1. ***Ironic references***

- As we have seen, Brillat-Savarin places the central part of his text under the heading “Meditations” (*Méditations*) in an ironic reference to Descartes. In my view, the question that underlies this (in the manner of a Copernican turn), is the following: “If Descartes – who is said to have initiated reflection on the modern subject in philosophy – meditated on what is most strictly divine, devoting his meditations to trying to demonstrate the existence of God and the soul, then why not meditate on what is the most strictly human?”
- Brillat-Savarin used the Kantian term *transcendent* in the work's subtitle, which is, it will be recalled, “*ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante*”. For unknown reasons, the first English edition (1859, translated by Fayette Robinson) already changed “transcendent” into “transcendental”, thus removing some of the irony, which –as I see it–

signaled that the discourse of gastronomy would transcend the avatars of the time.

- Finally, Brillat-Savarin also used the Kantian term “Prolegomena” with a certain sarcasm: namely, in the sub-title to the aphorisms, which runs: “To serve as Prolegomena to his work and eternal basis to the science” (“Pour servir de prolegomènes à son ouvrage et de base éternelle à la science.”). It should be recalled that the title of Kant’s work is *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that Can Present Itself as a Science*.

3.2. Appropriative or Anticipatory References

These occur in the following ways.

- Philosophical attention to taste in its nonmetaphorical use, following Voltaire in the part [written by him] of the entry “Goût” in Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*. It should be noted that the part written by Voltaire dates from 1757. Two parts of the article were previously written by, respectively, Louis de Jaucourt –who provided the text a physiological perspective– and Montesquieu, who died before finishing his part. It is useful to recall once more that Brillat-Savarin was a fervent admirer of Voltaire and that the four authors tried to salvage taste from the tongue, the palate and the other senses considered by the philosophical tradition as “lower” senses: which include also the olfactory and the tactile.
- The positivist dimension of the physiology of taste, following Jaucourt and anticipating the scientific account of certain aesthetic phenomena. It should be noted that, as part of the reaction against Romanticism, physiology was greatly in vogue in the culture of the time. Thus, it is certainly no accident that Balzac, a great admirer of Brillat-Savarin, would write his *The Physiology of Marriage* (*Physiologie du mariage*) in 1829 and would provide it as an appendix to the third edition of *The Physiology of Taste*, just as he had done already the previous year with respect to his *Treaty of Exciting Modern* (*Traité des excitants modernes*) and the second (1839) edition of Brillat-Savarin’s work.

- The treatment of taste as faculty of discernment and reflection. In its nonmetaphorical use, as already noted, following Voltaire; in its metaphorical use, following Hume and Kant. It should be noted that Brillat-Savarin read English and German (as well as Italian and Spanish) with ease, and that, as can be seen in the text, he knew well and appreciated both *Of the Standart of Taste* and the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, and, as far as possible, he appropriated them with respect to the nonmetaphorical use of taste.
- The defence of sentient perspicacity as a social and philosophical virtue, following Hume.
- The identification of disinterestedness as a fundamental aesthetic category, following Kant. This is the deep sense of the context that Brillat-Savarin gives to the term *esprit* in the above-cited *Aphorism II*: “Animals feed themselves; men eat; but only wise men know the art of eating” (“Les animaux se repaissent; l’homme mange; l’homme d’esprit seul sait manger”). Thus “knowing how to eat” –which is the faculty at which the innovative term *gourmandise* aims– “is an act of intelligence, by which we choose things which have an agreeable taste rather than those which do not” (“Est un acte de notre jugement, par lequel nous accordons la préférence aux choses qui sont agréables au goût sur celles qui n’ont pas cette qualité”) and goes beyond the mere necessity of nutrition. As an act of *esprit* that is comprehensible from the point of view of disinterestedness, *gourmandise* is distinguished from voracity and gluttony and becomes a social quality (see *Meditation III*).

Of course, it is far more complicated to establish aesthetic disinterestedness with respect to a gastronomic object than with respect to the aesthetic references of Kant’s reflections, but Brillat-Savarin did not shun the challenge, illuminating it in an attempt to maintain a balance between an Aristotelian functionalism of a pre-Darwinian stripe and an autonomism of a Kantian stripe. Thus, he argued that the two functions necessary for the continuation of the individual and the species –namely, eating and sexual reproduction– can be overcome from the point of view of *esprit* and open up a domain

of freedom going from the real to the possible. Thus, reproductive copulation is not the same thing as sex between two free and equal persons, just as eating to survive is not the same thing as eating to realize an exercise of judgment, of spiritual pleasure and conviviality, even if inevitably, at least in the second case, there is a continuum between the biological function and the aesthetic disinterestedness: a continuum that is converted into a tension of maximum philosophical interest by Brillat-Savarin. Pleasure occupies a privileged place in this tension in the *Aphorism V*:

V. The Creator, while forcing men to eat in order to live, tempts him to do so with appetite and then rewards him with pleasure.
(Le créateur, en obligeant l'homme à manger pour vivre, l'y invite par l'appétit, et l'en récompense par le plaisir)

It must be said that the author is far more explicit about disinterestedness referring to the sense of taste than about that which refers to the *genetic sense* or the sixth sense, the term that he uses to designate the erotic sense, even if mentioning it is surprising in the context of his time and perhaps represents one of the reasons why the text was published anonymously.

- The anticipation of the Hegelian understanding of aesthetics as philosophy of art, given that Brillat-Savarin does aesthetics as philosophy of gastronomy. In the same way, he anticipates the Hegelian understanding of the philosophy of art as a science.
- The appropriation of conviviality as a constituent of the political and public sphere, following the utopian socialist François Marie Charles Fourier (who was Brillat-Savarin's brother-in-law). For Brillat-Savarin, of course, the table was an ideal place for conviviality as the pleasure of eating well together and practicing the communal exercise of conversation (see Barthes 1975, p. 30). In fact, for Brillat-Savarin the conviviality that comes into being at the table is a symptom of the passage from the *Ancien Régime* to the *Nouveau Régime*:

Gourmandise is one of the principle bonds of society. It gradually extends that spirit of conviviality, which every day unites

different professions, mingles them together, and diminishes the angles of conviviality. (La gourmandise est un des principaux liens de la société; c'est elle qui étend graduellement cet esprit de convivialité qui réunit chaque jour les divers états, les fonde en un seul tout, anime la conversation, et adoucit les angles de la inégalité conventionnelle). (*Meditation XI*, p.160)

- To conclude with the non-ironic references, it could be said that the claim of conviviality constitutes a variation of “fraternité” and of the Kantian *sensus communis*; disinterestedness, a variation of “liberté”; and the ethological dimension of nutrition, a variation of “égalité”.

4. The Creation of a Philosophical Field

Meditation III is titled “On Gastronomy” (“De la gastronomie”) and, in my view, should be considered the most fundamental text of *The Physiology of Taste*, given that it is the place where Brillat-Savarin establishes the discipline of gastronomy. Even if he does so by using the habitual procedure of recuperating ancient nomenclature,

The use of the Greek Word *gastronomy* has been revived: it sounded sweetly in our French ears, and although barely understood is it but necessary to pronounce it to bring a smile of good fellowship to every face. (On a ressuscité du grec le mot de *gastronomie* ; il a paru doux aux oreilles françaises. Et, quoiqu'à peine compris, il a suffi de le prononcer pour porter sur toutes les physionomies le sourire de l'hilarité). (*Meditation XXVII*, p. 305)

he does it in a completely innovative and even undisciplined way by the standards of the traditional protocols of the disciplinary establishment, to use Rancière's terms. For Brillat-Savarin, gastronomy is an “undisciplined” field, which is proper to philosophy and especially to aesthetics. Thus, as Roland Barthes notes, Brillat-Savarin creates the field of gastronomy with a hybrid, encyclopaedic spirit combining science, philosophy and aesthetics. Still more decisively: Brillat-Savarin generates a vocabulary and an ensemble of arguments that is fruitful for the future of taste, not only (or even fundamentally) in its metaphorical sense, but also in this sense.

Barthes's reflections are highly pertinent and give renewed significance to the definition of gastronomy that Brillat-Savarin proposes:

BS perfectly understood that as a subject of discourse, food was a sort of grid (or topic, in the words of classical rhetoric), through which one could successfully pass all the sciences that we today call social and human. His book tends toward the encyclopaedic, even if he only outlined it vaguely. In other words, discourse is empowered to attack food from several angles: it is, in short, a total social fact around which a variety of metalanguages can be gathered: physiology, chemistry, geography, history, economics, sociology, and politics (today, we could add symbolism). For BS, it is this encyclopaedism – this “humanism” – which covers the term gastronomy: “Gastronomy is the knowledge of everything related to man in so far as he nourishes himself”. This scientific opening clearly corresponds to what BS himself was, in his own life: an essentially polymorphous subject – jurist, diplomat, musician, man of the world, well known both abroad and in the provinces; food was not a mania for him, but rather a sort of universal operator of discourse. (Barthes 1975, p. 32)

Still quoting Barthes, we could say that Brillat-Savarin analyzes cooking, a “universal operator of discourse” (“opérateur universel du discours”), “as a phonetician would do with vocality”, this is to say, “he acts as a linguist”, and he does this with a “neologistic discourse” (Barthes 1975, p. 18), generating a new vocabulary and argumentation. In fact, Brillat-Savarin “desires the words, in their materiality itself,” and his French language – or tongue (*langue*) – “is written with gourmand writing: gourmand of the words that it handles and of the food to which it refers” (Barthes 1975, p. 18).

5. The Claim for a Link between Desire, Absence and Writing

Roland Barthes begins his text by saying that “the taste implies philosophy of nothing”, (Barthes 1975, p. 7). But further on he will say that this has to do, more precisely, with desire:

Whenever I speak of food, I am sending linguistics signs which refer to a particular aliment or to an alimentary quality. The implications

of this common situation are poorly understood when the intended object of my utterance is a desirable object. This is clearly the case with the *Physiology of Taste*. BS speaks and I desire that about which he speaks (especially if I have an appetite). Because the desire it arouses is an apparently simple one, the gastronomic utterance presents the power of language in all its ambiguity: the sign calls forth the delights of its referent at the very moment it traces its absence. Language creates and excludes. Hence, the gastronomic style raises for us a whole series of questions: what does it mean to represent? To figure? To project? To say something? What does it mean to desire? What does it mean to desire and to speak at the same time? (Barthes 1975, pp. 24-5)

Whatever the response to these questions will be, and still speaking with Barthes,

BS's book is, from beginning to end, a book about what is properly human, because it is desire (in so far as it is spoken) which distinguishes man. (Barthes 1975, p. 9)

Gastronomic discourse, and with it gastronomic criticism, was born as writing that connotes desire and absence and thereby refers to what is strictly human. We would have to wait for the texts on photography of Barthes himself for discourse on visual arts to do the same.

6. The Claim of Philosophical Proximity between the Physical Tongue, the Palate and Language

In French, *palais* signifies both *palate* and *palace*, thus creating a suggestive continuum between the private and the public, between the recondite and the sumptuous. But this is just a play on words, since the etymologies of the two significations are different: *palatum* in the first case, *palatium* in the second.

From the philosophical standpoint, it does indeed turn out to be extremely compromising – and this is what Barthes found so seductive in his reading of Savarin – to attend to the fact that the *tongue* (la *langue*) is at once the organ of sensing taste and that of articulating sounds for the purposes of speech, just as, by extension, a tongue is a language, i.e. a system

of oral or written expression used by a group of people that is designated as a linguistic community. Along with Barthes, I regard as indispensable Brillat-Savarin's vindication of physicality, orality and the reviled senses for the philosophical tradition, as well as of the aesthetic synesthesia that can be produced from the palate: the concavity of ingestion and, at the same time, the articulator of the sounds of thought.

7. The Claim for the Centrality of the Body in Philosophical Accounts

In claiming for gastronomy, tongue and palate the status of a new focus of philosophical interest, Brillat-Savarin gave voice to the body in this scene. The latter had been rendered mute since the first emergence of Neo-Platonic philosophy, remaining so in Christian philosophy and the Cartesian derivatives of both. It took Foucault tremendous labors and efforts to salvage the body as the “other” of philosophy. For Brillat-Savarin, it appears to have been easy, although no one paid any attention to him, and well more than a century would pass before Maurice Merleau-Ponty would open the Pandora's box that has led to the centrality of the body in contemporary philosophy. Despite Brillat-Savarin's extremely interesting proposal concerning the link between the sense of taste and the genetic-sexual sense, about which we have already spoken in section 2.2, the work achieved by Brillat-Savarin does not appear in Foucault's genealogies. Barthes understood that this link-heightened taste not only as *inner sense*, but also as the privileged locus for the generation of synesthesia, an aspect that has been widely treated by contemporary philosophy and psychologies based on the centrality of the body (recently pointed as *embodiment*), especially those of an Enactivist stripe (see Noë and Hurley 2003; Noë 2016).

8. The Recuperation of the Platonic Link between Desire, the Philosophical Symposium, Eros and Pleasure

As already indicated, *The Physiology of Taste* brought about a resolute recuperation of hedonism, which had been absent from Neo-Platonic, Christian and Cartesian philosophy, and was first salvaged by British aesthetic

empiricism.

Brillat-Savarin took up this work of recuperation again and focused it upon gastronomy, choosing as the culminating moment *le plaisir à table*, which features in *Meditation XIV* and which adduces a highly sophisticated correlate to pleasure: boredom. Thus, according to *Aphorism VIII*: “The table is the only place where a man is never bored for the first our” (“La table est le seul endroit où l’on ne s’ennuie jamais pendant la première heure”), since this has to do with the surprise produced as much by the food as by the novelty of the conversation, which is the opposite of boredom. As in Plato’s *Symposium*, the banquet is the place for something that appears all of a sudden, it is the locus of taste, a faculty that is, according to Barthes, “Oral as language, libidinal as Eros” (Barthes 1975, p. 19).

9. Anonymity

Brillat-Savarin did not sign his text. As indicated above, this could be due to the fact that –in an extraordinary move for his times– he placed the *genetic sense* in the foreground of what is human and connected it to pleasure. But, in my view, there is also a second reason that is equally groundbreaking. This anonymity could indicate an ironic taking-of-distance with respect to the ideas of genius and of authorship that were so hegemonic in the late Romanticism by which the author was surrounded and that he combatted with his scientist, materialistic and hedonistic approach to the aesthetics of gastronomy.

10. The Identification of the Diner’s Role as a Constitutive Element of Gastronomic Creativity

The Physiology of Taste greatly foreshadows a philosophy of creativity that will not be developed until the last decades of the 20th century; namely, that which attributes a role as creative agent to the audience and gives this as much emphasis as the creative role of the producer. It is certain that for Brillat-Savarin gastronomic practice merely begins in the kitchen, since it is only fully realized in tasting and in conversation. The author thus democratizes the notion of creativity –which was current both at the time and much later– since, by virtue of this role attributed to the diner,

we can all be creative. With this perspective, the author thus anticipated the aesthetics of reception and relational artistic practices, and also, for the first time, related performative and ephemeral practices.

II. The First Story of the Restaurant as Gastronomic Institution: A Place of Democratization of an Aesthetic Practice

In keeping with the foregoing, Brillat-Savarin also develops reflections on the institution proper to gastronomy. During the revolutionary era in Paris, cooks left the palace and opened urban places where the bourgeoisie –from the highest to the most modes – could eat in the same way as until then only royals could have done. The restaurant was born in the shadow of the museum and the zoo, and the three institutions responded to a spirit of democratization: a scientific and –especially in the last two cases– encyclopaedic spirit, which was not without traces of the Eurocentrism that was proper to the epoch. Thus, Brillat-Savarin comments:

The encouragement of this new profession, which spread from France all over Europe, is extremely advantageous to everyone, and of great scientific importance. (L'adoption des restaurateurs, qui de France a fait le tour de l'Europe, est d'un avantage extrême pour tous les citoyens, et d'une grande importance pour la science). (*Meditation XVIII*, p. 154)

For the first time, the author of *The Physiology of Taste* produced reflections on the restaurant as an institution (to which he devoted all of *Meditation XVIII: Des restaurateurs*), and he was thus a pioneer in the field of sociological and political reflection on artistic institutions and what has since given rise to institutional criticism.

12. Conclusion

Brillat-Savarin was a contemporary of Hegel and Goethe. His book *The Physiology of Taste* shares certain topics with both of the latter and, as displayed in the ten preceding points, it represents a philosophical account

worthy of consideration alongside them in histories of aesthetics. This paper calls for such an inclusion of Brillat-Savarin, as well as for the contemporary recuperation of these points, which prove to be especially fruitful, in a general sense, in light of current debates about Enactivism, about the cognitive dimension of sentient thinking, about the bounds between arts and sciences, about the reflection on creativity and their institutions, and the relation between the aesthetic, the construction of the public sphere and politics. In a more specific sense, the questions broached prove to be indispensable to the founding of gustatory aesthetics as an undisciplined discipline (see Rancière 2008).

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Marginal Attention and the Aesthetic Effect of Inconspicuous Art^{*}

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ABSTRACT. This article discusses the role of faint or peripheral forms of attention in appreciating subdued forms of art (Munro 1957), which function as an accompaniment to activities that are not driven by an aesthetic urge. My main claim is that we should leave open the possibility that forms of art that do not impose themselves as such upon the observers may give rise to an aesthetic effect in the long run. In support of this claim I first provide four criteria for differentiating between several types of attentional processes, namely selectivity, duration, intensity and agency. Based on these criteria I then draw the spectrum of attention phenomena, focusing particularly on the place of marginal attention within this framework. Finally, I analyze the conditions under which forms of art to which we initially pay only marginal attention are liable to elicit an aesthetic response.

I. Introduction

It is well established that attention phenomena and aesthetic appreciation that we associate with the arts share a common fate deeply rooted in the tradition of aesthetics and philosophy of art. Authors such as Wolff (1738/1756, pp. 221-222), Lessing (1767-1769/1869, pp. 327-328) and Beardsley (1958/1981, pp. 527-528), to name but a few, famously argued that works of art arrest our attention and give us a privileged access to meaningful properties of the world by eliminating background noise and other inconvenient distractors pervading our everyday environment. Clearly by “attention” they mean, selective or focused attention. But art didn’t always have

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the function to be maintained within selective focus, much less to evoke aesthetic feelings. My aim here is to shed light on the relevance of faint or peripheral forms of attention for aesthetic appreciation and the need to reconsider in this light the theories available in philosophical aesthetics.

First of all, there are numerous settings in which art was merely meant to provide the backdrop for activities that were not driven by an aesthetic urge. Consider, for instance, a painting that is nothing but as a piece of furniture designed to cover bare surfaces in a seventeenth-century bourgeois Dutch home (Zumthor 1959/1994, p. 195). The main claim of this paper is that we should leave open the possibility that forms of art that do not necessarily impose themselves as such upon the observers may have an aesthetic effect in the long run. In other words, there may be forms of art which do not rely primarily on a definite sensorial or expressive “mode of presentation” (Munro 1941/1956, pp. 163-166) in order to make themselves salient but which succeed nevertheless in creating an aesthetic effect when experienced regularly. It is Thomas Munro, especially known as the founder of the American Society For Aesthetics, who advances the idea that works of art usually have “modes of presentation” or differing degrees of salience addressing specific senses: thus, painting and sculpture specialize primarily in visual presentation, music in auditory presentation as well as literature, opera in both visual and auditory presentation and so on and so forth. Not every form of art, though, has perceptual salience. Some of them are ‘inconspicuous’, as Munro (1957, p. 308-309) calls them, and what classifies them as such is a psychological category, namely a particular of mode of attending, diffused or marginal. Art is understood here in a broad, loose sense, as the product of organizing various sensuous materials into a relatively coherent whole. We would therefore identify this non-established type of art not by a particular type of content designed to silence the senses (as with Cage’s 4’33”) but by the attentional process correlated with it. The methodological proposal advanced by Munro is that one should turn to psychological categories that reflect modes of human experience in order to classify the materials of art (Munro 1941/1956, p. 165). How could then such forms of inconspicuous art trigger an aesthetic experience? This also raises the question of whether faint or peripheral forms of attention are relevant for aesthetic appreciation, challenging most of the theories available in philosophical aesthetics on the topic.

The aim of this paper is to give an account of this marginal attention and of the conditions under which it can give rise to aesthetic experience.

In order to address these questions, I will start by providing four criteria for differentiating between several types of attentional processes, namely selectivity, duration, intensity and agency. These criteria concern some geographical issues related to the reach of attention, its temporal span, qualitative feel and the presence of subjective control. Secondly, I will focus on the range of attention phenomena with varying intensity and on the phenomenological flavor that accompanies them. Where does attention begin and where does it end? Is there a way to settle the bounds of attention? Between the lack of attention (or inattention) and the focused or selective attention there is a whole range of intermediate processes that need to be pointed out. More specifically, the position of marginal attention within this hierarchy and its relation to aesthetic experience, that is my main concern here, will be given a thorough analysis.

2. Criteria for Differentiating Attentional Processes

The first and less contested characteristic of attention is no doubt its selectivity. Attention is known to have a limited capacity to process information; not all incoming data can reach its focus; as for the exact length of this focus there is no common agreement: the focus of attention has been compared altogether to a spotlight (Husserl 1893-1912/2009, pp. 81-82), a lantern (Gopnik 2010, p. 125) and a landscape (Datta et al. 2009, p. 1044; Block 2010, pp. 44-45), whose size could possibly be adjusted at will (Carrasco 2014, p. 184), thus presenting a truly irregular geographical span. When selectivity is poor, incoming information is coarse grained and the attended region is larger. This criterion helps, for instance, in distinguishing between distributed and focused (i.e. selective) attention, two processes that differ with respect to the attended content, that is, how much of the stimuli are attended to (Nanay 2016, p. 22) and with respect to the resolution or granularity of the attended content, that is, to what extent we can discriminate various entities composing this attended content. As mentioned in the introduction, fine art was generally thought to elicit focused attention, selecting either the fine-grained properties of artistic compositions or art products as coherent wholes.

Secondly, duration or temporal span is a criterion for distinguishing sustained from transient forms of attention. Thus, endogenous attention, controlled by top-down processes, is deployed at a late level of processing and can be sustained “for as long as is needed to perform a task” (Carrasco 2014, p. 185). Endogenous, sustained attention may be at work in aesthetic experiences defined in terms of a contemplative mode although the idea of performing any task whatsoever could be problematic here if we were to associate contemplation with a disinterested stance. On the other hand, exogenous attention, controlled by external stimuli, rises and decays quickly, peaking at early levels of processing and occurring “even when the cues are known to be uninformative and irrelevant and when they impair performance” (Carrasco 2014, p. 185). The pendulum-beat of a clock, for instance, may briefly arrest attention every now and then. Likewise, objects or entities that are strikingly beautiful or ugly may give rise to “aesthetic distraction”, that is, following Höfel and Jacobsen (2007, p. 21), “involuntarily switching attention towards aesthetic processing of an entity”. Involuntary, transient attention may be subsequently complemented by sustained attention.

Another characteristic is that attention comes in varying degrees, expressed at the subjective level by intensity variations. In this regard, attentional engagement with stimuli would be high, mid-range, low etc.; one can pay more or less attention to an object or to a location and this variation of intensity is liable to make a phenomenological difference, which means that the activity of attending will modify our overall experience by reason of its force.

Finally, agency is the last property of attention that I would like to mention here. Attention can be under voluntary control when a stimulus becomes interesting in association with some external goal, or on the contrary, rise involuntarily, as a consequence of the stimulation itself, without relation to anything else. The concept of “disinterested attention” (Nanay 2016, p. 20) was particularly significant in the aesthetic debates, where disinterestedness referred to an attitude of total engagement with an object or configuration of forms, free of self-interest (Maquet 1986, p. 46). This attitude is close to passive contemplation but the question then arises as to whether one can hold a disinterested stance while maintaining sustained attention, knowing that higher-order thoughts, inevitably self-

relevant, must at some point come into play (Jacobsen 2010, p. 253).

To sum up, the criteria roughly sketched in this section, namely, selectivity, duration, intensity and agency allow us to have a better understanding of the spectrum of attention phenomena, to which I shall now turn.

3. The Spectrum of Attention Phenomena

3.1. Preattentive Processing

In order to grasp the multi-level assessment of attention phenomena I propose to think of them as a spectrum. Thus, the first phenomenon that lies at the bottom of the spectrum – or rather operates outside of it – is *preattentive processing*. The standard definition given par Ulric Neisser in the first manual of cognitive psychology describes preattentive processes as automatic, global and holistic, producing the units to which attention may be directed subsequently in a more focused way (Neisser 1966, pp. 86-89, 92-93, 301-304; Neisser 1976, p. 18). In other words, preattentive processes help in crudely structuring the perceptual environment. They have also been reframed in terms of anticipatory schemas embedded in our cognitive systems (Neisser 1976, pp. 54-55, 57, 60-62, 94-95), which allow taking on information of a certain sort and ignoring the rest. Furthermore, preattentive processing is a preliminary stage to further processing but not yet a full-blown attentive process; we can be sensitive to information outside the current original focus of attention but even though some features or global properties of the environment are detected in this preliminary stage, they have to be passed on to subsequent stages of processing in order to be identified as parts of “fleshed out” perceptual objects. For instance, an absentminded person can walk along a path without noticing the details and still not bump into obstacles that she may come across. Another characteristic mentioned by Neisser is that preattentive processes affect only the immediate present and they could hardly give rise to perceptual learning, which is a capacity to distinguish progressively more fine-grained aspects of the perceptual environment. Finally, it appears that preattentive processes don’t provide emotional content either (Neisser 1966, 102-103) and this particular property will be significant when engaging in an aesthetic

debate.

3.2. *The Mere Exposure Effect and Perceptual Fluency*

Nevertheless, information analyzed without focal attention is not necessarily lost. Consider next the *mere exposure effect*, which refers to those situations in which repeated exposure to indeterminate stimuli generates enhanced affect ratings of those stimuli. Repeated exposure to different stimuli helps preserve them in long-term, implicit memory thus preventing them from disappearing unnoticed for good. Like preattentive processes, the mere exposure effect is a passive automatic process, “fleetingly conscious”, and it can give rise to perceptual fluency or ease of processing (Reber et al. 2004, p. 364). This means that the perceptual encoding processes involving previously encountered stimuli will be facilitated due to the effect of habituation or familiarity that is created through repeated exposure. The effect has also been related to perceptual implicit learning, a process through which we acquire the ability to discriminate different stimuli without being aware of doing so: for instance, the ability to detect pitch relations and regularities can be acquired through mere exposure to the musical system of a culture (Tillman et al. 2011, p. 378).

It is well known that when an object (property, scene etc.) is integrated in the usual routine of performing certain acts, we only allocate it diminished attention, if any. A good illustration of the effect of habit upon attention is given by James, who remembers how, “on revisiting Paris after ten years of absence, and, finding himself in the street in which for one winter he had attended school, he lost himself in a brown study, from which he was awakened by finding himself upon the stairs which led to the apartment in a house many streets away in which he had lived during that earlier time, and to which his steps from the school had then habitually led” (James 1890, pp. 114-115). As this passage suggests, objects or scenes lurking in the background of our awareness may subsequently reach the center of focused attention when they cease to be available, that is, when they cease to be part and parcel of perceptual habits (Nanay 2015, pp. 113-114).

As mentioned above, mere exposure to stimuli entails developing preferences for them. The effect has been observed both for mere exposure

to representations of artworks belonging to canon of art (Cutting 2006, p. 184) and for stimuli we encounter in everyday life. If this effect is sufficiently robust, then even objects or scenes to which we only dimly pay attention to could end up progressively building up aesthetic experiences. The problem is that, in everyday situations, we are exposed to a profusion of sensory impressions (the noises of the humming fridge, the traffic lights etc.); how would we know which ones are liable to give rise subsequently to aesthetic experiences? Unless there is a hidden import or value that is susceptible, hypothetically at least, of becoming salient at a later time, the vast majority of the impressions that the environment offers will be discarded (Meskin et al. 2013, p. 146).

3.3. *Psychic Overtones*

With the notions of *fringe of consciousness* and *psychic overtone* we move towards conscious phenomena that have a qualitative feel. Unlike preattentive processes, fringe experience does contain an affective component. In this particular case, psychic overtone consists of a dim awareness of relations and objects that we gain by mere acquaintance (i.e. bare impression) and which comes with, to quote William James, a “feeling of harmony or discord” that accompanies our thoughts (James 1890, pp. 260-261, Mangan 2014, p. 156). William James describes overtones in music as follows: “different instruments give the same note, but each in a different voice, because each gives more than that note, namely, various upper harmonics of it which differ from one instrument to another. They are not separately heard by the ear; they blend with the fundamental note, and suffuse it, and alter it” (James 1890, pp. 258-259). Using this musical comparison of the auditory perception of harmonics, which is always contextual, he goes on to call “psychic overtone”, “suffusion”, “halo” or “fringe” “the influence of a faint brain process upon our thought, as it makes it aware of relations and objects but dimly perceived” (p. 259). He illustrates fringe experiences with an example from word comprehension in the process of uttering a phrase:

No word in an understood sentence comes to consciousness as a mere noise. We feel its meaning as it passes; and although our object differs from one moment to another as to its verbal kernel or nucleus,

yet it is similar throughout the entire segment of the stream. The same object is known everywhere, now from the point of view [...] of this word, now from the point of view of that (James 1890, pp. 281-282).

The same process holds true for a sequence of fugitive visual impressions: “illuminate a drawing by electric sparks separated by considerable intervals, and after the first, and often after the second and third spark, hardly anything will be recognized. But the confused image is held fast in memory; each successive illumination completes it; and so at last we attain to a clearer perception” (pp. 440-441).¹ What James seems to describe here is the temporal dynamics of making a sensation or idea distinct (a phrase to be understood, a tone to be heard, an image to be recognized etc.) through a series of inward and outward activities: recollection, perceptual expectations as well as immediate perceptual experiences concur in giving shape to fringe experiences.

4. Marginal Attention

Now, what is the relation of these psychological phenomena to *marginal attention*? In line with the Jamesian approach to fringe experiences, marginal attention concerns the qualitative feel of cognitive processing of stimuli (i.e. dim or faint awareness) irrespective of the sensorial content towards which this processing is oriented. As its name implies, marginal attention deals with coarse-grained, vaguely sensed information located away from the center of the receptive fields and it is the exact opposite of the state of deep absorption and concentration with which we usually associate focused attention. It is to be distinguished from multifocal, or distributed attention (Nanay 2016, pp. 22), which is mainly concerned by quantitative rather than qualitative issues, namely the amount of sensorial content

¹ The explanation continues as follows: “We hear a sound in which, from certain associations, we suspect a certain overtone; the next thing is to recall the overtone in memory; and finally we catch it in the sound we hear; the impression awakens the memory-image, which again more or less completely melts with the impression itself. In this way every idea takes a certain time to penetrate to the focus of consciousness. And during this time we always find in ourselves the peculiar feeling of attention. [...] The phenomena show that an adaptation of attention to the impression takes place” (James, 1890, pp. 440-441).

(number of objects, properties etc.) which can enter the focus of attention. For instance, when attending an opera, spectators may have to distribute attention to a large number of properties and widen their field of interest in order to fully grasp the performance; they may of course also marginally attend to it and ignore the heavy attentional demands (or the performance altogether), but the two phenomena are different. Moreover, marginal attention is to be distinguished from covert attention in that it is not under the control of the observer nor does it have the same resolution or intensity: for instance, we can deeply, covertly, attend to something in the corner of our eye in order to satisfy a particular interest or need. Whereas marginally attending to an area in the periphery engages the early stages of processing; it is momentary and does not require cognitive effort or subjective control in order to be maintained. This early phase dealing with input from the periphery was also called “ambient processing” (Zacks & Eisenberg 2016, p. 1), as opposed to a focal phase dealing with fine-grained information. Coupled with the phenomena of repeated, diffuse exposure, it can provide the basis for generating an aesthetic experience. When a stimulus is perceived marginally and through repeated exposure, allowing information to be stored in long-term memory, it can give rise to aesthetic effects that we may become eventually aware of. Thomas Munro, who is the first philosopher, to our knowledge, to have introduced this psychological process into the aesthetic debates, describes marginal attention to inconspicuous art as follows:

Many kinds of art are made to be perceived marginally, not with focused attention: to recede somewhat into the background or periphery of attention, while the observer carries on other activities. [...] Subdued, inconspicuous art, like a gently insistent person, may have a deeper effect in the long run because one can enjoy its continuous or repeated presence. One’s conscious attention is usually elsewhere, but one is vaguely aware of a shifting sensory field or background of sights and sounds, tactile sensations, occasional tastes and odors. [...] A work of art which is seen or heard marginally on many occasions, such as a church or garden which one passes daily, may have deeper aesthetic effect in the long run than another which is seen once only with undivided attention, such as a motion picture film (Munro 1957, pp. 306-309).

The suggestion is that in this type of artistic encounter, the aesthetic effect acquires its force only gradually, through repeated exposure; the development of a definite aesthetic experience is thus deferred. This was true, according to Munro (1957, p. 306), “on the whole of music to be heard while dining (much *Tafelmusik* was written expressly for that purpose by 18th century composers)”; likewise, it could have been true of the Dutch paintings whose main function was to cover bare surfaces, to come back to the example² given in the introduction, and it could very well be true of many of the works that we experience in our daily environments, be they short musical compositions functioning as next-station announcements in tramway systems, *in situ* installations that we come across daily or just, as Munro says, an ordinary church that happens to be next door. Deployed in many everyday situations, marginal attention to objects to which we have an increased and intimate access could thus eventually elicit aesthetic responses, affecting us in a subtle but powerful way.

5. Aesthetic Appreciation and Memory for Inconspicuous Art

My suggestion is that the aesthetic effect of this kind of subdued art, to which we pay initially only marginal attention, roughly resembles the perception of overtones described by James: in other words, we first experience some fugitive sensorial impressions that we cannot hear alone and then we recall them in memory, thus allowing them to reach the focus of consciousness and, consequently, the focused attention. Through repeated presence subdued art is held fast in memory and then each act of retrieval renders it readily observable. Moreover, experiencing it frequently would bring about a modification of our aesthetic sensibility (Souriau 1955,

² Other examples, provided by Anthony Savile, include, arguably, manuscript illumination or Pompeian frescoes; according to Savile though, these are mere additives or even nuisances to more absorbing activities. See Anthony Savile (1987), *Aesthetic Reconstructions: The Seminal Writings of Lessing, Kant and Schiller*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 67. Valuable considerations on subdued art might also be found in Ernst Gombrich (1979), *The Sense of Order. A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, “The Wrightsman Lectures delivered under the auspices of the New York Institute of Fine Arts”, Oxford: Phaidon. Significantly, a potential title of this book was *The Unregarded Art* (p. 116), that is, art experienced without focused scrutiny.

p. 8) oriented toward this type of stimulation. Thus, aesthetic experience starts as a vague dispositional state and then becomes actualized through a subsequent act of remembering; it is not immediately felt, but is constructed in time by a series of endogenous acts which operate on what is originally given in the exercise of direct perception. A question that we may ask is why would we need to appeal to memory retrieval in the first place when speaking of the aesthetic effect of inconspicuous art? Why not stop at the moment of the original, crude stimulation? An answer to this is that just as we do not have immediate access to fringe experiences without altering their very nature (James 1890, 189), the aesthetic disposition originating from sensory encounters peripherally attended to would not be manifest to us, much less transparent. It is then problematic to know whether aesthetic experience can be merely dispositional, implying no subjective access whatsoever. What is exactly the process that takes place when evaluating subdued art? Are we merely reporting an aesthetic feeling felt in the past, experienced on the fringe of consciousness so to speak, of which we only become aware later through remembrance or is it the case that the aesthetic response, rather than being elicited in the immediacy of every individual weak sensory stimulation, is formed in the very late act of recall, thus appearing only in the memory mode?

The complex dynamics described here may account for a particular kind of experience likely to become aesthetic, such as nostalgia (Starr 2015, pp. 251, 256), which does not rely primarily on intensely perceived sensorial contents. In nostalgia, which can be triggered both by an external cue (a postcard, a tune conjuring up past events etc.) and by a voluntary act of remembrance, these sensorial contents reach the focus of attention only *post-mortem*, they are not fully apprehended in their immediacy. If this is a legitimate example, aesthetic experience could then be considered to be extending beyond the primary sensory encounter; it would rely on memory traces of object or scenes improving and becoming more precise over time rather than on deep immediate apprehension. Bence Nanay, who speaks of the lingering effect (2016, p. 17) of some aesthetic experiences, also expresses this idea, although in a very different context: he mentions the continued presence of certain aesthetic experiences in our memory immediately after the object of contemplation ceases to be available, for instance, after leaving a concert hall or the cinema; in the examples I have

considered so far the time span of the lingering effect would be much wider and would not be caused by a powerful aesthetic encounter that would alter subsequently our perception of the world. The trouble with this story is that in order to make it plausible and convincing, inconspicuous art has to be filled in our long-term memory store in the first place, it has to become available for further analysis; could there be memory storage of dimly attended perceptual information? From the perspective of the psychology of perception (Kuhl & Chun 2014, p. 826), there is some evidence that support the idea of implicit learning with respect to poorly attended information; in the realm of the arts, however, there are only few memory assessment studies that test the success of encoding and retrieval of non-salient artworks. Repeated exposure should in principle facilitate implicit learning and one can understand why Munro mentioned it as an essential ingredient of aesthetic experiences of marginally attended works. Another hypothesis put forth by psychologists is that perceptual learning may be greater when poorly attended information is unobtrusive, because it is less liable to be suppressed by higher order mechanisms (Kuhl & Chun 2014, p. 826); thus, rather than being parasitic upon more important activities, subdued, inconspicuous art may after all have a positive effect in the long run and enrich our perception of the world. An argument in favor of this idea comes from studies on liking and memory as a function of exposure. For instance, Szpunar et al. (2004, p. 376) found that for incidental listening to musical stimuli ecologically valid memory ratings as well as liking ratings increased linearly with increasing exposure. On the other hand, the effect of exposure on liking was not produced for focused listening; in this case, the stimuli were recognized with increased accuracy over repeated exposures, leading eventually to satiation. The quality of the attending experience – incidental or focused – does seem to have therefore an effect on preference ratings and it is not always focused attention that leads to increases in affective response.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have addressed the question of appreciating forms of art that are not apprehended primarily through focal attention and direct sense perception. Although I reject the idea that we can have an aesthetic

experience with no awareness, occurring at a pre-attentional level, I would like to keep open the hypothesis that aesthetic response might originate from stimulations taking place far from the center of one's focused attention. I have argued that given certain constraints, such as repeated exposure, perceptual learning, encoding in long-term memory and possibility of retrieval, subdued, inconspicuous art can elicit aesthetic experiences.

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An Alternative Account of the Ontology of Musical Works: Defending Musical Stage Theory

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I present a novel account for the ontology of musical works: Musical Stage Theory according to which the musical work is the performance. I propose this account as an alternative to mainstream and well accepted views on the nature of musical works with a specific intent: suggesting a way to analyse the identity of musical works which gives due relevance to musical practices and, at the same time, is grounded on a solid ontological basis. To this end, in the first part of the paper I address how Musical Stage Theory deals with the sonic/performative dimension. A dimension which, in a sense, has remained as an afterthought in alternative theories. As for the ontological ground, I get inspiration for my approach from an independently motivated move proposed by Ted Sider in relation to the ontology of space-time: switching the focus from four-dimensional worms to instantaneous stages while maintaining a perdurantist approach. I suggest carrying out a parallel replacement in the ontology of musical works: the musical work is a stage that stands in a counterpart relation to other stages. In the course of the paper I describe the points of contact between my view and Sider's, the inevitable adaptations that should be done in order to apply his view to the case of music, and the benefits which result from this theoretical bridge. The application of Sider's stage view to the ontology of musical works produces some interesting results in the identification of musical works with entities uncontroversially accessible by the senses. In addition, it proves to be a useful tool to explain the different linguistic attitudes we bear in relation to musical works.

1. Introduction

In this paper I present a novel account for the ontology of musical works: Musical Stage Theory. I propose this account as an alternative to main-

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stream and well accepted views on the nature of musical works. In particular, my intent is that of defending a view of musical works which gives due relevance to musical practices and, at the same time, is grounded on a solid ontological basis. According to Musical Stage Theory musical works *are* performances. Every performance is thus a different work, even if, as I will explain, the act of grouping performances together according to a certain relationship also plays a role in our everyday notion of musical works.

In the first part of the paper I address how Musical Stage Theory deals with the sonic/performative side of music. In order to do so, I take as my starting point the intuitive *desideratum* of epistemological grasp (Grasp), namely that direct acquaintance with the sonic aspect of a musical work is a necessary condition for grasping its nature. As I will explain, this *desideratum* can straightforwardly be accommodated within Musical Stage Theory, whereas it proves to be at least *prima facie* problematic for the mainstream views in musical ontology, notably structuralism and perdurantism. Musical Stage Theory, in fact, gives a promising prominence to the sonic/performative dimension. A dimension which, in a sense, has remained as an afterthought in alternative theories.¹

Later in the paper, I discuss the details of Musical Stage Theory. My development of this account takes inspiration from a move proposed by Ted Sider in the ontology of space-time: switching the focus from four-dimensional worms to instantaneous stages while, at the same time, maintaining a perdurantist approach. I suggest carrying out the same replacement in the ontology of musical works. As explained in section 2.3 below, musical works are best considered as stages that stand in a special counterpart-like relation to other stages, namely what I shall call a Repeatability-relation.

In the course of the paper I describe the points of contact between my view and Sider's, the inevitable adaptations that should be done, and the benefits which result from this theoretical bridge. I conclude the paper by replying to some concerns which may arise due to the revisionary ideas

¹ I am referring here to mainstream views such as the type-token theory, especially in the sonic interpretation of it given by Julian Dodd (see Dodd 2000, 2007). Also contextualism and action theories, however, even if to a lesser extent than the sonicists, fail to fully acknowledge the relevance of the practical act of performing (see Levinson 1980 and D. Davies 2004).

put forward by Musical Stage Theory. In particular, Musical Stage Theory needs to undergo some revisions when confronting the *desiderata* of (Creat) creatability and (Rep) repeatability. As I will explain, I believe that the epicycles needed by Musical Stage Theory do not damage the theoretical benefits it brings.

2. Musical Stage Theory and the Stage View

2.1. *Relevance of (Grasp)*

The main claim of Musical Stage Theory can be summarised as follows:

Musical Stage Theory: the musical work is a stage/performance connected by a privileged relationship to other appropriate stages/performances.

According to Musical Stage Theory, then, the performance *is* the work. From the viewpoint of this account, the performative aspect of music supplies the essential focus for any adequate ontology of musical works. In this sense, Musical Stage Theory provides an ontologically straightforward reflection of a fundamental intuitive insight in musical epistemology: the idea that direct acquaintance with the sonic aspect of a work is necessary for its appreciation. This is so, of course, because, being identical with performances, musical works are sonic events of a particular kind and are thus immediately available to acoustic inspection - or, more generally, they are available to the sort of epistemic contact that is pre-theoretically required for our access to songs, symphonies, and sonatas.

This outcome of Musical Stage Theory is in striking contrast with the sort of indirect epistemic contact that is recognized by the main ontological views currently on the market. For instance, when type-token theories strive to account for (Grasp), they at best posit a kind of mediated (and arguably not well defined) relation of hearing a work-type 'through' its tokens (see Kivy 1993; Dodd 2007; S. Davies 2001). Indeed, even materialistically oriented views such as Musical Perdurantism struggle with (Grasp), since works-qua-fusions are not themselves perceivable in their

entirety.² Nominalists and action theorists meet similar issues (see Goodman 1968 and D. Davies 2004): neither a class of performances nor the composer's actions can be objects of acquaintance on the part of the audience.³

2.2. *Ontological Soundness: Comparison with Sider's Stage View*

With the aim of providing a sound and consistent ontological ground to my view, I appeal to Ted Sider's independently motivated theory about space-time: the Stage View (see Sider 1996, 1997). The revisionary approach provided by the Stage View can be applied to the analysis of the ontology of musical works with interesting results. Its novel account on the topic of identity can in fact give a reading of the identity of musical works which accommodates an analysis of the nature of works of music which is both nearer to actual musical practices and, at the same time, grounded on a solid ontological basis.

The analogies between the structure of Musical Stage Theory and Sider's account of persistence are various: (i) musical works are spatiotemporal stages just as continuants are in Sider's view; (ii) stages are connected by a unity relation which is interestingly parallel to Sider's I-relation; (iii) our linguistic practices about music systematically shift towards forms of

² I won't dwell too much on the shortcomings of the rivals of my account and focus on the positive side of the view. For more details on this last objection, see Dodd 2000, 2002, and 2004.

³ I feel that a specification is needed here. It can be argued that the strategy of privileging one *desideratum* over the others merely by appeal to intuitions is worrying. If all parties to metaphysical disputes weigh the *desiderata* differently by appeal to intuition, the risk is of reaching an impasse: each of us ends up with 'one point' but nobody gets the 'full score'. My reply to this is twofold: first of all I do not intend to reject the relevance of other *desiderata* in respect to (Grasp). The recognition of musical works as creatable and repeatable entities is indisputable. In addition, the greater amount of attention devoted to (Grasp) is not justified merely by intuitions. In order for intuitions to be a strong enough basis for claiming the relevance of (Grasp), it should be the case that everyone - or at least the majority of people - share the intuition that in order to have epistemic grasp on the work it is necessary and sufficient to listen to it. But this is not the case: many people, for example, believe it sufficient to read the score in order to fully understand the work. This common belief is exactly what I am aiming to counteract: the focus on (Grasp) is justified by the intention of highlighting how the acoustical aspect of the musical works is necessary for grasping its nature.

discourse, in a manner similar to Sider's; (iv) elements of contextualism are embedded in our linguistic attitudes as well as in the individuation of stages and counterparts. In the following sections I will address these points and delineate a comparison between Sider's theory and Musical Stage Theory.

Sider puts forward the Stage View in dialectic confrontation with other theories in the philosophy of space-time, namely endurantism and perdurantism (see Sider 1996, p. 433).⁴ The Stage View defends the claim that objects are instantaneous spatiotemporal stages. They are not three-dimensional entities which are "wholly present" at all times at which they exist' (Sider 1997, p. 3), as endurantists contend; yet, they are also not four-dimensional continuant objects which perdure through time as in the four-dimensionalist claim.

Just as Sider identifies objects such as persons with stages, my claim is that a work of music is the single spatiotemporal stage of the performance. As a preliminary note, it should be said that the application of Sider's view to Musical Stage Theory does not have the presumption of creating an exact parallel between the two accounts. Rather, the Stage View should be considered a methodological tool for Musical Stage Theory, not a mirror image of it. This can be observed in the fact that identifying the stage with a temporally extended performance does not allow Musical Stage Theory to be grounded on instantaneous stages like the ones Sider grounds his theory on. In fact, given the fact that performances are extended in time, they cannot be identified with instantaneous stages. But I believe this does not constitute a serious obstacle to the structure of the theory. Indeed, in parallel with Katherine Hawley's interpretation of the Stage View, a salient temporal interval may well be established, which allows to set the boundaries of the stage according to our interests (see Hawley 2001, pp. 59 *et seq.*). A singular stage, in the sense relevant for Musical Stage Theory,

⁴ Endurantists describe objects as enduring or three-dimensional entities which are "wholly present" at all times at which they exist' (Sider 1997, p. 3). Enduring objects do not have distinct temporal parts, instead they occupy in their entirety the spatiotemporal regions which compose their lives. On the other hand, perdurantism adopts a four-dimensional approach and claims that objects persist through time by perduring, that is by having different temporal parts. Objects are thus described by four-dimensionalists as four-dimensional worms made up of the sum of different spatiotemporal stages.

can thus be described as the sum of all the instantaneous stages that constitute a sound event, the salience of which is determined by the complete performance, from the first to the last note prescribed by the composition.

2.3. *Shifts of Reference*

The comparison with Sider's theory is particularly promising for Musical Stage Theory since it suggests an encouraging alley for overcoming certain *prima facie* shortcomings of the latter. According to Musical Stage Theory the musical work is the performance. Yet, in our practices we are used to connecting together different works-as-performances (from now on I will call work-as-performance the musical work as intended in Musical Stage Theory to distinguish it from other acceptance of the term 'work') and to referring to them under a single concept of 'work'.

Interestingly, Sider grants a similar shift when talking about persons and stages: 'The Stage View should be restricted to the claim that *typical* references to persons are to person stages. But, in certain circumstances, such as when we take the timeless perspective, reference is to worms rather than stages.' (Sider 1996, p. 448). This shift from talk about stages to apparent talk about worms is dictated by the interests of the speakers. Sider gives the following example: Jane wants to reach the farm and she asks how many roads she must cross to get there. In order to avoid misunderstandings, our answer should be 'three' even if the 'three' roads are connected miles away with each other. Instead of referring to the road, we refer to road segments to facilitate our talk (see Sider 1996, pp. 440-441). The reference to the four-dimensional worm or to the instantaneous stage is thus dictated by the frame of reference adopted by the speaker at the moment of utterance. The consideration of which temporal stage is the one the speaker is predicating on is relativised to frames of reference, too. The 'harmless indeterminacy' (Sider 1997, p. 199) which is implied by this relativisation involves a contextualist analysis of the truth value and of the target of the speaker's utterance.

For Musical Stage Theory acknowledging a similar shift of reference is important to explain the different linguistic attitudes we bear in relation to musical works. In particular, according to Musical Stage Theory, this shift happens between the level of discourse about stages-performances

to discourse ostensibly directed towards a more general concept of a musical work. In order to start building this wider account of musical work it is thus worth addressing the issue of how we can group performances together.

2.4. Grouping Performances Together: the R-Relation

Every work-as-performance is related to certain other stages through an ontologically important relation: the Repeatability-relation (or R-relation). In this sense, the common idea of repeatability is here understood not according to the traditional one-many relationship postulated by type-token theories, but instead as the interconnection between performances themselves. What determines the conditions of repeatability is the compliance with the requirements which inform the R-relation. In this respect, then, Musical Stage Theory follows Christy Mag Uidhir in his proposal of replacing the standard notion of repeatability with the notion of ‘relevant similarity’ (see Mag Uidhir 2013, pp. 165-196). His revisionary view is driven by the aim of preserving the ordinary assumptions of repeatable artworks inside a materialistic framework. For there to be repeatable and concrete artworks ‘*repeatability* must just be *relevant similarity*, such that, to be a *repeatable* artwork (or *F-work*) just is to be an individual and distinct, concrete artwork (or *F-work*) to which multiple other individual and distinct, concrete artworks (or *F-works*) may be *relevantly similar*’ (see Mag Uidhir 2013, p. 196).

The aforementioned R-relation between stages can be individuated by three main features which, in their articulation, show that it is possible to individuate different ways to group performances together. The features of the R-relation are: (i) a causal relation which links the works-as-performances together and which, at the same time, connects the works-as-performances to the relevant act of composition, (ii) the intentionality of performers to play precisely that performance, and (iii) a sufficient degree of similarity between the works-as-performances. These requirements can be considered a parallel of the unity relation in Sider’s Stage View: in building the Stage View, Sider employs multiple unity relations in order to explain how objects can display different kinds of identity relations through time. The example provided by Sider is that of the coin

and the lump of copper: when a coin gets melted the *coin I-relation* does not hold between the coin and the lump that results from the melting process. What still holds, instead, is the *lump-of-matter I-relation* (see Sider 1996, p. 443). I will come back to the contextual features embedded in our reference to musical works in the next section.

The (i) causal relation implies that we can recognise two performances, X and Y, as performances related to the same act of composition as long as they result from the attempt at following the instructions provided within a given act of composition. For example, Barenboim's and Michelangeli's performances of Chopin's *Sonata* n.1 can both be inscribed within the group of performances related to the same act of composition because they both respect the instructions provided by Chopin for his *Sonata* n. 1. The causal relation between performance and composition can be weaker, if it depends only on the sum of constraints indicated by the composer, or stronger if it takes into account also the influence of performing traditions in vogue at the time. In the example above, the causal relation between a performance X and Chopin's *Sonata* n.1 can be weaker if it keeps into account only Chopin's prescriptions, or stronger if it refers also to the performing style in vogue at Chopin's time. I believe that, at this stage, a weaker account of the causal relation which requires only the respect for the work-determining instructions is enough to determine the R-relation between performances. Further elements of consideration will then be introduced by the other requirements.

According to requirement (ii), the connection between performances should involve the performer's intentions: the performer intends to initiate a sonic event precisely by virtue of the causal connection in (i). This specification is essential not only to support the causal relation described above, but also to rule out those cases of unintentional performances such as the scenario of the wind blowing through the canyon (see Wolterstorff 1980, p. 74). It is here that the performer's role comes to the fore. This, in fact, does not rule out the possibility for the performer to give a personal contribution to the rendition of the composition, as long as her aim is always that of converting into sounds that composition and not a new work.

Lastly, the (iii) similarity which should occur among the stages related by the R-relation implies that all performances originating from the same

composition should share a sonic (harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic) profile. Of course, a certain degree of variability within the sonic profile of these performances is allowed. Dynamics, tempo, timbral shadings are all elements which cannot be prescribed in an unequivocal way by the work-determining instructions. In this respect, performers have the possibility to adjust the sonic rendition of the composition according to their own preferences. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that if the identification of a performance as authentic were based only on the similarity that it bears in relation to other performances of the same composition, this would easily lead to a slippery slope scenario. Variations in some of the essential parameters of the composition, no matter how slight, could result in unacceptable discrepancies between its first and last performances. Slippery slope cases can be avoided by taking into account also requirement (i) and (ii) in order to ground the R-relation on a more solid footing.

2.5 *The Work-as-Construct*

The individuation of groupings of performances, as we have seen, calls into question many elements in addition to the sonic profile we can perceive by listening to a performance. All these proveniential/historical features contribute to the formation of a concept of ‘musical work’ which seems to come to the fore in our linguistic practices. So, when I say ‘I enjoyed Y’s work yesterday night’, I am apparently referring to a performance, i.e. to a stage. Yet, in other cases we adopt a ‘timeless perspective’ as when we say, for example, ‘Y’s work was performed in the late 19th century in front of Queen Victoria’. For, in this case, what is at issue is a talk directed towards a collection of R-related stages: a suitable stage/performance of it took place in front of a powerful monarch.

In Sider’s analogous account of our discourse about objects, this consists in a shift from instantaneous stages to an aggregate of stages, where even the aggregate is recognised as an entity. My claim in this respect is more radical than Sider’s: the shift which occurs in the ontology of musical work happens between the work-as-performance and what I will call from now on the work-as-construct. Unlike Sider, in fact, I do not consider the secondary level which is the apparent object of our linguistic practices as an entity to which they refer. The only entities which populate the onto-

logy of musical works are works-as-performances. The work-as-construct is a collection of information and notions we have in respect to the work which allows us to have a certain level of knowledge about it. Yet, I do not consider it as an entity which deserves the ontological characterisation as work. It is rather a linguistic and communicative tool which is useful in our linguistic exchanges and which allows us to understand each other and to have a common ground to refer to.

Just as in Sider's account, on the other hand, the aforementioned linguistic shift of perspective is grounded on contextually variable foundations. As for the R-relation and its features, sometimes we do not use all three requirements to name a performance or to connect it to its proveniential history. According to the frame of utterance or to the context in which the speaker is acting, different R-relations can be applied. Only the *intentionality*-R-relation, for example, can be applied when, for example, the speaker knows that the performer has the intention to play the performance X but she fails to do so because she is making too many mistakes. Or a combination of two requirements can be applied in the cases of arrangements and plagiarism. If Y is an arrangement of the work X, the performance of Y is *causally*-R-related and *similarity*-R-related to X since it is both related to the proveniential history of X and it shares similar features with X. Yet, it is not *intentionally*-R-related to X because the performer has the intention to perform an arrangement of X and not X itself. On the other hand, if the performer is playing X and X is plagiarising Y, that is, a plagiarist has published X presenting it as her own creation but X is instead plagiarising another piece, namely Y, then the performance is *intentionally*-R-related and *similarity*-R-related to X but it is *causally*-R-related to Y instead.

The articulation of the kinds of R-relation which a work-as-performance presents should not be seen as a downside for the clarity of the structure of the account. Taking into consideration the contextualist aspects inevitably implied by the analysis of the speakers interaction with musical works, in fact, also dispels some hurdles such as how to consider arrangements and plagiarism in respect to original works.

So far, I have described the main features of Musical Stage Theory. Now, I am going to address two main *prima facie* problematic issues for Musical Stage Theory: the issue of creation, and the problem of unper-

formed works.

3. Concerns and Replies

3.1. *Compliance with (Creat)*

The same shifting strategy between work-as-performance and work-as-construct can be applied for dealing with (Creat). Following Musical Stage Theory's central claim that the work is the performance, the temporal boundaries of the work are strictly speaking determined by its first and last notes. The creation and persistence of the work are indeed carried out all in the interval of the performance: a work comes into being with the playing of its first note and it persists until the last one fades away. The adoption of the shifting strategy devised above, however, allows Musical Stage Theory to provide an account of our pre-theoretic intuitions about musical creation which is compliant with ordinary beliefs.⁵ Saying 'The *Eroica* was created in 1803' means that the *Eroica* (the stage occurring now) has the tensed property 'having been created in 1803' by virtue of a previous stage S, such that (i) S has the property 'occurring in 1803', (ii) S is R-related to the present stage, and (iii) no other R-related stage occurs before.

This strategy makes it possible for the acceptance as true of the sentence 'The *Eroica* starts before the present performance's first note'. Still, this account of musical creation could still be considered unsatisfactory if, as common sense intimates, the creation of the work is identified with its act of composition and not with its first performance. Indeed, strictly speaking according to Musical Stage Theory a compositional act tout court is not a musical work. Barring cases in which an act of composition con-

⁵ Type-token theorists in particular struggle to account for (Creat). The debate surrounding the relationship between type-token and (Creat) is still open and it is not my aim to assess it in detail here. What suffices for my purposes is to note that any approach to (Creat) proposed by the type-token theory uncontroversially involves a revision of the everyday notion of (Creat). Some type-token theorists dismiss the idea of musical creation, and substitute it with explanations in terms of discovery and creativity (see Kivy 1993, p. 43 and Dodd 2000, p. 427); others, rest satisfied with an ontology of 'indicated structures' which at least bears an unclear and controversial relation to the everyday notion of composition as creation (see Levinson 1980, p. 20).

sists in a full-fledged performance, a composition is merely a set of instructions necessary to performers in order to transform it into sounds but which by itself is not sufficient to qualify as a stage/work. Reading the leaflet with the instructions to assemble a table may well be essential for giving the scattered pieces the shape and functionality of a table, yet we would not sit around the leaflet to have dinner with our friends. The same holds true for musical works: a musical work is a sum of sounds performed by respecting the instructions provided by the composer, it is not the composition itself. Nevertheless, even if it cannot be recognized as a work, the relevance of the act of composition is unquestionable: without it, it would be impossible to originate a sequence of performances, i.e. of works. Composition is thus not itself a work but it is a work *in potentia*. Musical Stage Theory can thus grant that when we say ‘The work W was created in 1850’, meaning that it was composed and not performed in that year, we are applying the expression ‘*in potentia*’ to our sentence. Whatever came to light in 1850 is, although in absence, an extensionless stage, since it is not a full-fledged performance, but it has the potentiality to become a stage as understood in the austere sense. I will come back to this issue in the next section when addressing the revisions that Musical Stage Theory needs to make regarding our linguistic attitudes towards unperformed compositions.

Is there a way to account for the commonsensical belief that the composing act ‘in some sense’ brings to life a work of music? There is, and it can be found again in the shift of reference between work-as-performance and work-as-construct. It is indeed possible to include the act of composition among the features of the work-as-construct. The composer’s action, as I said, is in fact essential for the future work-as-performance and, by itself, it gives us some information about the work.

3.2. *Unperformed Works*

Another concern is that, if musical works are performances, then compositions which are never performed do not have the status of musical works. The concern is legitimate: for Musical Stage Theory unperformed compositions are not musical works. They are merely potential works which can become *de facto* works as soon as they are transformed into sounds.

One could get around this worry by allowing that mental performances are works. In this way it would be possible to claim that also compositions which are never translated into sounds can be deemed musical works because they have been heard by the composer in her head or by whoever is able to ‘hear’ sounds only by reading the score. However, allowing mental performances to qualify as musical works is troublesome in certain respects. First of all, it is not obvious that every composer hears the notes of the composition in her own mind when composing. There are some cases, for example, in which the structure is too complex to be distinctly mentally reproduced even by the composer, or cases in which the composer uses patterns or sequences of numbers to build the composition, thus without hearing melodic lines in the head. And, more generally, mental renditions cannot be considered performances because they do not possess all the features which characterise the ontological profile of performances.⁶ In particular, mental performances involve neither production of sounds nor shareability. If a mental performance is heard only in the head of one person, in fact, it cannot provide interrelational information.

Still, the objection can be that, if unperformed compositions do not

⁶ I assume that the performance is an event which in turn can be understood as a fusion of zonally coinciding events or as a fusion of events connected by a dominant causal flow but spatially and/or temporally scattered. A performance is in fact divisible into temporal (e.g. the movements of a Sonata) or zonal (e.g. a performance of a band walking around the city) parts which are events themselves. As events, performances share most of the features which characterize accomplishments as described in philosophical literature (see Vendler 1957, Kenny 1963): performances (i) occur in time, (ii) have a goal, (iii) have temporal boundaries, (iv) can be complete or incomplete, (v) can be done quickly or slowly. To be considered a work, a performance should in fact be complete, from the first to the last note of the relative score, and its goal is that of providing an authentic rendition of the score itself. In addition to the features they share with general accomplishments, musical performances also possess other essential components: they include the presence of (vi) performer(s), (vii) instrument(s), (viii) an audience, and (ix) the production of sounds or, more generally, of sound waves. Performances are thus sound events but not every sound event is a performance. In order to qualify as performance, a sound event must display at least three characteristics: (i) a causal relation to an act of composition, (ii) the intentionality of the performer, and (iii) shareability, that is the possibility of being accessible and shareable. These requirements, as it is easy to see, are very similar to the features of the R-relation. This should not be surprising, since recognising a sound event as a performance is the first necessary step to group performances together.

deserve the status of work, the composer loses her valuable status as well. This objection is analogous to the one made by Levinson against the description of works as eternal and uncreated types (Levinson 1980, p. 9). For type-token theorists, claiming that works of music are not created does not result in a diminished value of the status of composers. They in fact still hold an irreplaceable task for the existence of musical works by being *discoverers* of them. My reply is along a similar line: the fact that unperformed compositions are not deemed works does not mean that the compositional process is superfluous. The choice of the set of instructions performers should comply with is the necessary first step towards the final product: the work-as-performance. Also, even if very few people are able to hear a piece of music only by reading the score – and, as I mentioned, it does not always happen – it is nevertheless true that the score provides some information about the piece even to those who are only scarcely musically literate. By reading the score it is in fact possible to know whether the piece will be short or long, which instruments it calls for, which dynamics are included (if they are indicated by the composer), whether the structure is simple or complex, and so on. For this reason, unperformed musical compositions, if not works-as-performance can be considered as part of the work-as-construct. They, or more specifically the set of instructions which is the only objective element which can be accessed, provide the audience with certain knowledge about the composition and can thus be included among the totality of elements which make up the general concept of work-as-construct.

4. Conclusion

With this paper I suggested an alternative theory for the ontology of musical works, namely the view according to which the work is the performance. The main drive behind this proposal is that of providing an account which both acknowledges the relevance of the sonic/performative aspect of musical works and which is ontologically solid.

As for the practical aspect, the identification of the work with actual performances guarantees the respect for the *desideratum* of (Grasp). It is in fact possible to have direct acquaintance with the work if the work is a single performance. The ontological ground to my view is provided by the

application to Musical Stage Theory of Sider's Stage View. Musical works can be analysed using the framework provided by Sider, thus considering them as stages linked together by a counterpart relation. Also, the shift acknowledged by Sider between the level of the single stage and that of the aggregate of stages has a useful application to explain our linguistic attitudes in relation to musical works. We, in fact, usually shift reference between the work-as-performance and the more general concept of work-as-construct.

Despite its benefits, however, Musical Stage Theory has limitations as well. Due to its revisionary approach, this view needs to reanalyse some of our commonsensical attributions. But this is not a concern exclusive of Musical Stage Theory. Every theory needs an assessment of intuitions and some kind of re-analysis of them. The fact that Musical Stage Theory requires some epicycles is not worrying. These reconsiderations are needed by the general Stage View, regardless of its particular application to musical ontology, to address some semantic objections. All things considered, in Sider's words, 'I think the benefits outweigh the costs' (Sider 1996, p. 451).

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Testing the Blending

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ABSTRACT. Some cognitive accounts of the experience of theatre audiences have been using the notion of “conceptual blending” in order to describe the way spectators combine distinct objective elements of a given actor – his voice, walk, gestures, or even his overall persona, including the memory of her previous performances – in order to build up their concept of the fictional character that is being played. This paper intends to measure the plausibility and the explanatory traction of the notion of “conceptual blending” as an account of theatrical experience. First, by assessing its novelty as a new definition of what is specific to theatre as an art form, and a suitable alternative to Aristotelian and Brechtian conceptions. It seems that by placing conceptual integration as the basic theatrical experience and by reviewing role-playing as the cognitive foundation of theatre, the concept of blending allows us to reassess the importance of emotional empathy, or detachment, in theatre. Second, we shall try to compare theatrical blending with other theories of art (namely, visual art) that portray artistic representation as a kind of “shuttle” or “fusion” between configuration and content. In particular, we propose that theatrical blending works as a kind of “seeing in”.

Like a dull actor now / I have forgot my part (...).
(Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, Act 5, Scene 3)

1. Introduction

Some cognitive accounts of the experience of theatre audiences (e.g., Faconnier & Turner, 2002, McConachie, 2008) have been using the notion of “conceptual blending” in order to describe the way spectators combine distinct objective elements of a given actor – his voice, walk, gestures, or

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even his overall persona, including the memory of her previous performances – in order to build up their concept of the fictional character that is being played. This is both an exercise connected to the very core of human cognition, based on the ability to combine different perceptions and turn them into abstract concepts (Edelman & Tononi, 2000) and a deeply entertaining practice, already present in the game of role-playing adopted by children after two years old. Blending, and particularly theatrical blending, is highly selective and it is up to each spectator to choose which characteristics of the actor belong to the conceptualization of the fictional character and which are not. This also makes it possible for the spectator, for instance, to actively “ignore” the fact that the character dies at the end of the play or to forget the actor’s persona outside the current stage role. Blending is also a dynamic process and both actors and spectators will often oscillate in and out of their respective blends. For instance, spectators often abandon their actor / character blend so that they may better admire this actor’s vocal or gestural prowess.

Conceptual blending may also be presented as an alternative theory of theatre and a powerful competitor vis-à-vis the usual para-Aristotelian notions of “empathy” or “identification”, and Brechtian *Verfremdung*. Ultimately, it encourages the spectator to think about the duplicity that characterizes all theatricality.

This description of theatrical experience as akin to a process of conceptual integration and assimilation seems to recall other accounts that tend to envisage aesthetic appreciation in general as a kind of peculiar linkage of the configurational properties and the content. This is the case of Richard Wollheim’s “seeing in”, Robert Hopkins’ “collapsed seeing-in” or Gregory Currie’s distinction between “representation-by-origin” and representation-by-use”. According to Currie, photography and film share the same possibility for distinguishing between “representation-by-origin” and “representation-by-use”. A film like *Casablanca* may represent-by-origin Humphrey Bogart but also represents-by-use the fictional character of Rick Blaine. Sometimes what the film represents-by-origin is so intrusive that the whole film is marred by what psychologists call “pop-out”, i.e., representation-by-origin grabs the spectator’s attention in such a way that prevents her from attending the fictional representation-by-use thus producing a strong sense of “representational dissonance”. “Pop-out” is also

common in theatre, of course. An actor's clumsy misunderstanding of his role, a distractive audience, the super-star persona of the leading actress may force actors and / or spectators to un-blend the actor / character as-similation and remove them from the fictional flow. Accepting the parallel with visual depiction, they stop seeing the character *in* the actor.

This paper intends to measure the plausibility and the explanatory traction of the notion of "conceptual blending" as an account of theatrical experience. First, by assessing its novelty as a new definition of what is specific to theatre as an art form, and a suitable alternative to Aristotelian and Brechtian conceptions. It seems that by placing conceptual integration as the basic theatrical experience and by reviewing role-playing as the cognitive foundation of theatre, the concept of blending allows us to reassess the importance of emotional empathy, or detachment, in theatre. In a given sense, emotional empathy or sympathy become just an ingredient of blending, albeit a very significant one. Second, we shall try to place theatrical blending side by side with other theories of art (namely, visual art) that portray artistic representation as a kind of "shuttle" or "fusion" between configuration and content. In particular, we propose that theatrical blending works as a kind of "seeing in". More recent developments of Wollheim's concept – such as Bence Nanay's – will be adapted to the experience of role-playing in order to test whether this constitutes a suitable analogy.

2. Conceptual Blending

According to Fauconnier and Turner, "the essence of the operation [of conceptual blending] is to construct a partial match between two input mental spaces, to project selectively from those inputs into a novel 'blended' mental space, which then dynamically develops emergent structure."¹ "Mental space" is a key concept here and it is described as an *ad hoc* "conceptual packet" that we assemble as we think and talk by blending together an array of distinct elements taken from previous mental spaces "for purposes of local understanding and action." This blending is described as a three-stages process: composition, pattern completion and elaboration,

¹ Fauconnier and Turner, 2003: 58.

and from the very start the activity of theatre spectators and actors is proposed as a quasi-paradigmatic case of conceptual blending. For the purpose at hand, I shall concentrate on composition.

2.1. Composition

Conceptual blending in film requires three steps: (1) a selection of characteristics of the actual actor (that he is alive, that he moves and talks in certain ways, etc.); (2) some knowledge of the fictional character being played (his past history, his present motivations, his beliefs regarding other characters, etc.); (3) with the concept of “identity” as a sort of template spectators create a new and more complex identity merging together the actor and the character, such as Benedict Cumberbatch / Hamlet.

Something of a similar nature occurs with the actor’s own blending. He chooses to draw salient, for instance, his “motor patterns and power of speech” while at the same time suppresses “his free will and foreknowledge of the situation”: “in the blend he says just what the character says and is surprised night after night by the same events.”² In fact, the authors defend that conceptual blending lies at the basis of all role-enacted games of make-believe.

Suppose that we are watching an actor playing a role. The two personas – the actor’s physical manifestation and the character’s supposed configuration – constitute two distinct mental spaces and each one of these reflect different salient aspects of each persona: his age, his height, his regal posture and illocution. The two also share a more “generic” space like, for instance, the fact that both are conscious of acting a part or simply that the two are involved with theatre. Conceptual blending is initiated when the spectator partially matches the two inputs and “projects selectively from these two input spaces into a fourth mental space, the blended space.”

In this new blended space, some features of the actor are selected because they are more congruent matches to the spectator’s knowledge of the character (e.g., the actor’s youth) and some characteristics of the character are also projected onto the way the actor is perceived and in some extent act as “focusers” for the spectator’s attention.³ Significantly, many

² Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 267.

³ “I once saw a performance of *The Elephant Man* (...) where one of the cast collapsed on

other characteristics pertaining to each one of their mental spaces are suppressed, like the fact that this particular actor is already famous for his impersonation of other dramatic roles or the fact that the character dies at the end of the play. The construal of a third persona becomes emergent in the blend, one that is actively responsible for bringing the spectator closer to the fictional flow but may also be admired in a more distanced way, as when spectators *blend out* of the actor / character mental space in order to better admire the actor's technical expertise.

2.2. *Characteristics of the Blending*

To blend in and out of conceptual compositions is also a deeply entertaining practice. Blending, and particularly theatrical blending, is highly selective: each actor and each spectator involved in conceptual blending is able to choose which characteristics of the actor belong to the conceptualization of the fictional character and which are not in a kind of aspect-seeing that makes salient some features of the actor and overshadows others. Another important characteristic of conceptual blending lies in the ability of concentrating on the "moment-to-moment playing of the character"⁴, for instance, by actively "ignoring" the fact that the character dies at the end of the play or to forget the actor's persona outside the current stage role. Considering the point of view of the spectator, usually, this kind of blending is used in order to better involve the spectator in the fictional flow providing a meaningful gathering of the actor's characteristics towards the manifestation of the fictional character. That way, even the most histrionic and ham actor can be turned into a suitable and unexpected implementation of a given character.

Throughout this blending in and out, spectators develop an acute sense of the twofoldness intrinsic to role-playing and this awareness can even be extended to props, spoken dialogue and the very nature of plays.

Naturally, social values and cultural ethos also affect the blend of char-

the floor. [A] doctor who happened to be in the audience (...) had at once gone backstage to help. After examining the patient he diagnosed him (...) with simple hyperventilation – then turned to Nicky [who played the role of a doctor in the play] and asked him with courteous deference if he agreed." Michael Frayn, 2010: xi.

⁴ McConachie, 2013: 24.

acter and role. Shakespeare, for one, used this cultural saturation by weaving complex innuendos about the sexual implications and ambiguities of male actors playing female characters, as ordained by Elizabethan law. In *Twelfth Night*, the female character of Viola dresses up as a boy – Cesario – so that she may ask the Duke for a job as male page. And it is as Cesario that the character would appear to her / his audience for most of the performance, thus becoming much more like the young actor actually performing the part and defying the spectator’s ability to blend in and out of the juxtaposed triad male actor / Viola / Cesario. “I am not that I play”, says the triad when asked by Olivia if he is a “comedian”. The alluring nature of this complex and entertaining exercise is quite evident. The spectator is given the chance to move between different temporary blends. The most immediate blend would combine the male actor with the character Viola; a second blend – the one that would most aptly defy the ability of the spectator to stay within the fictional flow – would correlate the male actor and Cesario; and a third blend, – the “two step blend”, as McConachie calls it⁵ – would require imagining that the male actor is playing a female character who in turn is impersonating a male character. Adding to the complexity of the exercise, the spectator is required to integrate the fact that Viola is a fictionally existing character – with the wrong gender – while Cesario is a fictionally non-existing character – but with the right gender.

2.3. Predecessors

Conceptual blending seems to echo some of the jargon proposed by Edward Bullough on his famous and theatre-inspired theory of psychical distance. Three major options are available in the continuum of aesthetic transaction. Spectators may (a) decide to “blend-out” actor from character and concentrate on the actor’s exuberance, distancing themselves from the fictional flow (to the point of risking an “over-distancing”); (b) engage fully with the character and sub-distancing themselves to the point of forgetting the actor’s performance;⁶ (c) reach an ideal balance between the

⁵ Cf. McConachie, 2008: 194.

⁶ As an extreme example of “sub-distance” in conceptual blending, one could quote the intriguing case of some Britons in the 1980s who suffered from nervous depression because they failed to win the lottery even though they knew that the odds were extremely

actor's physical presence and awareness of the character's personality in a suitable blend – “psychical distance”.

Conceptual blending is also in perfect consonance with what phenomenologist Bert O. States named “the three pronominal modes” of the actor-spectator relationship.⁷ The self-expressive mode refers to the way actors choose to show off their virtuosity, relaxing a proper manifestation of the character; in the representational mode the actor disappears behind the character; and in the collaborative mode actors interact actively with the audience, suggesting a kind of communitarian belonging. Oscillating between admiration of virtuosity and engagement with fictional characterization, the spectator prepares different blends adding more actor and less character, or vice-versa.

Conceptual blending is also at the core of David Saltz's conception of theatre as “the actual embodiment of alternate structures of reality”.⁸ Saltz's main point is that instead of what semiology and phenomenology defend, theatre spectators are not usually engaged in extracting meaning from the play, which would require them to perceive any production as a sign of something else. Rather, spectators watch the play by seeing the actors and props in a different mode, or by using them differently. To illustrate his point, Saltz quotes Gombrich: “If the child calls a stick a horse (...) the stick is neither a sign signifying the concept horse nor is it a portrait of an individual horse. By its capacity of serving as a ‘substitute’ the stick becomes a horse in its own right.”⁹ According to Saltz, and in perfect consonance with Fauconnier and Turner's conceptual blending, Gombrich was describing artistic creation “as an act of bringing objects into the world rather than imitating or referring to existing objects.”¹⁰ What this means in a theatrical context is that spectators use fiction in two complementary modes. First, they go from the narrative to the performance by following the given set of ‘prescriptions to imagine’ (“infiction”). The way Saltz describes this

slim: “[B]etween the purchase of the ticket and the drawing of the winner, these victims had fantasized (...) about what they would do upon winning the lottery. The actual lottery made them lose everything they had acquired in the fantasy world. In that world, they did indeed suffer a severe loss.” (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 231).

⁷ Cf. McConachie, 2008: 46.

⁸ Saltz, 2006: 218.

⁹ Saltz, 2006: 209.

¹⁰ Saltz, 2006: 210.

process is quite similar to that of conceptual blending. The actor builds up “a fictional schema that structures the event” and the spectator perceives the narrative not as a third term hovering above the performance but as totally permeating the performance, which becomes “the primary focus of attention”. Saltz equates infiction with Wittgenstein’s proposal that the expression in the face drawing inheres in the drawing, and finds a correspondence in Peirce’s notion of “secondness”, i.e., when there are only two terms involved: the spectator and the performance. Secondly, spectators may move away from the performance into the narrative: out-fiction is the name Saltz proposes for this “metaphorical redescription” of the performance, i.e., the spectatorial or critical interpretation of the play. Outfiction constitutes the semiotic step out of the blending and is similar to the *description* of the face in Wittgenstein’s example. It also corresponds to Peirce’s notion of interpretative “thirdness”, i.e., the emergence of three terms: a sign (the play), its object (the performance) and its interpretant (the sign created by the spectator and read off of the performance of the play). Only then, the narrative content is extracted from the performance and a triadic relationship between spectator, performance and fictional world is created.

2.4. Consequences

a) *The Moral Consequence*

What are the implications of conceptual blending for the emotional involvement and moral commitment of spectators regarding the fictional character? If blending is a two-way process and actors may also be seen as acquiring some of the characteristics of the roles they’re playing then empathy could be assessed by considering the consequences that the characters predicaments may have on the psychology of the actor carrying the role. For instance, there are several actors who have performed the role of Jesus Christ on film (e.g. Jim Caviezel or Enrique Irazoqui) who have confessed some psychological disturbance after playing that part. Naturally, this concern will affect the spectator the more she is aware with the actor’s actual persona. This concern for the actor-in-character may indeed become a stylistic tool in film and should be distinguished from the Socratic fear that imitating someone can increasingly become natural – “so

much so that one can begin to take on characteristics of the person one is imitating.”¹¹ Furthermore, if imagining to be someone else – such as the actor per trade and the spectator per empathy do – is perceived as a condition for pitying someone, then, through moving in and out of the actor / character blend, spectators may become truly mesmerized – and emotionally affected – by the way an actor expresses full comprehension of a character’s personality. Awareness of the actor’s ductility or adaptability to quite distinct roles may play an important part in this respect.

b) The Emotional Consequence

Blending also provides an interesting basis for re-examining Diderot’s principle according to which there is never a correspondence between the emotions expressed by the actor and the emotions actually felt by the actor, actually more concerned with manipulating the tools of his trade than being moved by the character’s passions. The juxtaposition of the actor’s expressiveness and the character’s emotional life is also a result from the blending.

c) The Fictional Consequence

Apart from its cognitive justification, blending is a refreshing concept also because it may be used as an alternative explanation vis-à-vis the usual para-Aristotelian notions of “empathy” or “identification”, and Brechtian *Verfremdung*. In a way, it acknowledges both attitudes as constitutive of that typical oscillation between experiencing the fictional flow, on the one hand, and attention to illusion and artifice, on the other.

It also provides a better description of theatrical experience than all the theories that present attention to the fictional flow as a kind of on-off disposition. According to these theories – epitomized by Coleridge famous formula about “the suspension of disbelief” – the spectator would swing between belief and scepticism in her connection to the actor / character. Instead of a “leap of faith”¹² that leaves behind the actor to focus on the character, conceptual blending puts forth a cumulative conception of theatrical experience according to which spectators are constantly combining

¹¹ Stern, 2008: 116.

¹² Cf. McConachie, 2008: 44.

actor and character. Instead of a binary or digital attention, spectators are involved in an exercise with different degrees of immersion in the fictional flow within a continuum that goes from exclusive attention to the actor to complete awareness of the character. Naturally, blending can be an acquired taste and different audiences tend to mix together different elements in varying degrees. Sometimes the elements drawn from the actor will be more numerous than the character's contribution, particularly if we are watching a famous star. But sometimes the fictional character will constitute the centre of attention as in the case where a particularly clumsy or rather unknown actor is on stage. Variations in the blend also occur during the production and experienced spectators develop different strategies that allow for the creation of a believable blend.

Usually, theories of theatrical representation, and semiotic theories in particular, have concentrated on the propositional meaning we extract from productions and followed exclusively the path from performance to narrative. However much of what is significant for us in a theatrical performance is of a non-propositional nature, and is clearly perceived when we are involved with conceptual blending. Kendall Walton identified a class of what he called "silly questions" in aesthetics much of which – significantly, we must add – occur in theatre: "How did Othello, a Moorish general and hardly an intellectual, manage to come up with such superb verses on the spur of the moment?" or "it is fictional in William Luce's play *The Belle of Amherst* that Emily Dickinson is an extraordinarily shy person who keeps to herself. Yet she is onstage throughout the play, speaking constantly. (...) How can it be fictional that Dickinson says all that she does (...) yet fictional that she is not gregarious? Is it fictional that Dickinson is and is not gregarious? That she is and is not shy?"¹³

Although these questions may seem plausible from a semiotic standpoint, they seldom interrupt the spectator's attention to the performance. This could prove that blending is quite often the main diegetic path followed by the spectator and is quite sufficient to sustain a meaningful and rewarding theatrical experience. Actively engaged in conceptual blending, the spectator is oblivious of any "silly question".

As already mentioned, blending is a dynamic process and both actors

¹³ Walton, 1990: 175-176.

and spectators will often oscillate in and out of their respective blends and this ability was, to some extent, identified by authors such as Coleridge and Stendhal, for whom spectators drift in and out of the fictional “spell” not in a binary way away but in varying degrees. This ability to move in and out of the fictional flow while still maintaining an aesthetic appraisal of the production constitutes one of the most distinctive traits of theatre *qua* art form. And even under the most intense blending experience, as Coleridge writes, “it is at all times within [the spectator’s] power to see the thing as it really is.”¹⁴ The pervasiveness of this blending and un-blending encourages spectators to reflect on the twofoldness that characterizes film. But what kind of twofoldness is this?

3. Twofoldness

Is conceptual blending a kind of twofoldness?

Arguably because of a semiotic and phenomenological bias, and until very recently, theories of theatre haven’t been keen on exploring the active twofoldness or doubleness involved in watching a play. On the other hand, however, twofoldness, input blending and representational seeing constitute established topics in philosophy of painting or visual representation, in general. In order to interrogate the conditions in which conceptual blending takes place let us look for assistance in the current discussion concerning the concept of “seeing-in”. What follows is an exercise in analogic reasoning. We have twofold visual experiences if we are simultaneously aware of both the representation of an object and the medium of representation. We see something in a painting when we are simultaneously aware of the canvas and the representation of an object object. It is, to a fair extent, a conceptual blending, with composition, pattern completion and elaboration: two input “mental spaces” share a generic space (e.g., both the original model and the canvas are oriented towards the viewer) and there is a selective projection from the two input spaces into a blended space. Although the two input spaces may share equal importance in seeing-in – as when the material properties of the canvas interact and assist the viewer to see the represented object, as in some paintings by Le-

¹⁴ Quoted by Stern, 2008: 64.

Leonardo da Vinci or Antoni Tàpies -, it is usually an unilateral experience in which the properties of the canvas *serve* the emergence of the represented object: we *see* the object *in* the canvas. What this entails is that, in painting, to blend out of the object-being-represented (which is not the same thing as the represented object, the latter being an element of the original input mental space and the former the object in the blended space) in order to concentrate on the material qualities of the canvas does not seem to amount, *per se*, to an aesthetic attention of the canvas. Whereas when we see Hamlet in Cumberbatch, to blend out of the character in order to admire the actor's prowess is still within the latitude of an aesthetic experience.

For a number of years there persisted a consensus encircling the idea that the experience of a picture necessarily amounts to a twofold experience of the kind I've just described. Dominic Lopes and Jerrold Levinson broke this consensus.¹⁵ Levinson's arguments are of particular significance in our context. In particular, he pointed out that not all seeing-in should be described as "aesthetic in character" and distinguished between (a) twofoldness as a necessary condition for the experience of *pictures* and (b) twofoldness as a necessary condition for the aesthetic appreciation of pictures. According to Levinson, b is true and a is false. Levinson denies the fact that whenever we see, say, a woman in a picture we are always in some measure "attending to, taking notice of, or consciously focusing on the picture's surface or patterning as such".

To some extent, Levinson's distinction between (a) recognizing a depicted object and (b) the aesthetic appreciation of that depiction can be projected onto theatrical conceptual blending. Take, for instance, the difference between (a) simple impersonation and more or less complex (b) acting or representation. Accordingly, aesthetic appreciation of theatrical representations also involves "attending to, taking notice of, or consciously focusing on" the way the actor's persona or physicality becomes instrumental in the implementation of a specific character. But that kind of attention is not necessarily involved in the mere recognition of which character is being played or which famous person is being impersonated. Indeed, just like aesthetic appreciation of a picture's configuration involves, to some ex-

¹⁵ Cf. Lopes, 1996; Levinson, 1998; Nanay, 2005.

tent, going beyond the mere visual recognition, so too the complexities of the integration between the actor and the character's mental spaces only become the focus of attention when the spectator departs from simple imitation. In an important sense, imitation is not representation.¹⁶

Following Levinson's criticism, Bence Nanay went back to Richard Wollheim's original formulation of "seeing-in" and identified two different senses of twofoldness wrapped together:

1. Twofoldness of the experience of a painting means that one is visually aware of the (two-dimensional) surface and the (three-dimensional) represented object simultaneously – which corresponds to Levinson's stage of recognition of the depicted object.
2. Twofoldness of the experience of a painting means that one attends to (takes notice of, consciously focuses on) of the represented object and the way it is represented simultaneously – which corresponds to Levinson's stage of aesthetic appreciation of the painting.¹⁷

Nanay considers that the two senses should be kept apart and argues – to my view convincingly – that twofoldness in the second sense is a necessary condition for the aesthetic appreciation of pictures (a point Levinson also maintains) whereas twofoldness in the first sense is a necessary condition for recognizing a depicted object (something Levinson denies).¹⁸ Also, notice that twofoldness in the first sense does not require "attending to, taking notice of, or consciously focusing on" the surface of painting whereas twofoldness in the second sense does require that attitude towards "the way something is represented".

Roughly adapting this debate to the theatrical environment, this segmented experience, from the twofold experience of surface and represented object to the twofold experience of represented object and the way it is represented, would produce a parallel distinction:

¹⁶ Just like there is room to defend that "trompe l'oeil paintings are not pictorial representations", as Wollheim does (cf. Nanay, 2005: 254). "[I]t is not necessarily the case that the more effective the illusion, the better the play. (...) Breaking the spell, or manipulating its intensity, may well be part of a successful performance." (Stern, 2008: 64).

¹⁷ Nanay, 2005: 256.

¹⁸ Cf. Nanay, 2005: 252.

1. Twofoldness in theatre means that one is aware¹⁹ of the actor's physicality and the represented character simultaneously,
2. Conceptual blending in theatre means that one attends to the represented character and the way it is represented simultaneously.

The first sense corresponds to a simple recognition of the character and is present in a simple act of imitation of a given character - fictional or real. Arguably, this could also account for what Tom Stern calls the Houdini-type illusions in theatre, such as the stage slap.²⁰

Wollheim's argument in favour of 1) in pictorial twofoldness is worth pursuing in theatrical terms:

[A] salient fact about our perception of representations (...) is that any move that the spectator makes from the (...) standard viewing-point does not (...) necessarily bring about perspectival distortion. Under changes of viewing point the image remains remarkably free from deformation (...). The explanation offered of this constancy is that the spectator is, and remains, visually aware not only of what is represented but also of the surface qualities of the representation.²¹

Thus, if the argument holds, constancy in pictorial recognition requires twofoldness in sense 1. The argument points out to the simple fact that recognizing something in a painting is different from recognizing something in the real world.²² When asked to touch the object shown in a photograph, the viewer will not try to reach through the photograph to touch it. She merely touches the surface of the photograph because awareness of the surface is a constitutive element of her recognizing the object in the photograph. Similarly, in theatre one could argue that the process of recognizing the character via the actor is different from recognizing a real person. Namely because spectators are fully aware that "actors pretend to perform various kinds of illocutionary acts rather than genuinely

¹⁹ Of course, the exact nature of this awareness is doubtful: is it visual, is it conceptual?

²⁰ "In the case of the stage 'slap', the actors behave in such a way the the audience thinks that something has taken place when, in fact, it hasn't." (Stern, 2014: 61)

²¹ Wollheim, 1998: 215-216.

²² Nanay, 2005: 254.

performing them.”²³ This implies, first, that spectators are aware that actors don’t have appropriate illocutionary intentions or are under some sort of Gricean “sincerity obligations” (an assertion on the part of the character cannot lead the spectator to think that the actor is making that assertion). Second, because actors are not identified as making genuine illocutionary acts spectators have no reason to believe that the actors’ utterances are caused by anything other than the script. It is ultimately this awareness of pretension that holds the representational constancy and makes it possible for the spectator to step back from the actor / character blend and still keep attention to the way the character adheres to the actor’s persona – just like moving away from the painting’s centre of projection does not cause in the viewer any additional sense of distortion.

Twofoldness in the second sense corresponds to a “higher-order mental activity” and in theatre that would correspond to a more reflexive attention to the actor’s ability and, curiously enough, depends on a certain degree of blending out of the actor/character mental space. Unlike simple imitation, the aesthetic value of this second twofoldness seems to depend on the way the actor deviates from stereotypes and tradition in the rendering of the character. That would explain why complex and unexpected role-playing is more aesthetically rewarding than formulaic impersonations: it mandates from the spectator a more demanding conceptual blending and provides a richer twofold experience in the second sense. The way the character is represented becomes constitutive of the spectator’s awareness of the character instead of the other way around. Among other things, I propose that through twofoldness in this second sense, the spectator is able to discern the particular attitude of the actor *vis-à-vis* the character he is impersonating, including his personal moral or political stance on the issues raised by the character, his philosophical understanding of the play, or even his overall existential standpoint within the constraints of

²³ Alward, 2009: 321. Alward holds his “illocutionary pretence view” against Gregory Currie’s “theatrical illocution account” – “actors hold the illocutionary intention of making the listener imagine or make believe the proposition expressed by her utterance” (2009: 323) – and David Saltz’s game model account – actors adopt some game intentions and following these intentions “genuinely perform the whole gamut of illocutionary actions” (2009: 325).

that particular role-playing.²⁴ This requires an effort of blend-out but still maintaining awareness of the character that is being actively reformulated as the actor unravels his interpretation: it is, after all, his take on *that* character that the spectator is attending to.

I would like to argue at this point that in theatrical twofoldness in the second sense, what is represented supervenes on the traits of the actor that lead to the recognition of the character and is perfectly compatible with conceptual blending – this is the mimesis-imitation level. But in twofoldness in the second sense – which is “aesthetic in nature” – it is the character that is being represented that supervenes on the way it is represented – the mimesis-imagination level.²⁵

4. Final Remarks

Our attention to theatrical fiction is never binary, continuously switching on and off. It works in layers and in relation with other assessments of what is real. It is a kind of dialectic blending: we accept something as real; with proper timing we tend to reject it as such; some other representation comes along that looks and feels more real than the previous one; for a moment, it is real; with proper timing, that too subsides into the artificial and something else comes along. It is not so much a question of providing the spectator with a tool for stepping out of the blend but a question of grasping yet another aspect of reality and turn it into a scaffolding for the fictional flow.

Pirandello is a recent production of the Portuguese company Mala Voadora. The award winner stage design is uncanny. We see at first a large backdrop with a bi-dimensional painting of two twin houses. We are given some time to exhaust the potential verisimilitude. Then the backdrop disappears and we are presented with the same two houses in a three dimen-

²⁴ I adopt here a view of aesthetic experience close to that of Noël Carroll: “aesthetic experience is a matter of attending with understanding to the way in which the point or purposes of an artwork is embodied or presented” (Carroll, 2012: 177). I think that theatrical conceptual blending, but in particular the exercise of “blending out”, constitutes an important cognitive tool towards attending with understanding to the way the work embodies its content. As a matter of fact it looks like a suitable epitome of aesthetic experience.

²⁵ Cf. Stern, 2014: 24.

sional lifelike setting. In comparison with the first representation, this is more verisimilar and for a moment it may even be mistaken for the real thing. When this suggestion gets exhausted, another model with the house's indoor is produced. Immediately occurs the same effect of an apparent upgrade in verisimilitude, mimesis, or conceptual integration. The game could be carried on with a 1:1 scale photograph of those same two houses. And if for argument sake, the stage could be finally removed and we could see those two houses in the landscape, we would eventually end up by judging them to be fictional. In a way, this is theatre's way of settling the score with Plato as if theatre becomes the tool that ends up revealing the veil of appearance of reality. The world is a stage but we only get to know this after watching the stage as a world.

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Death and Ecstasy: Reflections on a Technological Sublime

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ABSTRACT. Kant divides his aesthetic taxonomy of 'the sublime' into two categories: first, there is the 'mathematical' type, and secondly, the 'dynamical' genera, which is akin to scandal. The success that sublime experience sustained throughout twentieth century art can be primarily attributed to repeated attempts to scandalise. This paper is responding to Bernard Stiegler's proposal that, in contemporaneity, the phenomenon of scandal is rendered obsolete. Such a postulation indicates that the demise of the dynamical sublime must submit to the ecstatic ascension of the mathematical type, that is, to the relationship between magnitude and the imagination. This paper offers cogitations on *why* the mathematical sublime becomes incredibly important to aesthetic experience in the digital epoch. Jon McCormick and Alan Dorin (2001) argue that the 'computational sublime' operates on the basis of an inability to comprehend the speed of computers' internal operations, and because they occur at a scale and in a space vastly different to the realm of direct human perception. This paper contends that what must be added to their hypothesis is the problem of *machinic evolution* as elaborated by Bernard Stiegler. There is a groundlessness introduced by digitally engaged art that gathers a sublimity founded on *the speed of technical evolution*, wherein the deceleration of biological human evolution gives way to an acceleration in the technical milieu that begins to map unthought possibilities and unknown dimensions within the ontogenetic reality of technicised poiēsis. Digital-cultural works foreground the idea that the techno-human is subjected to a loss of nature and humanity, which bears the brunt of a transcendental pressure. This dehumanisation is modulated by an accelerating progressive destiny of technical prosthesis and the possibility for self-actualisation through technicised evolution, which is empirical in its reach but cannot be simply reduced to biology, anthropology or mechanics.

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1. Introduction

In the digital epoch, every sector of culture is experiencing a shift in how its working processes are constituted, and the arts are no exception. The increased use of digital technologies in processes of art production has created opportunities for transdisciplinary exchange between the arts and sciences – especially computer science. According to techno-philosopher Bernard Stiegler, we are experiencing ‘the second mechanical turn of sensibility’ (Stiegler 2011, 4). Through an examination of an artwork by Erwin Driessens and Maria Verstappen, entitled *E-Volver*, this paper focuses on the shift, taking place in the arts, brought about by the migration from mechanical to digital technology and the import of software into working processes. While this has engendered a deluge of innovative techniques and intriguing products on the practitioners’ side, it has also created incommensurable gaps in relation to how those objects are received and interpreted from the spectator’s point of view. Driessens and Verstappen explore, on one hand, possibilities for mathematics and algorithms, as both the form and matter that are pertinent to the new-world, digital economy, and on the other hand, the creative potential, or efficacy, of automatised, machine-led art-production systems, where the artist’s hand is completely removed from the creative process. The acceleration of cyclical automation to astonishing speeds, approximately one hundred million times faster than that of mechanical technology, is a techno-evolutionary phenomenon that artists and art-going publics have had neither the time nor space to digest and reconcile. And still technology and production continue to accelerate. This paper reflects upon the experiential shift taking place in *the encounter* with new digitalised art forms.

2. *E-volver* by Driessens and Verstappen

E-volver (2006) is a site specific, generative¹ artwork, by Dutch collaborative art practitioners Erwin Driessens and Maria Verstappen, which was

¹ The definition of *generative art* cited most frequently in recent years is that of Philip Galanter’s (Artist and Professor at Texas A&M University), which he set out in a paper that he wrote whilst attending the *Interactive Telecommunications Program* at New York University (NYU). He writes: ‘Generative art refers to any art practice where the artist uses

commissioned for the newly established research labs of the LUMC in Leiden. The title refers to the entire collection of works that consists of five large prints and four 'breeding units' that are spread throughout the building. The large prints are the visual printouts [FIGURE 1] of a bespoke, generative computer programme that runs on custom-built terminals, which the artists call breeding units. The breeding units are essentially LCD monitors that act as the interface for a quasi-organic microculture [FIGURE 2]. They simulate the idea of containing or housing a quasi-organic, semi-autonomous mathematical entity that creates visualisations, in a similar manner to the way a bacteria or fungus might leave a visual pattern or trace in a petri dish.



FIGURE 1. Driessens & Verstappen, *E-volver*, Medical Centre of Leiden University (photo by Gert Jan van Rooij).

a system, such as a set of natural language rules, a computer program, a machine, or other procedural invention, which is set into motion with some degree of autonomy contributing to or resulting in a completed work of art' (Galanter 2003). Adrian Ward, author of *Generative.net*, offers a further elucidation when he writes: 'Generative art is a term given to work which stems from concentrating on the processes involved in producing an artwork, usually (although not strictly) automated by the use of a machine or computer, or by using mathematic or pragmatic instructions to define the rules by which such artworks are executed' (Ward 2015). Mitchell Whitelaw gathers the term to help explicate the newly established artistic genre of *artificial life* (a-life).

The software at the breeding units generates a group of 'artificial pixel-sized agents' (Driessens and Verstappen 2006), that can move from one pixel to other adjacent pixels within the programme, which uses the entire area of the LCD screen. Each agent is constituted by mathematical rules drawn from the study of evolutionary behaviour in genotypes, phenotypes and organic cells; for example, each agent is made up of thirteen genes that together determine how it will behave on the screen. The gene examines the properties of the eight contiguously adjacent pixels and after sensing its environment, based on a combination of the values, it makes a decision on: firstly, how to modify the colour of the pixel – upon which it rests – in terms of the tone, hue, saturation, tint and so on; and secondly, where, or what pixel, it should move to next. In this regard, each agent leaves a unique and nuanced coloured trail that is determined by its genetic rules and the environment within which it operates. The accumulation of the actions and interactions of all the agents results in a fundamentally indeterminate colourful image that keeps on changing over time.



FIGURE 2. Driessens & Verstappen, *E-volver: Breeding Unit*, Medical Centre of Leiden University (photo by Gert Jan van Rooij).

The colourful, abstract and dynamic animations that arise from the process compel the viewer into reflecting upon subjects as diverse as micro-

scopic observations, cell tissues and blood vessels, geological processes, topological configurations, cloud formations, fungus cultures, organ tissues or satellite photos, but ultimately they still avoid any definitive identification [FIGURE 3].²

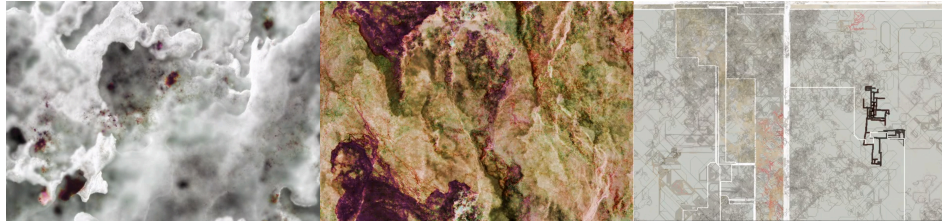


FIGURE 3. Driessens & Verstappen, *E-volver*. Three different screen grabs that testify to the nuanced, varying and diverse range of possible images that the software can output.

In a review of the work, Mitchell Whitelaw notes: ‘The word “organic” is overused in describing generative art, but it’s unavoidable here; the forms that emerge have a fine-grained integrity and richness about them that inevitably recalls physical and biological processes’ (Whitelaw 2006).³ As the agents evolve and develop their mobility and powers of visual efficacy, they move hither and thither, from pixel to pixel, sometimes jumping several spaces and sometimes in constricted, adjacent progression, leaving a visual trace that is itself continually evolving. At first glance their movements may appear haphazard and arbitrary, but on protracted reflection

² For a time lapse video document showing the evolution of the imagery in *E-Volver* go to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3LaxDAI-BI&feature=player_embedded#!

³ Whitelaw is actually reviewing a screensaver, which operates on the same computational logic as the art installation at LUMC. It was released by Driessens and Verstappen following the unveiling of the installation and can be downloaded from their website: <http://notnot.home.xs4all.nl/E-volverLUMC/screensaver.html>. The interesting thing about the screensaver is that it allows viewers to experience the generative processes of the artwork unfolding live on their own screen, in their own home, as opposed to simply viewing a predefined video rerun on YouTube. In addition, it still has the same global reach on audiences as online video documents, yet added to that the spontaneity and uniqueness of indeterminate emergence. The main notable difference with the screensaver is that there is no process of selection on the part of the interlocutor; the picture is wholly determined by the software agents and it only evolves for the timespan that the computer is left uninterrupted.

the viewer starts to decode an abstract, fractal and systematic regularity that is echoed and evinced in the progressive formation of organic architectures, from rivulets and capillaries, which slowly evolve into cavernous ravines and pulsating arteries, to eroded coastlines and fronds under siege by invasive fungal species. The visuals that emerge from the generative processes are sometimes also surprisingly geometric and linear, reminiscent of city grids, electronic circuitry and alien architectural plans, thus compounding the aleatoric nature of the quasi-organic computational procedures.

What all of the designs have in common is that they are all engaged in a continuous, evolutionary process, correcting themselves, eating themselves, restructuring and reorganising themselves at a genetic level, from the inside out. The artists state: 'An important source of inspiration... are the self-organising processes in our natural surroundings: the complex dynamics of all kinds of physical and chemical processes and the genetic-evolutionary system of organic life that continuously creates new and original forms' (Ibid.). They make it their prerogative to not only observe and record these processes, but also to simulate them, learn from them and integrate them, as heterogeneous agents, into their computationally engaged works of art. Their praxis is motivated by an understanding that the natural systems can and will bring their own efficacy, beauty and dynamics to the artistic outcome of the work, in unexpected ways that the subjective power of the artist, as author-supreme, could never conceive of. Furthermore, and crucially for this paper, their strategy of genetically programming quasi-organic art-systems can be understood as a practical validation of Bernard Stiegler's hypothesis on evolutionary progressions in the technical milieu and the ongoing emergence of what he calls 'inorganic organised beings, or technical objects' (Stiegler 1998, 17), which have a new beauty, dynamics and speed all of their own.

3. Bernard Stiegler's Aesthetics

In his philosophical programme concerning technology, aesthetics and politics, Stiegler goes to great lengths to show, via Freud and Winnicott, how the libidinal economy of late capitalism is one constructed primarily on the strategy of placing desire at the centre of each and every individual's

universe. This is achieved by shifting the focus of libidinal energy from human goals towards that of technically constructed objects; that is, from the collective toward the technical milieu. The marketing and public relations sectors' maintain the ability to create 'phantasms' – idealised projections and mythologies – that can then be mobilised towards the ends of constructing modes and fashion trends. These are always constituted by the human characteristic that has become *the* object of the culture industry: *desire*. Interestingly, Stiegler points out that in hyperindustrial capitalism, when the objects of desire become consumed on a global scale, what arises is a general homogenisation of individual global cultures, which can only lead to the stupefaction of individual and collective intelligences. As such, by converting desire into a calculable commodity, the hypercapitalist culture industry is contributing to the continuing fragmentation, dissipation and henceforth liquidation of desire. For Stiegler, it is precisely the liquidation of desire that precipitates a pandemic of uncaring and indifference that, in turn, diminishes the possibility for audiences to undergo profound aesthetic experiences, whether they be ecstatic or scandalous. Stiegler writes:

If it is true that today the adjective “contemporary” means without scandal. There used to be a time of the scandal: a time when transgression produced a scandal. But this is no longer the case—it’s as if there no longer were any possibilities for transgression, as if one could no longer expect anything from transgression. Or from a mystery. As if there no longer was a mystery. (Stiegler 2011, 8)

This paper is responding to Stiegler's proposal that, in contemporary Western culture, the phenomenon of scandal is obsolete, because this scenario implies disastrous repercussions for contemporary art that attempts to proceed along the lines of avant-garde principles. It poses enormous problems for any manifestation of artistic activism conceived with a view to provoking institutions by scandalising them – a strategy that was, for example, so effectively deployed by early avant-garde movements like the Dadaists, Futurist and Surrealists. In short, it renders aesthetic activism impotent. Stiegler's understanding of scandal is largely conceptualised in terms of Kant's *Analytic of the Sublime* (1790); both concepts are related on the basis that they operate through processes of *outraging* audiences. The

theory of the sublime provides an important conceptual tool for thinking about Stiegler's emphasis on the pertinence of scandal to contemporary cultural production and the strategies available to art thereof.

Stiegler understands scandal as an important aesthetic strategy that gives rise to a 'sort of social levitation,' but one which is firstly 'preceded by a fall' (Stiegler 2011, 12); that is an aesthetic collapse. He conducts an etymology of the term, which he urges us to think about in respect of its Greek origin, *skbandalon*, which means *trap*. He does so in order to show that the initial psychological trajectory conditioned by the crisis is one of a downward momentum, which is diametrically opposite to the more popular and desirable one of aesthetic ascendancy. Operating through a condition of shock, or surprise, this cognitive pitfall, as it were, creates an obstacle that blocks the imagination's ability to cogitate on the abnormality; that is, it places the psyche in a condition of subterranean stasis. Scandal operates by flying in the face of dominant norms, usually administered by an incumbent, top-down regime of taste, thereby stifling the subject's ability to overcome the quandary presented. The psychological collapse caused by a scandal is not easily overcome but it is possible; indeed, it is inevitable.

Stiegler asserts that for a work of art to be truly a work of art, and not simply a bi-product of the globalised culture industry, it must synchronously arouse a *belief* and a *doubt* in its interlocutor. Aesthetic judgement then, for Stiegler, amounts to a state of belief, a belief that, as an idea – whether received independently or shared with a community –, it is always 'intrinsically doubtful and improbable, un-provable' (Stiegler 2011, 10). As such, it is a condition of *mystery* that is constitutive of aesthetic experience. The *mysterious* is the extra-ordinary quality immanent in works of art that vectorises 'a mystagogical performativity of the work' (Stiegler 2011, 6). Stiegler's Kantian reading of aesthetic judgement permits an understanding of works of art as objects, or events, that are endowed with a 'suprasensible faculty' that, in terms of an 'encounter with the sensible (*aesthesis*)' (Ibid.), gives rise to a uniquely subjective experience, which Kant famously analogises with moral judgement. As such, an aesthetic experience is a transformative experience in which the audience learn something;

that is, the audience individuate⁴ over and against the work of art, and are transformed by it. The artwork's mode of presentation extracts and brings forth, in a way that is in itself quite ordinary, that which is *extraordinary* and accommodates it beside, above and beyond the plane of its own ordinary reality. In doing so, it invites the interlocutor to similarly and concurrently inhabit that extraordinary and mysterious dimension next to her/his real one, and it is on this plane where the mysterious aesthetic encounter can and does take place. Furthermore, it is at this *epi-destination*, or milieu, where a *reflexive*, aesthetic judgement is permitted to take place; that is, a type of judgement that cannot be related back, equated or likened to objects or experiences constituted by established, quantifiable or known parameters. Any such reduction or comparison would deflect that judgement back into the domain of the *cognitive* which, for Stiegler, can never be mysterious. Whereas the cognitive is devoid of mystery, 'the reflexive, on the other hand, is the mystery of the extra-ordinary itself, but of an extra-ordinary without transcendence' (Stiegler 2011, 7). This may appear to be an unusual statement for someone who is wielding the (Kantian) transcendental idealist understanding of aesthetic judgement for explicating his own aesthetics, but the statement makes sense when we reconsider the main concept underpinning Stiegler's entire corpus: individuation. Given Stiegler's premise that aesthetic experience is central to individuation and furthermore that the audience is individuated (or transformed) by the artwork, we can elicit the nuanced differences between his and Kant's understanding of the intellectual ascendancy triggered by a reflexive judgement: it *transforms*; not *transcends*. Individuation, as a philo-

⁴ The theory of individuation describes the manner in which a thing is identified as distinguished from other things in its taxonomy; that is, it expresses how a thing is identifiable as an individual thing that is not something else. This concept can be extended to include people, for example, individuation describes how an individual person is understood as distinct from other persons in a collective. The concept has enjoyed a rich history in theoretical writings, extending from Aristotle through Nietzsche, Bergson, Jung, Simondon, and Deleuze, and is now heavily employed in the philosophy of Stiegler. For Stiegler's part, he is much influenced by Simondon, who conceives of technology and materiality as withholding a profound efficacy over the relations between the individual and the group, and determines how processes of individuation play out along these lines. For Stiegler then, this argument is pertinent to aesthetics because of art's inseparable link to materiality and processes of fabrication.

sophical concept, is based on the fundamental pre-supposition of history, which is the primary (teleological) circumstance upon which Hegel mounted his critique of Kant's philosophical programme. Furthermore, thought of in terms of individuation, the trap is *not* escapable through the sort of solipsistic, individual, psychic ascendancy proposed by Kant; conversely, for Stiegler, it can only be overcome by processes of individuation. For Kant the transcendental human can and does overcome the shock of a scandal by themselves, through and by a reflexive judgement; but for Stiegler, a 'surprise'⁵ or 'over-taking' (Ibid., 12) is only attainable through hard mental work, collective discussions and re-assessments that are so central to individuations and transindividuations, which are always mediated through the material world. For Stiegler the 'aftermath' of a scandal, which constitutes an epochal limbo, provides a 'suspension' that is necessary for overcoming the collapse initiated by the scandalous event; therefore, the satisfaction derived from the sublime is only possible as a 'collective levitation' through re-workings and reconsiderations of the offending article. This re-reading of Kant, in the context of his own hybridised view of technique and philosophy is precisely what moves Stiegler to assert that avant-garde art is an assemblage of subject-object relations that communicates in a mystagogical manner. His quasi-transcendental position emphasises a 'suprasensible' quality of artworks that, in terms of an 'encounter with the sensible (*aesthesis*)' (Ibid.), gives rise to a uniquely subjective experience that 'directs us towards a mystery: it reveals next to existence—next to its own existence first and foremost, but also next to that of its author and of its spectator—something other than the plane of existence—if one believes in it' (Stiegler 2011, 6). But, to fully understand Stiegler's suggestion, as well as the role of scandal in terms of aesthetic judgement, we must return to Kant.

4. Review of Kant's Beauty and the Sublime

In opposition to the beautiful, which is characterised by the form of a clearly distinguishable object and its condition of being 'bounded' thereof,

⁵ Stiegler purposefully conducts a grammatisation of the word surprise in order to get to the heart of its meaning. Considering the French (Latin) origin of the words reveals that a direct translation of its discrete parts literally translates as over-take [surprise].

Kant defines an experience of the sublime as one 'found in a formless object, insofar as we present unboundedness, either in the object or because the object prompts us to present it, while yet we add to this unboundedness the thought of its totality' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 97). That is to say, the aesthetic experience that proceeds from an object whose form can be distinguished clearly and cogently is one akin to the beautiful, whereas the sublime proceeds from a confrontation with things which either appear formless or, because of our inability to reason the magnitude of their presence through the normalising – *a priori* – criteria of time and space, exceed our ability to perceive their form. As such, the art audience's ability to recognise spatio-temporal limitations is called into question under the irreconcilable experiential conditions of the sublime.

Kant's critique of the judgement of taste explicates how the human mind maintains the ability to amalgamate nature and understanding towards a definite reconciliation. In the chapter, he declares that the sublime operates on the basis of outraging the sensible faculties of intuition, thereby contravening judgemental processes. He is expanding on Edmund Burke's hypothesis, which suggests that there is a certain feeling of 'delight' that proceeds from a terrifying experience. However, Kant argues that there is an unintuitive derivation that initiates as a feeling of 'admiration and respect' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 98) but then manifests into a 'negative pleasure', arising from the ability of sensible intuition to reconcile aesthetic experiences that either 'overwhelm' or 'overbear' the imagination (Ibid.). Henceforth, Kant surmises the delight as something akin to a feeling of ascendancy over, and autonomy from, nature,⁶ which gives rise to further satisfaction.

It is furthermore important to note that for Burke, the sublime experience is one arising directly out of the unpleasant situation, whereas for Kant, the experience is fundamentally unrelated to the event; that is, only the radical subjectivity of the mind could procure pleasure from a clearly disagreeable confrontation. Kant writes: 'For what is sublime, in the proper meaning of the term, cannot be contained in any sensible form' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 99). This makes sense if we reconsider Kant's as-

⁶ For Kant, aesthetic experience is 'always confined to the conditions that must meet to be in harmony with nature' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 98).

sertion at the beginning of the chapter, whereupon he says that the effect of 'unboundedness' is followed by the 'thought of its totality' (Ibid.). This is to say, the sublime is constituted by two phases, the second phase being a sort of spontaneous reaction to the first. The first phase operates by halting the imagination's ability to grasp the totality of the encounter and, straightforwardly, the inhibiting of the faculties of comprehension to supply a concept that would permit its understanding. The second phase, for Kant, is located in the faculties of reason. It is constituted by a reactive (or 'reflexive') intellectual movement that operates to counteract the impediment caused by the first phase. It consists in the ability of sensible intuition to reconcile aesthetic experiences that either 'overwhelm' or 'overbear' the imagination. Importantly, this reflexive intellectual movement is the locus of Stiegler's oscillation between 'belief' and 'doubt'; but, in an age of computer-scientific rationalisation, and demystification of the world, why does Stiegler choose to employ these quasi-transcendentalist terms?

5. Kant's Bifurcation: the Dynamical Versus the Mathematical Sublime

Of central concern to this paper is the fact that Kant identifies a bifurcation, in the taxonomy of the sublime experience, resulting from the imagination's referral of the 'agitation either to the *cognitive power* or to the *power of desire*' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 101). Thus, he is moved to make a distinction between two different types of agitation, the former being of a 'mathematical' nature and the latter being of, what he calls, a 'dynamical' one (Ibid.). The dynamical sublime is, henceforth, akin to *scandal* because both phenomena are bound to the human capacity for *desire*. In the case of the mathematically sublime, the imagination is overwhelmed by a feeling of absolute magnitude, which is always subject to the *a priori* conditions of time and space. Herein the subject is thrust back into itself because of a disparity between the object and any conceptual relation, which implies largeness 'beyond all comparison' (Ibid.); that is, a presentation too great for the imagination to instantaneously absorb in its entirety – infinity. This type of cognitive agitation holds more interest for Kant, and it shall be demonstrated that it is fundamentally related to art which engages

newness and technology. However, first it is necessary to explicate both genera in order to prove the key point at the heart of this paper; that is, while the mathematical sublime is experiencing an ecstatic ascension, the dynamical genus is undergoing a certain demise.

5.1. *The Dynamical Sublime*

The dynamical sublime relates to an overbearing power that obstructs the will and as a result, the subject is rendered incapable. It operates on the basis that it 'blocks the ability of the imagination to act in accordance with the understanding' (Shaw 2006, 81); however, it appears that in regard to this symptom Kant is apprehending an experience that affects the emotions over and above a rationale arrived at through quantitative reasoning. Henceforth, in this case he is associating the agitative condition with an anxiety arising from an encounter with unpleasantly overpowering forces, which he likens to the terrifying forces of nature. This is one of the few situations in Kant's entire philosophical system that he offers an example:⁷

consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power, hurricanes with all the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean heaved up, the high waterfall of a mighty river, and so on. Compared to the might of any of these, our ability to resist becomes an insignificant trifle. (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 120)

Kant is resistant to locating the sublime in the object proper, thereby strengthening his case for identifying the sublime as a subjective condition of the imagination that is experienced as an agitation of the emotional faculties. Further on in the same paragraph, he asserts that the dynamically sublime object of reflection 'becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 120). As such, the source of delight obtained from the dynamical sublime

⁷ Consistent with his philosophical programme of transcendental idealism, Kant is notorious for not offering examples, which can make his work quite difficult to read and often constitutes the source of criticism directed against him.

is connected with the safety provided by distance, which allows for processes of contemplation to activate, ultimately conditioning a satisfaction. Said differently, the satisfaction derived from the contemplation relates to an appreciation for human fragility when confronted by violent forces (of nature) and analogously, via the second (reflexive) phase, our ability to comprehend this fragility, which transmits the characteristic of *mightiness*,⁸ initially associated with the object under regard, away from it, and towards something in the mind of the beholder. Thus understood, nature is perceived as having 'no dominion over us' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 5: 261) and the experience, as such, indicates the existence of a higher (transcendental) faculty, thereby bringing about a condition of solace and intellectual ascendancy. In this regard, one can surmise that the death of scandal to which Stiegler is referring – and the straightforward emergency that the art world is experiencing – is inherently connected to the difficulty in occasioning a dynamically sublime experience in the wake of a pervasive *aesthetics of anything*, propounded by digital networks and their liquidation of desire. That is, the inherent difficulty in occasioning intellectual ascendancy through art – following visual culture's legitimation of even the most horrific, violent and offensive imagery – leads one to conclude that, in contemporaneity, any experience of the sublime is largely dependent on the mathematical genus.

5.2. *The Mathematical Sublime*

For Kant, the mathematical sublime is related to the inability of the spectator's imagination to present an analogous idea that would facilitate comprehension of something denoting enormity 'beyond all comparison' (Kant and Pluhar 1987, 103). Said differently, in opposition to something 'great' that can still be related back to a universally understood unit of measurement (or 'quantum'), the mathematical sublime is the result of a judgement arising from an aesthetic encounter wherein quantitative estimation is involved and fails. In Kant's own words: this 'brings with it the Idea of the sublime and produces that emotion which no mathematical estimation of its magnitude by means of numbers can bring about' (Kant 1914, 111). As

⁸ Kant discusses the 'mighty' characteristic of nature in relation to the dynamically sublime. See pp. 119 – 123.

such, it is an experience of being overwhelmed by a seemingly unfathomable 'sequence of sensible intuitions' (Shaw 2006, 81) extending towards infinity, because the imagination must instead cope with the rationality of never being able to account for the totality of the experiential progression.

Although Kant does relate the mathematical sublime to problems surrounding the idea of scale, he does not restrict it to that which is infinitely great. It has already been noted that, for Kant, all attempts to understand and reconcile experiences engendered by art are related back to nature. But, in the case of the mathematical sublime, referents in the natural world invariably fall short, because when 'considered in another relation' they can be 'reduced to the infinitely small' (Kant 1914, 109). Conversely, ideas that present an experience of the tiny or the miniscule, by extension of the imagination, equally disclose the 'greatness of the world, if compared with still smaller standards' (Ibid.). So, to reiterate: An experience of the mathematical is *not* located in the objective scale of the thing under consideration, but instead in the great 'effort of the Imagination' to present a 'unit for the estimation of magnitude,' which in turn implies 'a reference to something absolutely great' (Kant 1914, 120). The *unknown* surrounding the idea of absolute magnitude and the subsequent laying bare of the 'inadequateness' of the imagination refers the imagination to the law of Reason which in turn 'excites in us the feeling of a supersensible faculty' (Kant 1914, 109).⁹ It will be demonstrated over the next couple of sections why this relationship between magnitude and the imagination becomes incredibly important to aesthetic experience in digital media art.

6. The Sublime and Technology

Firmly rooted in the terrain of retinal theorisation, Kant was writing in an epoch when telescopes and microscopes were the cutting-edge of optical instrumentation; indeed, he does refer to these instruments to help elucidate his theoretical rationale. Micrographic illustrations similar to those

⁹ In this deployment of the term 'supersensible', one can observe a resemblance to the language employed by Stiegler, in his discussion of the mystagogy of the work of art, which helps reinforce my suggestion that it is the mathematical strand of the sublime that Stiegler is pursuing in relation to technological works.

first produced by Robert Hooke, in *Micrographia* (1665),¹⁰ would have held an interest for Kant, and his philosophical contemporaries, by testifying to the existence of unknown and unexplored, yet nevertheless tangible and contiguous, realms situated just beyond the standard levels of human perception [FIGURES 4A AND 4B].

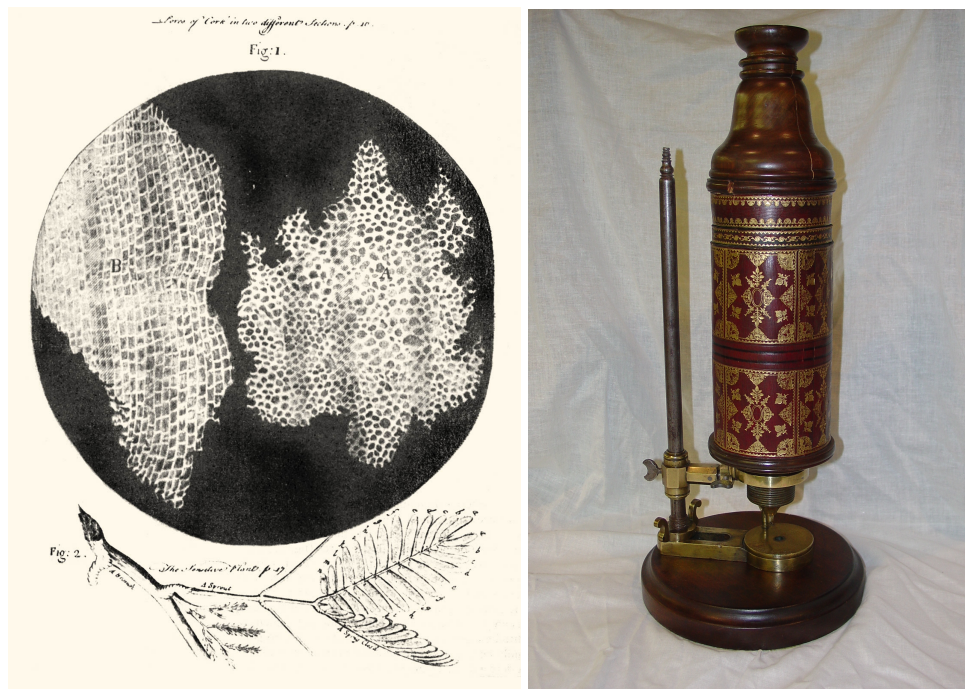


FIGURE 4A. Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (extract), 1665. A drawing of the cellular structure of cork and a sprig of the sensitive plant.

FIGURE 4B. Anonymous, *Hooke's Microscope*. Used by Hooke for magnifying his minute subjects.

Kant's observation on the fluid and reversible relations between the enormous and the tiny, when perceived through and by the subjectivity of the human imagination, is an important observation concerning modern aesthetic experience because, thinking about it under the auspices of com-

¹⁰ Hooke, Robert. 1667. *Micrographia: Or Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made By Magnifying Glasses. With Observations and Inquiries Thereupon*. John Martyn.

putational economies, all technologies and fabrications undergo continual processes of refinement; that is, miniaturisation and acceleration.

It is on foot of this relationship between aesthetics and scale, between the imagination and magnitude – particularly the miniscule – that Stiegler's techno-aesthetics (which is also to say his politics) become pertinent to this discussion because, as Stiegler says himself: 'calculation... will come to determine the essence of modernity' (Stiegler 1998, 3). By this, he means that modernity is characterised by an increasing industrialisation of every *thing*, through processes of mathematical and statistical rationalisation. From natural, organic entities to sociocultural activities, modernity consists of the general organisation, and demystification of the world. This is why I suggest that sublime experience, in the epoch of computation, is one primarily located in the domain of maths and calculation. But, it is a certain type of calculation that constitutes the foundation of the new genus of the sublime.

It is *speed* that formulates the basis of the disparity between what Stiegler calls the first and 'the second mechanical turn of sensibility' (Stiegler 2011, 6). This is constituted by the acceleration in processes of automation from tenths of seconds, in the mechanical epoch, to billionths of seconds, in the digital epoch – processes that are always underpinned by calculation. Digital technologies, henceforth, precipitate a situation that shifts the emphasis away from Kant's a priori categories of space and time towards the organisational pressure unearthed by a quest for 'a speed "older" than time and space... which are the derivative decompositions of speed' (Stiegler 1998, 17). For Stiegler the question of speed is *the* essential consideration when engaging the techno-aesthetic-political question, because 'time, like space, is only thinkable in terms of speed (which remains unthought)' (Stiegler 1998, 15). Stiegler is not attempting to undo or undermine the spatio-temporal work on aesthetic experience that has been formulated throughout the centuries, following Burke and Kant's preliminary interrogations; conversely, he is attempting to approach the question of aesthetics and politics through an originary understanding of technics and time that is vectorised by the previously unexplored relational normal of speed. For Stielger, the question of speed does not just relate to efficiency (in the Heideggerian sense), nor to the speed of data transfers, the explosion of real-time technologies and the inevitable 'processes of deterritorialisation

accompanying' (Stiegler 1998, 17) them (as per Virilio). More significantly, for Stiegler, are the implications of '*the speed of technical evolution*' (Ibid., emphasis added). The unexpectedly fast development of the technical milieu brings about epochal 'ruptures in temporalization (event-ization)' (Ibid.), which themselves comprise the basis of sublime experiences.¹¹ The relations between speed and technics are not just the essence of sublime aesthetic experience but so too, for Stiegler, are they fundamental to *all* experience – from the most banal musings to the most meticulously laboured effort – in the sociopolitical landscape of contemporary Western intersubjectivity.¹² Therefore, speed suffuses both ontology *and* epistemology because, for Stiegler, they are always underpinned by technical processes of exteriorisation, and in this respect speed itself, as an originator of time, needs to be engaged pharmacologically; that is, with the apprehension that there are both positive and negative aspects to it. Stiegler's line of inquisition into the human–technical problem, through the transductive¹³ relational normal of speed, engenders an original thesis that elucidates how the progressive expansion of the technological milieu, on the one hand, increasingly contributes to the erasure of the original, organic human condition, and on the other hand, bears the promise of infinite prosthesis that is always reducible to the biological domain of exteriorised speech and gesture: the technologised spirit. It is this understanding of speed that pushes it towards a position of quasi-transcendental authority.

¹¹ The sublime has, since Kant, been characterised by a psychological and temporal *event* that presents itself through a rupturing of the temporality of consciousness. This understanding of it as a temporal occurrence gained currency through Heidegger's coining of the term *ein Ereignis* [*an Event*], which he defines as a state of infinite simplicity that can only be apprehended through a condition of privation. The concept of the Event has been expanded and developed in the work of several prominent philosophers throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, especially in the work of J.F. Lyotard and Alain Badiou.

¹² This point brings the argument back to a consideration of 'the society of the spectacle,' which has endured a rich history of interrogation from the *Situationists* through to Rancière.

¹³ Transduction, is a term and concept that Stiegler inherits from Simondon. It is a relational concept that 'opens up possibilities of internal resonances in a process of psychic and collective individuation, and that thus (re)constitutes its terms' (Stiegler 2009, 47). In this regard, the technological milieu demonstrates its efficacy in relation to the formation of individual and collective subjectivities and identities.

Thinking about Driessens and Verstappen's *E-Volver* in terms of Stiegler's transductive speed, shows that the new idea at the heart of the project, which impels an experience of the sublime, is fundamentally related to the aporetic condition of light speed electronics conceived as both infinitely prosthetic and dehumanising. The newness, that for Alain Badiou firstly constitutes the sublime experience as an Event, can therefore be reduced yet again to the essential quality of speed. That Driessens and Verstappen's idea is new there is no doubt, but that characteristic must firstly submit to the essential authority of Stiegler's speed that is older than time. For *E-Volver*, the revelation brought to the confrontation between artwork and spectator, by the technologies of real-time, automatic image construction, is inextricably linked with a laying-bare of the incomprehensible speed of technological evolution. This shockingly fast evolutionary process is transmissive of the horrific idea of technology over-taking the human, replacing the human, proletarianising and decommissioning the human. Sublime experience henceforth compels reflections on broader societal subjectivities connected to the pervasiveness of digital hard and software, which inevitably engenders a set of sociohistorical and ontological questions. But, according to Kant's thesis, the faculties of reason must also re-activate and impel a rational reflection on the positive aspects than can give rise to aesthetic ascendancy. Those positive aspects can always be traced back to the artist's ability to change the rules; that is, the unique human ability to innovate, which requires a deviation from automatism that no machine can execute by itself. By demonstrating their ability to introduce a new technocultural configuration, a reinvention, Driessens and Verstappen show how art ideas offer a means to travel faster than the message in circuit; that is, faster than light-speed and to think with greater power than any computer executed calculation.

7. From a Computational Sublime to a Technological Sublime

In an enquiry into what they define as the 'computational sublime', via an analysis of Driessens and Verstappen's work, McCormick and Dorin (2001) argue that digital art thrusts a sublime experience upon the viewer by foregrounding an inability to comprehend 'the speed and scale of [the

computer's] internal mechanism, and because its operations occur at a rate and in a space vastly different to the realm of our direct perceptual experience' (McCormack and Dorin 2001, 78). This is certainly concurrent with Kant's definition of the mathematical sublime; however, their paper – in spite of its title – only offers a rather cursory glance at the theory of the sublime, consisting only in a very brief outline of Kant's analytic and a fleeting nod to Lyotard's postmodernist view. It does offer a focused and original account of competing definitions of art, 'the role of subversion, mental models of understanding for the artist and audience' (McCormack and Dorin 2001, 79), and the slippage art has experienced under the weight of a newly established confluence with computing and (biological) science. However, they do, themselves, acknowledge that these are not 'the only issues for consideration' (Ibid), yet fail to elaborate on this statement. Their hypothesis of the sublime remains locked within a sort of scientific-idealistic framework that primarily considers digital art from its formal, autonomous, epistemic and mimetic points of view. Their reflections remain largely Kantian because their 'computational sublime' is conceived in terms of incomprehension, fear and pleasure corresponding to the power and vastness of nature and the lack of a concrete referent. Their article considers generative art in terms of Kant's emphasis on form, but they ignore Hegelian considerations such as intellectual import and advancements made by Adorno – in relation to modern art and, crucially, the avant-garde – that combine those former aspects with Marx's (materialist) insistence on art's embeddedness within sociohistorical, economic and material totality. It is these aspects of aesthetic experience that have been most recently advanced by Stiegler, and which I feel need to be teased out in the context of computational culture. This paper contends that what must be added to McCormick and Dorin's hypothesis is the problem of machinic evolution (or technical individuation) under the apprehension of Stiegler's thesis; that is, there is a groundlessness introduced by digital art that gathers the primordial problem of the *sublimity of speed*.¹⁴ Herein

¹⁴ Stiegler actually describes this as 'Transductive speed' a term that is, in fact an expansion on Simondon's theory of *Transduction*, as explained in an earlier footnote. It helps gather the nature of the sublimity of speed. Aside from Simondon's understanding of the term transduction also implies, on one hand, the action of converting energy or a message into another form, such as symbolic matter, and on the other hand, the biological

the deceleration of human ontogenesis gives way to an acceleration in epiphylogenesis that begins to map unthought possibilities and unknown dimensions within the ontogenetic reality of automatised technical poiēsis.¹⁵

Digital cultural works foreground the *morbid* idea that, under the aegis of the speed of technical evolution, the techno-human is subjected to a loss of nature and humanity, which Stiegler describes as our originary 'de-fault' of being¹⁶. Herein the human is subjected to a forgetting of the eternal and truthful nature of being-there, which always bears the brunt of a transcendental pressure. This dehumanisation is weighed against an accelerating progressive destiny of technical supplementation (prosthesis) and the possibility for *ecstatic* self-actualisation and observational multiplicity, through technicised evolution that is empirical in its reach but cannot be simply reduced to biology, anthropology or mechanics. In this

understanding of transferring genetic material from one organism to another.

¹⁵ *Ontogenesis* refers to the development of an individual organism or anatomical or behavioural feature from the earliest stage to maturity. *Phylogenesis* is the evolutionary development and diversification of a species or group of organisms, or of a particular feature of an organism. Stiegler extends the term phylogenesis by adding 'epi' to the beginning, in order to describe the transition of evolutionary development from the biological to the technical milieu. As such, artworks are conceived as physical exteriorisations that are impelled by developments in the epiphylogenetic layer. The sublime 'shock' occasioned by the encounter with the work is inherently related to the speed of technical phylogenesis and the profound technological efficacy that it foregrounds.

¹⁶ Stiegler writes: 'One must understand "de-fault" here in relation to what it is, that is, a flaw in being. And yet, whereas animals are positively endowed with qualities, it is tekhnē that forms the lot of humans, and tekhnē is prosthetic; that is, it is entirely artifice' (Stiegler 1998, 193). He draws the concept from the myth of Prometheus, in Plato's *Protagoras*, in which humans come into being because Epimetheus forgets to allocate a 'quality' to man, leaving him naked: in a default of being. As such humans lack any balancing quality that would place them in harmony with nature and are therefore doomed to supplement their condition through 'prostheses, instruments' (Stiegler 1998, 114). Throughout the work Stiegler repeatedly emphasises the *originary default* of the human species that engenders its becoming technical, as opposed to other living species. Consequently, humans are therefore indeterminate and contingent. Stiegler deploys the term, on one hand, in a deconstructionist sense in order to establish an ambiguous play between fault and default, while on the other, to retain the connotations of a lacking, a failure, an error, a 'deficiency' or 'defect'. The concept represents a strategy that attempts to think through the limits of diverse fields of human practice and thought—including the human, social and experimental sciences as well as religion, politics and art—via the attendant reflection on the relationship between humans and technics.

sense, the experience of the technological sublime that is disclosed in the work of Driessens and Verstappen is activated by an 'aporetic oscillation of speed between the (quasi-)transcendental and the (quasi-)empirical' (Ekman 2007, 60); that is, their automated, emergent systems employ the speed-dynamics of hyperindustrial calculative systems that give rise to reflections on a more original and irresolvable problem concerning speed: our biological, ontogenetic and sentient selves become increasingly dissipated against the horizon of advances in the technical, epiphylogenetic milieu.¹⁷

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¹⁷ It is worth noting that, despite the nuanced technological and historical-material considerations that Stiegler brings into cogitations on the sublime in computational culture, qua Kant the technological sublime is still ultimately an aporetic discussion locked within 'the conditions that must meet to be in harmony with nature' (Kant and Pluhar, 1987, 98). However, in this case the emphasis has shifted from a classical understanding of nature towards internalised human nature and its erosion by technology.

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Tracing the Invisible

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I will address Jacques Derrida's deconstructive reading of Merleau-Ponty, focusing on both philosophers' treatment of painting and drawing respectively. I will detail Merleau-Ponty's concept of the *chiasmus* as the intertwining relationship between the visible and invisible to deflect Derrida's deconstructive analysis. For Derrida, the 'trace' of drawing is always haunted by an ambiguity, the aporia at the heart of vision itself. I contend that such an ambiguity is already articulated by Merleau-Ponty inherent in the visible, marked by the very opacity of the body. I will argue it is an ambiguity never fully explored in Derrida's deconstructive analysis and while Merleau-Ponty insists on embodiment as the disclosive force between the visible and invisible, Derrida remains on the side of textual surface.

1. Introduction

In his seminal essay, "Eye and Mind" (1960), Merleau-Ponty grounds his discussion on painting through the body that constitutes a clear development of his earlier work. This leads toward an ontological theory of painting that begins to consider the visible and its reciprocal relationship to the invisible that pervades Merleau-Ponty's last great unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964). It is this incomplete text that generates an evocative response and re-reading of Merleau-Ponty by Jacques Derrida. In *Memoirs of the Blind* (1991), Derrida also marks the borders of this threshold between the visible and the invisible, mobilised through the graphic act of drawing. This paper interrogates the particular reading of Merleau-Ponty by Derrida through both philosophers' engagement with the visual arts.¹

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¹ Derrida's most explicit treatment of Merleau-Ponty in his late work *On Touch, Jean-Luc Nancy* (2005). In this text Derrida concludes that Merleau-Ponty has mis-read the essence of touch that Husserl proposes in his own philosophy. For Derrida, this has invariable consequences for alterity while also underlining the hierarchy between vision over touch.

2. Merleau-Ponty's Eye and Mind

Within the tradition of philosophy consciousness was reified as the centre of knowledge and action. In his work Merleau-Ponty attempted to recast this understanding by emphasizing the bodily operations that are necessary to make consciousness possible in the first place.

I have only to see something to know how to reach it and deal with it, even if I do not know how this happens in the nervous system. My moving body makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it; that is why I can steer it through the visible .

The above quote from "Eye and Mind" condenses the essential concerns and propositions of his earlier work, the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), where Merleau-Ponty builds upon the influence of Edmund Husserl and Gestalt psychology to articulate a new position of embodied perception.

In the first section of "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty re-iterates the limiting scope of the natural sciences that invariably mark the body as a technical body "[...]where human creations are derived from a natural information process, itself conceived on the model of human machines". For him, there are a range of non-conscious processes that occur through our breathing, eye adjustments, sophisticated movements and reactions that deny such reductive treatments that dominate the natural sciences and traditional epistemology. Congruent with his earlier work, the body through its motile arrangements becomes the very site of perception itself and consequently for Merleau-Ponty, painting is naturally embodied.

Developing out of this, Merleau-Ponty highlights painting as the medium that can elucidate the hidden contingencies of the visible. The convergence between the "profane vision" and the painted scene, the invisible, is revealed through the 'reflexivity' of the body." The body not only reveals the visible world through its pre-conscious, apprehensive movements but the visible world and motor intentionality fold into each other. This folding or 'palpation' of vision is realised most resolutely through the act of painting. Although painting celebrates and evokes the other side of the visible it is never totalizing but exemplifies the solicitation of a world of meaning and significance. For Merleau-Ponty:

The painter “takes his body with him,” says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body—not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement .

This argument was already marked in his earlier, essay “Cézanne’s Doubt” (1946) where Merleau-Ponty found an artistic correlative to his own project in the painting of Paul Cézanne. Through his painting, Cézanne suppresses the schematization of the mind in explicitly shaping the lived world. The body perspective is expressed as not something static but something ever changing through our body motility that opens up those objects that solicit us. The eye — and by extension the body — are constantly shifting to gain an optimal grip on the world. Cézanne’s lived perspective reveals the objects, the cup, and the bowl of fruit as they appear through the act of perception. The scenes in his still life never appear fixed but always suggest movement, a body never at rest. For Merleau-Ponty, this motor awareness is not a conscious activity but is always occurring at a primary level of perception. By lending his body to the world, Cézanne explicitly marks our actual lived mobile perspective. In essence, Cézanne is not painting the world, as such, but painting how we relate to the world. By ‘lending his body to the world’, Cézanne explicitly marks our actual lived mobile perspective.

In the later work, there is movement in Merleau-Ponty’s thought, whereby in “Eye and Mind” he remarks that “The visible world and the world of my motor projects are both total parts of the same Being” . Here the world itself is shedding the last remnants of objectivity, as something outside ourselves. The body schema, an essential concept in his earlier work is being ontologically grounded.² The world becomes the ‘visible’.

² “The theory of the body schema is, implicitly, a theory of perception” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.239). This highlights the significance that Merleau-Ponty places on the body schema which determines that through underlying, bodily arrangements with the world I become aware of a world. Interestingly he states that “[...] The body image is finally a way of stating that my body is in-the-world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.115). It is worth noting that the word ‘in’ here is significant, whereby in the later work the body through the flesh is not only ‘in’ but ‘of’ the world.

Merleau-Ponty's concept of the *flesh* extends from this articulation, an ontological principle that becomes the ground level of our immersion in the world. The *flesh* is the filament, an element which binds beings and the world together, enabling differentiation, the space for Being itself to appear. In his final works, this difference constituted as *reversibility* leads Merleau-Ponty to devise this concept of the *flesh*. Note that for Merleau-Ponty "the flesh is an ultimate notion" a carnal expression of our intimate bound up relations to the things in the world.³ The body is now bound to the visible through the *flesh*. The visible encompasses the world *and* the body, for both are "[...] total parts of the same Being [...]" that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement". The body not only reveals the visible world through its pre-conscious, apprehensive movements. It now also reveals itself through vision as that which is part of the visible. In "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty contends:

The enigma derives from the fact that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself.⁴

Thus vision and visibility are inscribed upon each other, the visible active in vision prior to conscious articulation, emanating from the spread of the invisible. Painting, for Merleau-Ponty, best exemplifies this solicitation and order. It is through the concept of depth that this occurs. Depth gets considerable and more attuned attention in Merleau-Ponty's late work. While in the *Phenomenology of Perception* depth is analyzed as a more technical aspect of the perceptive act, it forms a crux around which he devises his new concept of the *flesh*. Here Merleau-Ponty articulates

³ As Merleau-Ponty states: "To designate it we should need the old term 'element,' in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being" (Merleau-Ponty, 2003, p. 139).

⁴ This idea is already considered in his earlier work where he points out "[...] how can we possibly dissociate the certainty of our perceptual existence from that of its external counterpart? It is of the essence of my vision to refer not only to an alleged visible entity, but also to a being actually seen." (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.436).

depth as a means to uncover the interconnectedness of both the artist and the world that is expressed through their work. Cézanne is again influential by apparently exclaiming that “Space must be shattered this fruit bowl broken [...]” for a more meaningful, ontological, understanding of space. Cézanne understood intuitively when Merleau-Ponty declares that “[...] we must seek space and its contents as together .” Reversibility of both the painter and the painted is revealed. As Cézanne remarks “The landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness.” This reversibility, a folding over of the perceiver and the perceived, is at the core of Merleau-Ponty’s essay and is something painting by its very nature reveals.

3. Derrida’s Eye and Hand

In *Memoirs of the Blind*, Derrida turns to drawing as a device to weave together different artistic themes such as blindness, memory and self-portraiture. But what is most striking in the text is his return to the body and in particular the relationship between the hand and eye that are invariably responsible for the mark making process of drawing (and writing)⁵. However, in contrast to Merleau-Ponty, Derrida insists “We are talking here about drawing, not painting.” Recall, drawing for Merleau-Ponty is always re-appropriated through painting. Merleau-Ponty contends that there remains an inherent danger in the line, one that divides and sets up boundaries between subject and object that inevitably denies the very thickness of the perceived visible world. It is painting that reveals the very depth of the world.

However, for Derrida, drawing not painting becomes the very mode of considering the visible and its inherent relationship to the invisible. To think of drawing is to think of a commitment to vision and to what is visible. For Derrida, the mark or trace (or ‘trait’) constitutes a commitment to the visible but it also inscribes within it is the site of the invisible. The visible – that which we see – is always redrawn through our activity of seeing.

⁵ Always writing for Derrida; drawing becomes an extension of writing. “I then scribble with my right hand a few squiggly lines on a piece of paper attached to the dashboard or lying on the seat beside me . . . These notations—unreadable graffiti—are for memory; one would later think them to be a ciphered writing.” (Derrida 1993, p.3)

In order to be absolutely foreign to the visible and even to the potentially visible, to the possibility of the visible, this invisibility would still inhabit the visible [...] The visible *as such* would be invisible [...]"

The 'right on the visible' corresponds to the mark of the line, the recession of the trait through the process of drawing itself. Here Derrida proposes a whole re-reading of Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and Invisible*. But he disputes what he considers to be a layering of the invisible that Merleau-Ponty prescribes. "To be other of the visible, absolute invisibility must neither take place elsewhere nor constitute another visible" It is his conviction to an 'absolute' invisible that separates his concept from Merleau-Ponty's. Derrida suggests that he is deferring to Merleau-Ponty's "pure transcendence" as the site of the invisible, that which remains unavailable but persistent in the visible.

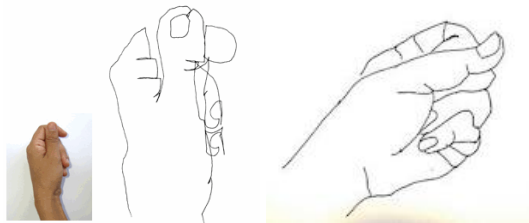
As I mentioned, we can already see that drawing for Derrida is fundamentally different to Merleau-Ponty's conception of it. He does not think of drawing in terms of a divisive static outline to be subsumed under the rendering of a painted thickness. Derrida wants to think drawing differently and so proposes two hypotheses that echo binocular vision. The two hypotheses are defined as abocular and double genitive respectively. It is the abocular which marks drawing as a kind of blindness. Derrida evokes the myth of the blind man as a seer evoking the parallel between the artist and blind person as visionaries that bring to light that which is yet to appear in vision. Here the hand of the blind person is present, rushing ahead, exploring space, gesturing as drawing. Similarly, when the draftsman focuses on the object, without looking at the canvas or page he or she draws precipitately, "[...] the hand ventures forth . . . rushes ahead." The hand leads, tracing out the other side of the invisible. In the second case, the double genitive, Derrida comments that blindness still permeates drawing while the eye 'represents'. The artist, in this case, "invents drawing" as 'trait'.⁶ When the draftsman focuses on the canvas, the object becomes

⁶ Robert Vallier in his essay "Blindness and Invisibility" defines these terms as follows. In the first instance "Abocular hypothesis is also explorative [...] the very operation of drawing could be performed without the eyes [...] but with the hand. The hand rushes ahead without seeing, leaping without looking [...] The hand, holding onto and using the inscriptive instrument, explores the space ahead of it, blindly feeling its way through the

secondary. The artist relies on memory and draws anticipatively.⁷

darkness. "In the second hypothesis Vallier defines the double genitive as a restitution "Between model and copy there is the spread of invisibility through which the draftsman's gaze must pass in order to draw [...] the draftsman relentlessly pursues it (the trait) in the night and quickly traces it on the canvas, restoring to the light of day before it fades from memory" (Vallier 1997, pp.193-195)

⁷ An example of the contrast between both thinkers can be seen through a drawing exercise, which I have both participated in and taught, called blind contour drawing [FIGURES 1 AND 2]. The student is asked to draw an object without looking at their page but by focusing on the object and drawing what they see. In practice this seems simple but is much harder to achieve. We feel compelled to look at the page to measure up the drawing to what we see. The results initially tend to be quite distorted but with practice the marks being made on the page begin to correspond to the object in front of the viewer in a most extraordinary way. The results reveal a very primary view of an object, one prior to the work of a conceptual perspectival schema that is often grafted onto the flat picture plane of a page. The purpose of the exercise is to reveal the implicit awareness the body has of space ahead of a 'correct' schema being imposed by the mind. It breaks the habitual trained perspectival approach of representing what we see. There remains something elemental about the results of this exercise that illustrate the essential hand eye synthesis at work. The marks made converge toward an outline of an object and this is where Merleau-Ponty's notional sacrifice of depth in drawing could be contested. The line acts as a boundary, the outline brings forth, while the page is pushed back. The outline reveals an object against the flat white of a page, the threshold or boundary of perceptual depth is marked out. Depth is achieved through the very contour of the outline. Merleau-Ponty does re-evaluate line in "Eye and Mind" using Leonardo's concept of the "flexuous line" to denote the generative quality available in line. But it is Derrida that gives the much richer account of the drawing process that highlights this generative quality of the line and how it marks not a boundary but a threshold. Where I disagree with him invariably leads me back to Merleau-Ponty, because the body enables the process of mark making through both its comportment and style. In Derrida, the threshold is never recognized as depth.



FIGURES 1 AND 2. *Examples of Blind Contour.*

Therefore blindness surfaces, as the trait and recedes in the visible "[...] escapes the field of vision." A shadow of the object is traced at the moment of this blindness.

Derrida locates a dualism that is operative in the act of drawing that equates to hand before eye and eye before-hand. But Derrida's insistence is that through either mode of mark making, blindness is present. This represents the "[...] two great 'logics'" of the invisible at the origin of drawing. Thus two hypotheses and accordingly, two "blindnesses", about drawing take shape. Blindness becomes the *aporia*— the condition for the possibility for drawing at all. Derrida is not talking here about a pathology of the body, but the blindness invoked during the act of drawing itself which is indicative of that which sustains the drawing itself. For Derrida, the key lies between the space of both 'logics'. There is an inherent interdependency between these two hypotheses that are enabling of the mark making process. Recall in broader terms, the Derridean 'trace' (which becomes 'trait') is the absent part of a sign's presence. It marks the parasitical necessity in any binary position, for two opposing points rely on each other for the very constitution and sustenance. In this instance the 'trait' marks the recession of the line into the invisible. I quote at length:

We have been interested thus far in the act of tracing, in the tracing of the trait. What is to be thought now of the trait once traced? A tracing, an outline, cannot be seen. One should in fact not see it (let's not say however: "One must not see it") insofar as all the colored thickness that it retains tends to wear itself out so as to mark the single edge of a contour: between the inside and the outside of a figure. [...] Once this limit is reached, there is nothing more to see, not even black and white, not even figure/form, and this is the trait, the line itself: [...] Nothing belongs to the trait, and thus, to drawing and to the thought of drawing, not even its own "trace" [...] The trait joins and adjoins only in separating .

What Derrida evokes however is the impossibility of the original trait to be witnessed when we return to the perceived object. We cannot locate a particular outline that has been scribed onto the page. What the lines describe disappear in front of us. Suddenly the exercise of drawing is impressed upon all who look upon the world. Thus all we are left with is a

shadowy outline of the visible articulated through the blindness of drawing; we are left with the gesture to an invisible field, that which is 'right on the visible'.

Even here whether drawing is improvised, mimetic or not the 'trait' remains "unbeseen" by the artist. Robert Valier notes that the "[...] trait passes through the invisible and remains there [...] because the space of difference between the thing and its representation is and remains abyssal: there is no possibility of return." So in essence, Derrida is highlighting the impossibility of the retention of the trait once the mark is traced. At the site of the mark the trait recedes into this invisible field. Memory then, evidenced in the marks made on the page is not enough to grip this passing, this recession into the invisible. The marks are the tracings of this movement of the trait into invisibility. But, and this is crucial to Derrida, it is precisely in this passing into the invisible — this difference between the invisible and the visible — that vision itself becomes possible at all.

Derrida claims that drawing is neither abocular nor double genitive in its operation but the intertwining of both, a chiasmatic relationship. However, following Merleau-Ponty, I argue that because Derrida has to relegate the body, movement cannot be invoked as imperative to the very act of mark making. It is not just the movement of the hand but the ever restless eye that attempts to gain maximum grip in a perspectival situation. The eye is as much precipitative in drawing as the hand is.

So how does the Derridean visible correspond to Merleau-Ponty's concept of the visible? It is through our earlier description of depth that another significant divergence appears. Recall Merleau-Ponty's attempt to re-think depth beyond the tradition of Cartesian spatial co-ordinates. I remarked that depth is an essential feature in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach, deployed through our body schema and actualized in the painting of the world. Derrida's lines can have no depth, for they are constantly disappearing from view. In "Eye and Mind" depth becomes the 'primary dimension'. It is not a dimension that is restricted to a conventional measurable notion but a space where things come into being through their relations with other things. Depth cannot be the "unmysterious interval" but exists primarily as a necessity to perceive. It is not to be confused with the perception of distance but is instead a lived phenomenon of orientation that anchors any conception of distance. Depth

is that which reveals the thickness of vision which is indicative of the *flesh* which subtends it. Merleau-Ponty states “[...] my body simultaneously sees and is seen.” and for him the visible, intertwined into vision (as depth), is the interconnection between body and world. “He who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it.”

However as noted, for Derrida, depth does not exist — it is only surface. There is no flesh for Derrida which is contiguous to vision and visibility. Recall that for Derrida in *Memoirs of the Blind*, that which makes the visible possible is the invisible; that which makes vision possible is blindness. Reversibility, the chiasm and intertwining are not for Derrida thought through the sedimentation of meaning that is available to corporeal sensitivity as they are for Merleau-Ponty. Instead, for Derrida, meaning is defined through a textual interplay of signifiers that is always deferred. This is why Derrida’s line must sacrifice depth, for this deferral can never be actualized. For Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, through depth an intertwining always occurs. I suggest that this in fact relegates Derrida’s ‘phenomenological description’ of hand and eye as a body of mere technicality, a body of ‘surface’ — a technical body that Merleau-Ponty explicitly resists in “Eye and Mind”.

In contrast with Merleau-Ponty, Derrida disputes what he considers to be a layering of the invisible that Merleau-Ponty prescribes.⁸ It is his conviction to an ‘absolute’ invisible that separates his concept from Merleau-Ponty’s. Derrida appears to suggest that he is in fact deferring to Merleau-Ponty’s “pure transcendence” as the site of the invisible, that which remains unavailable but persistent in the visible. But for Merleau-Ponty, the invisible is:

Not a de facto invisible [...] not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible. Rather it is the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being .

Recall the disappearance of the line for Derrida, where the invisible must always remain beyond the reach of the visible. The *punctum caecum*, a

⁸ “To be other of the visible, absolute invisibility must neither take place elsewhere not constitute another visible.” (Derrida 1993, p.52)

physiological blind spot on the retina is “[...] an analogical index of vision itself, of vision in general, [...]” and Derrida mobilises the example of the *punctum* to illustrate the limit or blind spot in vision itself. Correspondingly, Merleau-Ponty describes the *punctum caecum* as that which, although marked by blindness, makes vision possible. “What it does not see is what makes it see, is its tie to Being, is its corporeity, are the existentials by which the world becomes visible.” The convergence of both philosophers’ work echo loudly here.

Both Robert Vallier and Jack Reynolds respectively argue that the *punctum caecum* represents the very site of intersection between Derrida and Merleau-Ponty. Vallier in particular treats the *punctum* as that which “[...] constitutes the irremediable absence [...] the body that is blind.” What he is proposing is that the body as perspective articulator, reveals the visible through the *flesh* and invariably is sustained through blindness. This is a style that is our very mode of being in the world. Reynolds on the other hand, notes that it is this very difference in their conceptions of the invisible that leads Derrida to abandon “Merleau-Ponty’s chiasmic conception of visibility and invisibility, which precludes the one ever being considered in isolation from the other.” I argue that Vallier doesn’t press home enough the fact that it is the corporeal body *itself* that contrasts their particular definitions of invisibility. Following Reynolds, I maintain that Vallier attempts to conflate both philosophers’ understanding of invisibility and passes over Derrida’s insistence of the ‘absolute’ that corresponds to Derrida’s treatment of alterity. Derrida’s gesture or call to “transcendentality” seems to be a particular inflected reading of Merleau-Ponty’s text that distils the body out of this mixture of the chiasm. The *chiasm* is the reversibility or folding between body and world which captures or marks the very nature of the flesh, this element that allows Being itself to appear.⁹ This appeal to ‘transcendentality’ is, I would contend, the very moment of Derrida’s deconstructive interpretation. Although Merleau-Ponty concurs with a visibility predicated by invisibility he envisages the relationship

⁹ “The chiasm is not only a me other exchange (the messages he receives reach me, the messages I receive reach him), it is also an exchange between me and the world, between the phenomenal body and the “objective” body, between the perceiving and the perceived.” (Merleau-Ponty, 2003, p. 215)

as one bound up in a chiasmus.¹⁰

4. Self-Portraiture

In *Memoirs of the Blind*, Derrida focuses on the significance of self-portraiture, particularly the temporal nature of the body itself. As Derrida spots, self-portraiture is the idiom that best embodies this movement of self from subject to object. In fact, the self-portrait is presented as a ruin which not only points at the invisible as constitutive of the visible but also marks the materiality of the mortal body, a body susceptible to age and decay:

Just as memory does not here restore a past (once) present, so the ruin of the face [...] does not indicate aging, wearing away, anticipated decomposition, or this being eaten away by time - something about which the portrait often betrays an apprehension.

Memory, as in Derrida's analysis of the graphic act, becomes central to this distinction. The ruin as memory plays itself out on the canvas.¹¹ Here at this site of 'ruin' we can outline another difference between both philosophers. In traditional self-portraiture, the face is often a privileged part of the body and in the self-portrait the face becomes equivalent with identity. Indicating a continued search for something, an identity that remains elusive, both Cézanne and Van Gogh continually returned to the self-portrait.

¹⁰ Reynolds acknowledges Martin Dillon's argument that both Merleau-Ponty and Derrida use the figure the chiasmus in different ways. (Reynolds 2004. pp.74-75)

¹¹ In fact, I would suggest that the temporal body codified through the play of textual signifiers might be more readily portrayed through photography or film a medium Merleau-Ponty in "Eye and Mind" displays a distinct coolness.(Merleau-Ponty, 1993, p.144-145) A more contemporary take on the portrait that I think aligns both philosophers thinking while utilizing new media is a film, *Zidane: a 21st Century Portrait* (2006) by video artists Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno. Here both artists filmed Zidane during a match focusing on movement and temporality, characterized by the body. We do not see the match only Zidane's performance and the piece is broken up by a ten minute newsreel that recounts the news events on that particular date. We get the body in all its motorized potential codified and stratified by events, images and commercials. This example comes closer to chiming with the potential Merleau-Ponty spots in film in his lecture series *The World of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p.97-99).

For Derrida, the affordance of fractured identity is borne out through the process of portraiture itself.

Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty never mentions self-portraiture explicitly but in “Eye and Mind” he continually asserts the intersection between the perceiver and perceived. He, like Derrida, notes that we are reliant on a mirror to reveal other parts of our bodies i.e. our face, our back. Thus for Merleau-Ponty, there remains an implied opacity to the body and an incomplete sense of ourselves visually. It is through the “reflexivity of the body” that:

The experience I have of myself perceiving does not go beyond a sort of imminence, it terminates in the invisible, simply this invisible is its invisible, i.e. the reverse of its specular perception, of the concrete vision I have of my body in the mirror.

This mirroring enables self-portraiture by reflecting back that which remains invisible to us in our habitual day to day practises. Recall the *punctum* that marks for both this impossibility of transparency. In order to paint or to draw a self-portrait an artist must, through the aid of a mirror, render themselves objectively. But for Merleau-Ponty, this reflective image incurs an alienation that importantly is released through the act of painting or rendering the portrait itself. I contend that for Merleau-Ponty instead of ‘ruin’ through *deconstruction* there is a gestalt through *reconstruction*. For Merleau-Ponty, painting can elucidate the hidden contingencies of visibility themselves revealing a necessary subjectivity always embedded in a world.

5. Conclusion

In a late interview entitled “Spatial Arts” with Peter Brunette and Davis Wills (1994), Derrida comes close to paralleling the invocation of style that Merleau-Ponty invokes in his later writings.¹² Recalling an encounter with

¹² Style for Merleau-Ponty is not just a subjective quality that the artist’s talent expresses through their own unique comportment. Style is something that is part of our “motor potentiality”, (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.369) acting at a sub-reflective level, and revealing things in the world that call for our attention. It is visible not only in our speech or expression but also in our very bodily comportment. An artist can extend or express this

Van Gogh's paintings, Derrida states "I am given over to the body of Van Gogh as he was given over to the experience." Derrida acknowledges the distinctive brushstrokes and style that invite the viewer into that experience. The body is implicated through this style of painting or 'writing' in the Derridean sense. Crucially and in contrast to Merleau-Ponty, Derrida once again resists positing the body as the genesis of encounter. Rather, the body that 'haunts' Van Gogh's painting is "[...] ruptured [...] riven by nonpresence, by the impossibility of identifying with itself [...]" In a particularly explicit comment Derrida remarks that the body is "[...] how should I say, an experience in the most unstable [voyageur] sense of the term; it is an experience of frames, of dehiscence, of dislocations." This is a remarkably candid explanation of how he conceives of the body. Such explanation stands in stark contrast to Merleau-Ponty who consistently appraises the body as our essential insertion into a world of meaning and significance. It is the body through its sub-reflective potential that reveals the 'dehiscence' or difference through an unfolding between subject and object. Of these sub-reflective body operations there is an explicit denial by Derrida. Importantly, these operations are not only the very foundation of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy but define the very style of the artist more generally. Instead Derrida evokes the 'signature' which Van Gogh "[...] signs while painting".¹³ This signature is not cashed out through bodily comportment but through the failure of presence to assemble at the site of the invisible. Thus we are left with the Derridean trope of the trace, the ruin, the dislocation of presence made explicit. Once again, there is a limitation imposed upon the body as ontological possibility.

Merleau-Ponty observes how consciousness forgets the gestalt from which objects appear from. He also notes, while critiquing Husserl that the problem of forgetting in a temporal sense is its discontinuity — "[...] it

bodily comportment or body schema into a work of art. See also Merleau-Ponty's essay on painting and language *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*. (Merleau-Ponty, 1993, pp. 76-120)

¹³ This echoes Derrida's earlier essay "Signature Event Context" (1988). Here Derrida interrogates communication and transmission of meaning through context. In relation to the signature Derrida notes how the signature as an act of writing communicates the absence of the addressor. In the case of Van Gogh this signature is written large through the manipulation of paint through brush strokes which act as signatory elements.

would be the point where the *clear image* is no longer produced because the corporeal trace is effaced." He contends that this vocation toward a 'clear image' through reflection is the forgetting that effaces the chiasmic relationship between mind and body, subject and world. I contend Derrida comes closest to denoting this relationship in his consideration of drawing in *Memoirs of the Blind*. His articulation of aporetic structures that infect traditional dualisms highlight broad convergences between both philosophers but this aporetic rejoinder appears to forget or occlude a more nuanced reading of Merleau-Ponty's evocation of the chiasmus. For Derrida, the 'trace' of drawing is always haunted by an ambiguity, the aporia at the heart of vision itself. I contend that such an ambiguity is already articulated by Merleau-Ponty inherent in the visible, marked by the opacity of the body; "[...] the untouchable of the touch, the invisible of vision, the unconscious of consciousness (its central punctum caecum, that blindness that makes it consciousness [...]) This opacity, I argue is an ambiguity never fully explored in Derrida's analysis of Merleau-Ponty. For Merleau-Ponty, the visible is not traced after the fact, as it is for Derrida, but reborn out of the spread of the invisible. While Merleau-Ponty insists on embodiment as the disclosive force between the visible and invisible, Derrida remains on the side of textual surface.

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Expressiveness, Ineffability, and Comparisons^{*}

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ABSTRACT. The basic claim of the thesis of ineffability is that works of art possess expressive qualities that cannot be captured by literal language, or that they cannot be captured by any language at all, literal or nonliteral.

The distinction between descriptive (or semantic) and communicative effability (after Kennick) seemed to provide a solution and conceded a practical power to comparisons (and other kinds of indirect descriptions) in order to communicate about expressive qualities or nuances. On the other hand, many scholars (Spackman and Roholt, for example) have conceded that expressive qualities can be captured *demonstratively* by means of predicative expressions involving demonstrative concepts, even if they remain nonetheless *descriptively* (or *semantically*) ineffable. Both seem to accept at the same time that comparisons are implicitly demonstrative.

Comparisons become a watchtower in order to adopt a right approach concerning expressivity, meaning and understanding in art. The effort to support the option of a communicative effability allows us to slip out of a reductionist view about the role of comparisons and therefore about expressiveness. Nevertheless, the predominant way of approaching the question of ineffability in contemporary analytic aesthetics is upheld by the obsessive idea of *capturing* (in terms of a *semantic* comprehensive ambition, very common in cognitivist approaches). That obsession disappears when we think in terms of a view based on Wittgensteinian *aspects*, or in general from more contextualist approaches (such as De Clercq's *kinds of awareness*).

The ineffability of the expressive qualities of works of art has been a central topic in aesthetics since the emergence of analytic aesthetics at the end of the 50's. Contemporary debate has flourished specially in the domain of

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the aesthetics of music, and the influence of Wittgenstein's ideas has been crucial in this regard. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the conclusions may concern arts in general, and not only music.

The basic claim of the thesis of ineffability is that works of art possess expressive qualities that cannot be captured by literal language, or cannot be captured by any type of language at all, whether it be literal or nonliteral (following Spackman's definition, Spackman, 2012, p. 304). Some theorists underline ineffability as a substantial source of value in the arts.

Different ways of solving this matter (or different ways of clarification at least), have been proposed in the tradition of analytic aesthetics. The recent papers by Spackman, Roholt, Raffman or De Clercq are no more than the tip of the iceberg in a contemporary debate enriched firstly by the contributions of Prall, Langer, Dewey or Kennick, and also, more recently, by Stephen Davies, David Cooper, Roger Scruton, Jerrold Levinson, Arthur Danto or Malcolm Budd.

On the one hand, the Wittgensteinian distinction between direct descriptions and indirect descriptions (Kennick, 1961) seemed to provide a solution to this question. Direct description is essentially *naming*, while indirect description involves the characterization of the circumstances and context in which a feeling is experienced or can even be a proposal of re-contextualization (more or less partial) of that experience. Often indirect description is more effective in order to depict a particular and subtle feeling. Wittgenstein noted that an indirect description the kind one finds in a novel ("It was a small rickety table decorated in Moorish style, the sort that is used for smoker's requisites") serves incomparably better to bring a vivid image of the table than a direct description giving exactly the shape, dimensions and so forth (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 181).

Comparisons (often involving metaphor) are commonly recognized as a relevant kind of indirect description. Borrowing Wittgenstein's example: "The chord with which that slow movement [of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony] opens is the colour of that sky' (pointing out of the window)" (Rhees, 1981, p. 130). Or in Spackman's example: "we could capture the expressive quality of the beginning of the Brahms sextet by saying it is the same kind of yearning as that expressed by, say, a passage from a certain Schubert quartet" (Spackman, 2012, p. 311). The comparison often combines different media, as in another famous example of Wittgenstein: "I often

found that certain themes of Brahms were extremely Kellerian” (referring to Gottfried Keller, the Swiss poet and writer) (Wittgenstein, 1978, p. 32).

Then, different kinds of indirect descriptions (such as comparisons, paradigmatically) provide a way to avoid “the traditional ineffability claim” which, after Kennick, can be found in versions by Dewey, Langer or Prall. Certainly, comparisons give us something to say in order to communicate a particular feeling or image to someone, and something to say in literal language (rather than gestures, pointing to, etc). It would strongly satisfy the anti-ineffabilist proponent, even though he would resist accepting that it really “captures” some expressive qualities of the work.

Concurrently, the distinction between descriptive (or semantic) effability and communicative effability (following Spackman, 2012, p. 304) allows us to concede a practical power to comparisons (and other kinds of indirect descriptions) in order to communicate expressive qualities or nuances (fine-grained variations within basic musical categories) with another musician (for example), even if we are skeptical about the possibility of capturing expressive qualities in emotional terms (such as ‘anguished’ ‘yearning’, ‘melancholic’, etc.) or in formal terms (such as tonal or chromatic transitions corresponding to very precise expressive effects).

Descriptive (or semantic) effability implies that we are able to capture an experience or an item of knowledge by the meaning of some words. Communicative effability implies that we are able to convey it to other by means of words. Although most theorists defending the ineffability claim often presuppose that both notions run together, we are not forced to accept communicative ineffability after having accepted a version of semantic ineffability, even if this version is very strong. And all this works without needing to go beyond the limits of literal language.

Comparisons would be successfully used in order to communicate an expressive feature of a musical passage, for example. A good friend (and a good clarinet professor also) told me how difficult it was for him to explain to his students that a *piano* indication in the score does not mean the player ceasing to project the sound to the audience’s ears. After very technical advice, he resorted to the comparison with the theatrical resource of the aside, and he even used real examples of theater asides in order to make his students understand the comparison. Naturally, the success of communicative effability would be proved by the fact that the student is now able

to play the passage of music with a projected *piano*, even though the only thing that the professor can do to fulfill the claim of descriptive effability is to repeat the technical instructions previously intended (“open the throat while keeping the column of breath tense”, for example). In these kinds of examples, the limits of literal language are challenged by the fact that we are really tempted to point to the second term of the comparison rather than to trying to capture again in descriptive words the content of the feature.

On the other hand, many scholars (Spackman, 2012, after McDowell, and Roholt, 2010, for example) have conceded that expressive qualities can be captured *demonstratively* by means of predicative expressions involving demonstrative concepts (such as ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘now’, ‘here’, ‘there’, and so on), even if they nonetheless remain *descriptively* (or *semantically*) ineffable.

For Spackman, the expressive qualities of the artworks are (if not uniquely, at least potentially¹) strongly fine-grained ones, and then they are more specific than any description comprising a set of emotional terms (such as, for example, “anguished yearning”, “hopefully yearning”, etc.). An alternative means of description is that of demonstrative formulas.

Even if an expression like ‘that expressive quality’ can adequately capture the emotion conveyed by the Brahms sextet discussed earlier, it is nonetheless clear that these words do not offer us any *descriptive* purchase on the expressive quality we perceive. (Spackman, 2012, p. 310)

Both Roholt and Spackman seem to accept at the same time that comparisons are implicitly demonstrative: comparisons say in effect, “*this* expressive quality is the same as *that* expressive quality”. Consequently, comparisons could not actually be descriptive alternatives to demonstratives in order to capture expressive qualities, but equivalent in meaning to these demonstratives.

Roholt’s strategy consists, in fact, of arguing that there is a type of description able to render musical nuances “effable enough for practical

¹ Spackman 2012, p. 308-309: “And it may thus be the case that some works express nuances of emotion that are different from the emotions expressed by any other actual works”.

purposes". The kind of things that Roholt has in mind, speaking of nuances, is that: "A musical nuance is typically defined as a note performed slightly early or late in time (music theorists and cognitive psychologists prefer the term 'expressive variation')." (Roholt, 2010, p. 1)

Let Spackman explain Roholt's claim:

The descriptions he has in mind are *comparisons*, often themselves involving metaphor, to the nuances in other works and performances, as when a musician says, 'The brightness I have in mind is a brightness just like the one *so-and-so* achieved on the recording of *that* song.'² Such descriptions make nuances practically effable in the sense that they allow musicians to effectively communicate about them. In a similar way, it might be suggested that we could capture the expressive quality of the beginning of the Brahms sextet by saying it is the same kind of yearning as that expressed by, say, a passage from a certain Schubert quartet. If not all expressive qualities are uniquely fine-grained, it is theoretically possible that in some cases we could specify the expressive quality of a work by pointing to another instance of the same quality in another work. But notice, as is revealed in Roholt's formulation above, that descriptions of this kind are implicitly demonstrative: they say, in effect, '*this* expressive quality is the same as *that* expressive quality.' For this reason, such expressions are not actually descriptive alternatives to the demonstratives that I have argued can capture expressive qualities; they are actually equivalent in meaning to these demonstratives. (Spackman, 2012, pp. 311-312)

Spackman goes beyond dealing with the limitation of the power of comparisons: he thinks that there will be many expressive qualities that cannot be exactly captured by any such comparative descriptions for "the expressive qualities of different works have at least the potential to depend quite closely on the different formal features of those works" and then "it would be difficult to find, for many expressive qualities, another musical passage that has *exactly* [my italics] the same set of emotional resonances" (Spackman, 2012, p. 312). Furthermore, Spackman thinks that there are expressive qualities that are strongly fine-grained and that this is a good argument in favor of the thesis of descriptive ineffability.

² Spackman quotes Roholt, 2010, p. 6.

Additionally, Spackman, in order to reinforce his strategy to limit the capacity of comparisons (or comparative descriptions) to capture expressive qualities, tries to bring on his side Roholt's thesis about nuances: "Roholt may in fact concede an analogous point about nuances by saying only that comparative descriptions render nuances 'effable enough'" (Spackman, 2012, p. 312). But actually Roholt was speaking about "effable enough" relating to what Roholt judges to be the really relevant objectives for effability: nonstructural objectives. "The explananda of an account of musical nuance should be the raised or lowered pitches and early or late notes *as they are perceived in their musical contexts*." (Roholt, 2010, p. 7). A rock composer envisions not merely a certain rhythm (which is a matter of structure) but a certain *groove* (which is the *feel* of a rhythm, a nonstructural objective). And it is there where indirect description, including metaphor and comparison, render these musical nuances "effable enough" for practical purposes. Roholt's view actually underlines the practical and contextual elements.

I quote Roholt's paper:

Rock musicians (and other musicians, of course) share a fine-tuned familiarity with a large number of recordings; by referring to these recordings, they add *comparisons* to indirect descriptions. They often begin with an indirect description and then, in order to add specificity, refer to an example: 'the brightness I have in mind is a brightness just like the one *so-and-so* achieved on the recording of *that* song.' A composer may say to a drummer, about a target groove, 'Lean the beat forward □ not like the recorded version of The Beatles' «I Saw Her Standing There» but like the Washington, D.C., live performance of the song from 1964.' By adding a comparison to indirect description we have added a degree of specificity to our ability to communicate about nonstructural nuance objectives. In this case, musical nuances are effable enough for the practical purposes of rock musicians, and I suspect, through similar devices, for the practical purposes of musicians in general. After all, musicians do manage to communicate about nuances. Thus, ineffability seems to be relative to the task at hand, and as far as the perceptually rich, practical task considered above, nuances are effable enough. (Roholt, 2010, p. 6)

In fact, Roholt's strategy works in favor of a contextualist or pragmatist

claim, while Spackman's strategy (gobbling Roholt's up, in a way) is ultimately devoted to claim for ineffability as an important source of the value of art, in line with an old (and even contemporary) topic of discussion. I quote Spackman's article:

I have suggested that while, contrary to the claims of the traditional theorists, expressive qualities are not strictly ineffable since they can be grasped by demonstratives, they are nonetheless descriptively ineffable, and this admission may indeed preserve a good deal of the spirit of the traditional claims. Even if this view is accepted, however, it might be held that the traditional thinkers were wrong to maintain that this ineffability was an important source of the value of art. I want to conclude by suggesting why this charge seems mistaken. (Spackman, 2012, p. 312)

The topic of the source of the value of art related to the ineffability would divert me from the right direction in this paper.

The relevant thing here, for me, is that the pragmatist and contextualist framework which is really adequate for those kinds of indirect descriptions (as comparisons, paradigmatically) points in the right direction in order to find a solution to the question of ineffability in art. The alternative view appears in its revealing power when we try to explain the meaning of musical understanding in terms of "hearing something (a chord, a rhythm, a tune) endowed with expression" (Marrades, 2005, p. 11. Translation mine, hereinafter): it "involves being able to listen to it as probable points of intersection between music and life, and there sounds are connected with other elements of the listener's accumulated experience", but at the same time "musical expression depends on the way of that connection, it is the way a musical motif fits in a particular setting or environment of experience".

Of course, that "setting or environment of experience" involves a role of the audience in which perception, imagination and judgement are interwoven in multiple ways, and in which "a change of expression following the dawning of a new aspect in a musical theme depends not only on the training of the listener, but also on the fantasy of the player and of the listener" (Marrades, 2005, p. 11).

In short, comparisons become a watchtower in order to adopt a better approach concerning expressivity, meaning and understanding in art. The effort to get away from the option of a descriptive effability and to support the option of a (more operative) communicative effability allows us to slip out of a reductionist view about the role of comparisons and therefore about the working of expression in art. And all this may be said without forgetting the huge range of forms and uses that comparisons can adopt in artistic and aesthetic language games.

Spackman emphasizes ineffability as a guarantee of the inexhaustible richness of the emotional power of the work of art. I prefer to put the emphasis on effability (rather than on ineffability) in order to explain the inexhaustible richness and value of the work of art.

My main criticism of the predominant way of approaching the question of ineffability in contemporary analytic aesthetics is that it has been ballasted by an obsessive idea: the idea of *capturing* (in terms of a *semantic* comprehensive ambition, very common in cognitivist approaches). That obsession disappears when we think about *capturing* the expression in terms of a view based on aspects (in line with Wittgenstein's ideas again), or in general from more contextualist approaches to understanding in art (such as Rafael De Clercq's explanation of aesthetic ineffability based on different kinds of awareness or attention [De Clercq, 2000], for example). I will show this through the analysis of varied examples concerning the relationship between different artistic media.

From an approach based on aspects, comparisons are not the only kind of "seeing as" or "listening as", and neither are they the only kind of aspect, but they have a paradigmatic role to play in order to underline two essential features of expressivity and understanding in art: one, the imaginative attitude of the audience, and two, the relevance of context (in a broad sense) in the actual working of expression.

If we conceive the comparison, in the framework of the approach from a theory of aspects, as a trial to activate the capacity of a listener to connect his perception of sounds with other aspects of his experience, that is, a trial to activate his capacity to fit a musical motif in a particular environment of experience, then the mystery of the attribution of expression to an artistic object (the attribution of melancholy to a Schubert's piece, for example) vanishes, and a path is opened between the Scylla and Charybdis

of externalist and internalist approaches.

I quote Julián Marrades:

We are not talking about us projecting a conceptual or experiential content towards the sounds. But to conceive the expression as something immanent in the sounds does not imply either a reduction in the expression to intrinsic properties of the sound materials independent of the musical experience. It may occur that someone perceives the sound properties in a piece by Schubert, the pitch, intensity and timber of those sounds, the tonality, the intervals, the chords, etc. and in spite of all that, the piece tells him nothing at all. We say that such a person lacks an ear for music. It is not a physiological defect, but an inability to perceive intentional aspects in the sounds, an inability to hear [or to listen to] the sound as music. (Marrades, 2005, pp. 11-12. Translation mine.)

Of course, to propose a comparison such as “Compare the brief chorus of Bach’s *Passion* with the meaning of the brief scenes in some works of Shakespeare” (I borrow Wittgenstein’s example) can become the trigger of a process of aspect dawning, but it can also *fall on deaf ears* for my conversational partner, even if comparisons are just a particular kind of *seeing as* strategy.

What has been “captured” by my comparison if my partner has achieved listening with meaning to Bach’s brief chorus? Does it really matter to find in Shakespeare’s brief scenes “exactly the same set of emotional (or cognitive) resonances” which guarantee that “*this* expressive quality is the same as *that* expressive quality”? I think it would be better to underline the fact that I try to take advantage of my knowledge that he or she is a fan of Shakespeare’s dramas although Bach’s *Passion* seems quite boring to him, or that he or she insists again on pushing the forward button of his sound system every time that a brief chorus arrives.

The contextual element has been rarely remarked upon even in very famous Wittgensteinian examples. In fact, the idea of indirect description is borrowed by Kennick from Wittgenstein who, in *The Brown Book* considers the feeling or experience of familiarity just before the example of the table decorated in Moorish style. I quote Wittgenstein:

Different experiences of familiarity: a) Someone enters my room. I haven't seen him for a long time, and didn't expect him. I look at him, say or feel 'oh, it's you?' □ Why did I in giving this example say that I hadn't seen the man for a long time? Wasn't I setting out to describe *experiences* of familiarity? And whatever the experience was I alluded to, couldn't I have had it even if I had seen the man half an hour ago? I mean, I gave the circumstances of recognizing the man as a means to the end of describing the precise situation of the recognition. (Wittgenstein, 1965, p. 181)

Roholt is very clearheaded remarking that the relevance of context is here outside the experience ("in order to correctly describe a *particular* experience of familiarity") in the same way that the relevance of context is embedded in the relationship proposed in an indirect description and even in the proper link of similarity (or resemblance) constituting the experience of familiarity. I quote Roholt:

Wittgenstein points out that there are different experiences of familiarity. (To anticipate where I am going with this, note the analogy between different experiences of familiarity and different F-sharps.) Wittgenstein claims that in order to correctly describe a *particular* experience of familiarity, we must describe the circumstances or context. (Roholt, 2010, p. 3)

The way of escaping from the obsession with "capturing" the essence of the expression is, for Roholt, the claim for nonstructural objectives of minute variations (or nuances) in music. For Spackman, that role is played by the emphasis (again) on descriptive ineffability, while he concedes at least the possibility of a communicative effability.

An alternative claim for ineffability founded on a very different tradition (Michael Polanyi's theory of attention) has been defended by Rafael De Clercq. I would think about it as a third kind of way of escaping from the "capture obsession". For De Clercq, Polanyi's distinction between subsidiary (or instrumental) attention and focal (or integrated) attention is very useful in order to characterize aesthetic experience, to the extent that there "Both the subsidiary and the focal are appreciated in their own right" (De Clercq, 2000, p. 93). It means that "it is impossible to grasp focally

how an aesthetic object acquires its special meaning” because “we can only relate to it in a subsidiary (that is, indirect) manner, through its reflection in a concrete, aesthetic object” (De Clercq, 2000, p. 95). Then “what we cannot articulate is how the bassoon affects the quality of the hole [it is, the symphony] upon which it bears.” (De Clercq, 2000, p. 96)

De Clercq’s paper results in a claim for ineffability, though I would brand it as a *positive* ineffability, to the extent that the attention to the concrete, particular or structural elements is no more conceived in terms of the failure of an obsessive capturing project (that is, “the difficulty of putting into words all nuances of a perceptual and/or aesthetic experience” [De Clercq, 2000, p. 96]). Rather that attention to the particular is conceived as an integrated part of a dynamic and tensional mechanism, as rich as it is complex, which brings the effable and the ineffable closer than ever. And then, no restrictions can be required to the claim for the ineffable side of the aesthetic experience and its importance for human beings.

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The Young Marx between 'the End of Art' and 'the Future of Art'

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ABSTRACT. Although the young Karl Marx does not develop a coherent aesthetic theory, my paper seeks to highlight the influence of the Hegelian “end of art” theory within some of his early writings—namely, in the drafts of his dissertation. I will proceed with the following steps: In the first section I will discuss *a)* the categories of “end of art” and “future of art,” providing *b)* a short sketch of the differences between the Hegelian and Left Hegelian theories. In the second section I will *c)* analyze the distinctive features of the young Marx’s considerations of art. I will show how his aesthetic conceptualization depends, in some respects, on the Hegelian conception, which argues that Greek beauty cannot return in modernity. I also aim to show some differences between Marx’s and Left Hegelians’ theory of art.

In her recent articles on the aesthetics of the Hegelian School, Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov (2011, 2014; see also Pepperle 1978) shows that the *differentia specifica* of the Young Hegelians’ aesthetics is a dismissal of the ‘end of art’ theory. This rejection, she argues, coincides with the gradual appearance of a ‘never-to-be-concluded-future of art’ theory. Referring to the *Paris Manuscripts*, Ernst Müller also argues that Marx refuses the ‘end of art’ theory (Müller 2004, p. 261; cf. also Müller 2010). To the best of my knowledge, the only counter to this position can be found in Giuseppe Prestipino, who, while reflecting on the famous utterances in the *German Ideology* about the role of the artist in the communist society, wonders if there is not, rather, a “Marxian version of the ‘end of the art’” (Prestipino 1976, p. 21).¹ Taking advantage of Collenberg-Plotnikov’s and Müller’s

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¹ Prestipino’s query, therefore, is not valid for the ‘young’ Marx. Many scholars correctly stress that the comparison between a ‘young’ Marx and a ‘mature’ one can be put

analysis, I will work to show that, in a certain sense, an 'end of art' theory *does* exist in Marx's earliest work. While I do not argue that the Hegelian theory of the 'end of art,' in all of its structural complexity, can be ascribed to the young Marx, I do contend that some aspects of his early thought can be understood within the Hegelian context and that the theory of the 'end of art' could clarify some of his early writings.²

My paper will proceed in the following steps: *a*) with a discussion of the categories 'end of art' and 'future of art,' which will provide *b*) a short sketch of the differences between Hegelian and Left Hegelian theories, and *c*) an analysis of the distinctive features of the young Marx's considerations of art.

1. The 'Future of Art': The Aesthetics of the Left Hegelian School

Collenberg-Plotnikov traces two paths within Hegelian School aesthetics after the death of Hegel in 1831. Although these two paths align themselves with the concept of a teleological development of art (*teleologische Entwicklung der Kunst*) (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2014, p. 85), the Old Hegelians subjectivise the 'end of art' thesis, deeming crucial aspects such as the creative and the imaginative skills of the artist. The main subject of this *milieu* was the genius conceived of as "a great individual" (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2011, p. 206). According to Collenberg-Plotnikov, Heinrich Gustav Hotho and Friedrich Theodor Vischer belong to this school of thought.³

in doubt on the basis of the new critical edition, *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA2), since it depends on a particular history of reception (Musto 2011, pp. 225-272). Here, then, my use of 'young Marx' refers only to the Marx of his doctoral dissertation and student period. For the new critical edition (MEGA2) cf. Fineschi 2008; Sgrò 2016.

² I wish to thank L. Kreft, V. Marchenkov, S. Bird-Pollan, and P. Stephan for their questions at the ESA Conference, which assisted me in further specifying my thesis. I'm also very grateful to A. Speer, M. Brusotti, A. Le Moli, E. Müller and G. Sgrò for their suggestions and K. Kavar for her careful proofreading of my paper.

³ It is well known that Hotho was also the editor of the Hegel's Aesthetics, which was published between 1835 and 1838. The reworking of the Hegelian lectures into a systematic work, along with Hotho's interpolations, have been recognized by several scholars (cf. Gehtmann-Siefert 2014; Farina & Siani 2014). For this reason, I will cite Hegel 1823 (2007).

The other path is that of Young Hegelians such as Arnold Ruge who emphasize the historicity of art, insisting on its political-teleological function. According to Collenberg-Plotnikov, the Young Hegelians “transform the so-called thesis of the end of the art” (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2011, p. 208), grasping it as a “function of social utopia” (*Ibid.*, p. 213; Collenberg-Plotnikov 2014, p. 96) and radically historicizing the Absolute Spirit. In contrast to this stance, the Hegelian theory of the ‘end of art’ also has a systematic foundation, being one of the forms—with religion and philosophy—through which the Absolute manifests itself; in this sense, art cannot be reduced to historical development. For the Young Hegelians, therefore, art becomes a ‘means for struggle’ against the contradictions of history and the (Prussian) State. The reason for this is that art, itself, expresses the harmonious unity of thought and being Young Hegelians sought to regain in modernity. One of the parameters of aesthetic judgement thus becomes the political content of the artwork (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2011, p. 214),⁴ with the artist serving as the “apostle of the future” (*Apostel der Zukunft*) (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2014, p. 96). Investigating the relationship between art and the philosophy of right in Hegel’s thought, Alberto Siani has argued that art can serve as a dialectical counterweight to the “politicization of each relationship” (Siani 2013, p. 234).⁵ Indeed, art can express the manifold nature of humanity, namely because art, in modernity, is no longer bound up with religion.

It is worth noting that for the Young Hegelians the aesthetic phenomenon becomes not only the *model* of a certain kind of dis-alienated activity of men, but the *task* of intellectuals working against the restoration of the Prussian State (Pepperle 1978, p. 157); the Young Hegelians were convinced that art was an expression of the Absolute in the present and, at the same time, capable of manifesting the Absolute Idea, becoming, for this reason, the *task* of intellectuals. Such a stance contradicts Hegel, who

⁴ Ingrid Pepperle also finds a “dualism of criteria” in the Young Hegelians’ notion of aesthetic judgement. The first criterion is the autonomous aspect of formal harmony and, the second, the engagement in political struggle (cf. Pepperle 1978, p. 158).

⁵ But the manifold nature of humanity does not mean that art can serve the purposes of the political. Rather, it would serve as an answer to this politicization. In modernity, art contributes to the establishment of a dialectical relationship between individuals and the state, because it serves as a “reminder of the individual” (cf. on this topic Siani 2010).

stresses that art is something of the past on the side of its highest possibilities (*Vergangenheitscharakter der Kunst ihrer höchsten Möglichkeit nach*) (cf. Hegel 1823 (2003), pp. 4f.; pp. 189f.). According to Collenberg-Plotnikov, the 'end of art' does not mean that artwork cannot be produced in modernity, but that art is no longer valid, as it was for the Greeks, as a ground for the prescriptive, ethical content of the community, in which the artist was the "master of god" (*Meister des Gottes*) (Enz §560); rather, art has, for Hegel, the status of "reflection, that is function of a culture, in which the individual understands itself" (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2014, p. 82).

The main yearbooks—*Hallische Jahrbücher* and *Deutsche Jahrbücher*—in which the Young Hegelians were active at that time, held the subtitle "for science and art" (*für Wissenschaft und Kunst*). The opening of the main article on aesthetics in the *Hallische Jahrbücher* reads:

Die Neue Zeit hat den Frieden des Selbstbewusstseins im poetischen und im freien wissenschaftlichen Geist errungen und mit Enthusiasmus seine Verkündigung begrüßt; aber sie sollte ihn nicht unangefochten und in ungetrübter Selbstgenügsamkeit genießen; es wird vielmehr um des Friedens ein erbitterter Krieg geführt, der immer mehr entbrennt. (Echtermeyer & Ruge 1839 (1995), p. 192)

Although Collenberg-Plotnikov only analyzes Ruge's conception of art, it seems to me that the same analysis could be applied to Bruno Bauer,⁶ who, in 1842, theorized a reconfiguration of the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, situating art on a higher level of the Absolute than religion. On the basis of the concept of the (self-)creative power of self-consciousness, in its dialectical sense, Bauer proposes, in his "Hegel's Doctrine of Religion and Art" (*Hegels Lehre von der Religion und Kunst*) (1842), the "dissolution of religion in art" (*Auflösung der Religion in der Kunst*) through comedy. Art, Bauer stresses,

⁶ Douglas Moggach states: "Bauer's doctrine of universal self-consciousness is deeply aesthetic in inspiration, based on an idea of formative activity in which, subjectively, the beautiful unity of the self is achieved through the transcendence of particular interest, and objectively, sublime and unrelenting struggle is waged to make the outer order accord with the demands of conscious freedom. He opposes the weight of substantiality, or of unreflective historical traditions, to the form-giving and critical power of the self, as the agency of cultural and political transformation" (Moggach 2011, p. 507; Cf. also Moggach 2003).

is an autonomous realm that cannot be subsumed into the heteronomous purposes or “practical interests”—as he writes—of religion (Bauer 1842, p. 107). Nevertheless, since art, in modernity, is not free and reflective, and it is bound by practical reason (Moggach 2011, p. 508), it can be used for political aims. Some months after the publication of Bauer’s aforementioned essay, Ruge writes:

eine neue Form der Tugend, die *öffentliche*, eine neue Form der Kunst, die *historische* ... (*die historische Lyrik* und die *historische Komödie*, welche im Gegensatz zu der Genrekomödie ... seine reellen geschichtlichen Stufen ... auflöst) ... werden wir jetzt schon bei uns entdecken können. (Ruge 1842 (1986), pp. 446f.)

Ruge names Bauer’s *Posaune* (1841) and *Hegels Lehre* (1842) as central works of this new historical genre, which, “regarded as artworks, are historical comedy” (Ruge 1842, p. 757). In spite of the fact that Hegel stresses that although comedy is one of the point of rupture of the classical art, it is humor that pertains to modernity,⁷ Ruge names “historical comedy” as a form that pertains to modernity.

2. The Young Marx Between the ‘End’ and the ‘Future’ of Art

In the most famous of his early works, Marx seems to devote little attention to art or the philosophy of art. What has to be doubted, nevertheless, is an innocent lack of awareness or disinterest with regard to the aesthetic

⁷ The Hegelian theory of comedy could be considered an antecedent to his theory of objective humor (cf. Gehrmann-Siefert 2005). Interestingly, against Hegel’s claim that the ‘not-beautiful’ could appear as an autonomous form of expression within modernity (Hegel 1823 (2007), pp. 168f.; Iannelli 2007; 2014; Collenberg-Plotnikov 2014, p. 84), the Young Hegelians conceive of the ‘not-beautiful’ as a stage to be overcome through artistic and philosophical action (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2011, pp. 208f.). For Hegel, the effect of the radical changes in the paradigms of art that occur within modernity is that art becomes a “formal, subjective ability,” or an “art of appearance” (*Kunst des Scheins*), since “the matter [is] external [*äußerlich*].” In modernity the artist can represent the manifold nature of humanity, since only the “Humanus, the universal humanity” remains interesting (see Hegel 1823 (2007), pp. 169-190).

experience. It is worth noting that Marx deals, again, with Hegelian aesthetics in 1842 while working with Bauer on “Hegels Doctrine of Religion and Art” (*Hegels Lehre von der Religion und Kunst*).⁸ Afterward, he continues to work on the treatise “On Religion and Art,” an article comprehensive enough to be considered a book, though it was never published and is today considered lost.⁹ Although it would be interesting to discuss some issues concerning this essay—I refer, here, to the notes and the letters—, I will focus on the drafts to the Jena dissertation.

To give a brief biographical account, in one of his first poetic works Marx wrote an epigram entitled “On Hegel,” in which he denies Hegelian aesthetics and philosophy. Marx argues that we must move beyond Hegelian aesthetics (MEGA2, I, 1.1, p. 644; MECW, I, p. 577). Nevertheless, it is notable that Marx’s first contact—some years later—with the Hegelians of the so-called *Doktorklub* was rooted in the aesthetic field:

Herr V. Chamisso sent me a very insignificant note in which he informed me ‘he regrets that the Almanac cannot use my contributions because it has already been printed a long time ago’. I swallowed this with vexation. The bookseller Wigand has sent my plan to Dr. Schmidt, publisher of Wunder’s firm that trades in good cheese and bad literature. I enclose his letter; Dr. Schmidt has not yet replied. However, I am by no means abandoning this plan, especially since all the aesthetic celebrities of the Hegelian school have promised their collaboration through the help of university lecturer Bauer, who plays a big role among them, and of my colleague Dr. Rutenberg. (MEGA2, III, 1.1, p. 17; MECW, I, pp. 19f.)

Thus, during his stay in Berlin, Marx declared himself to be a Hegelian (MEGA2, III, 1.1, pp. 9ff.; MECW, I, p. 18). He was “at the point of seeking the idea in the reality itself. If previously the gods had dwelt above the earth, now they became its centre” (MEGA2, III, 1.1, pp. 15f.; MECW, I, p. 18).

Marx’s approval of and accordance with Hegelian philosophy is also attested to, according to Roberto Finelli, in the Jena dissertation on the

⁸ Most scholars now agree that the work was written entirely by Bauer (cf. Tomba 2014, p. 10. Cf. also the debate between Meyer 1916 and Nettlau 1919).

⁹ On this topic cf. Rose 1984.

philosophy of nature in Democritus and Epicurus,¹⁰ where he interprets Greek philosophers within an aesthetic framework. The Greeks, even if they were determined by nature, were the first to “break” the relationship between man and the natural world, creating a spiritual world for men through “the Hephaestan hammer of art”:

The premise of the ancients is the act of nature, that of the moderns the act of the spirit. The struggle of the ancients could only end by the visible heaven, the substantial nexus of life, the force of gravity of political and religious life being shattered, for nature must be split in two for the spirit to be one in itself. The Greeks broke it up with the Hephaestan hammer of art, broke it up in their statues; ... [let] it pass away in smoke in the holy fire of the spirit, and as fighter of the spirit fighting the spirit, not as a solitary apostate fallen from the gravity of Nature, it is universally active and melts the forms which prevent the universal from breaking forth. (MEGA2, IV, 1.1, p. 38; MECW, I, p. 431)

Marx stresses that the Eleatics and the Pythagoreans were the expression of ‘substance’ — “living images, living works of art which the people see rising out of itself in plastic greatness” (MEGA2, IV, 1.1, p. 41; MECW, I, p. 436) — while Socrates and the Sophists represented the emergence of substance’s subjectivity. Nonetheless, both of them were seen as *sophós*, wise men, “as little like ordinary people as the statues of the Olympic gods; their motion is rest in self, their relation to the people is the same objectivity as their relation to substance” (*Ibid.*). As we have already seen, Marx nevertheless argues that the difference between the ancients and the moderns is the opposition between man and nature in the former and that between man and humanized world, “spirit against spirit,” in the latter. According to Andreas Arndt, however, it would be a mistake to think that Marx ascribes the contradictions of the Young Hegelians to the post-Aristotelian philosophers, because in modernity, both sides—man and world—are spiritualized (Cf. Arndt 2012, p. 21):

¹⁰ In his dissertation, Marx attempts an *inner* critique within the Hegelian history of philosophy, criticizing the judgement of ancient materialistic philosophers and judging Epicurean philosophy as a more developed stage of the Concept with respect to the Democritean one. On this topic, cf. Finelli 2004, Ch. 1. See also the English translation, Finelli 2015.

Das Altertum wurzelte in der Natur, im Substantiellen. Ihre Degradation, ihre Profanierung bezeichnet gründlich den Bruch des substantiellen gediegenen Lebens, die moderne Welt wurzelt im Geist und er kann frei sein anders, die Natur aus sich entlassen. Aber ebenso ist umgekehrt, was bei den Alten Profanierung der Natur war, bei den Modernen Erlösung aus den Fesseln der Glaubensdienshaft und wovon die alte jonische Philosophie wenigstens dem Prinzip nach beginnt, das Göttliche, die Idee der Natur verkörpert zu sehn, dazu muss die moderne rationale Naturanschauung erst aufsteigen.

Antiquity was rooted in nature, in substantiality. Its degradation and profanation means in the main the defeat of substantiality, of solid life; the modern world is rooted in the spirit and it can be free, can release the other, nature, out of itself. But equally, by contrast, what with the ancients was profanation of nature is with the moderns salvation from the shackles of servile faith, and the modern rational outlook on nature must first raise itself to the point from which the ancient Ionian philosophy, in principle at least, begins the point of seeing the divine, the Idea, embodied in nature. (MEGA2, IV, I.I, pp. 29f.; MECW, I, pp. 423f. *Modified translation*¹¹)

Nonetheless, in one of the hardest passages of the *Fifth Notebook* of the so-called *Vorarbeiten* to the Jena dissertation, Marx, while reflecting on the Hegelian School, describes what he terms the “carnival of philosophy” (*Fastnachtszeit der Philosophie*) (MEGA2, IV, I.I, p. 99; MECW, I, p. 491). Philosophy assumes, he affirms, a practical relationship with reality in the nodal points (*Knotenpunkte*) of its history (MEGA2, IV, I.I, p. 99; MECW, I, p. 491), when philosophy itself and the world are totalities and both totalities are separated from one another.¹² Thus, Marx can argue that it is a *historical necessity* that a systematic philosophy wherein thought and being are united should develop, dividing its unity with reality into two poles. It is for this reason that, when a philosophy becomes a totality, the world becomes divided in itself. In Marx’s terms, “the division of the

¹¹ Here, I modify the translation of “Substantialität” from “materiality” to “substantiality.”

¹² For a discussion of the notes (*Anmerkungen*) (MECW, I, pp. 84-87) of the dissertation, which are a reworked version of the *Fifth Notebook*, Cf. Arndt 2012, pp. 21-23.

world is total only when its aspects are totalities” (MEGA2, IV, 1.1, p. 100; MECW, I, p. 491). Philosophy has to become worldly (*weltlich*) and the world has to become philosophical. Whereas the universality of thought and being vanishes, the development of practical-critical subjectivities—the “transubstantiation into flesh and blood”—follows these “iron epochs,” and only a struggle for a moment of totalization can occur. Art, however, could not constitute the mediation; only a titanic struggle could:

Neither must we forget that the time following such catastrophes is an iron time, happy when characterised by titanic struggles, lamentable when it resembles centuries limping in the wake of great periods in art. These centuries set about moulding in wax, plaster and copper what sprang from Carrara marble like Pallas Athena out of the head of Zeus, the father of the gods. But titanic are the times which follow in the wake of a philosophy total in itself and of its subjective developmental forms, for gigantic is the discord that forms their unity. Thus Rome followed the Stoic, Sceptic and Epicurean philosophy. They are unhappy and iron epochs, for their gods have died and the new goddess still reveals the dark aspect of fate, of pure light or of pure darkness. She still lacks the colours of day. (MEGA2, IV, 1.1, p. 101; MECW, I, pp. 492f.; My emphasis)

Thus, Marx stresses that art cannot serve as the grounds for a moment of totalization and that modernity is imbued with the political. Art as a mediation of the contradictions of reality cannot serve as a task, because it represents something that does not correspond with philosophical, critical modernity. Rather, philosophical critique has to succeed. Marx ties these statements to a critique of that mythologization of the Absolute, which is rooted in Plato’s philosophy and which he finds to be still active in the Prussian State:

[A]t this point Plato has recourse to the positive interpretation of the Absolute, and its essential form, which has its basis in itself, is myth and allegory. Where the Absolute stands on one side, and limited positive reality on the other, and the positive must all the same be preserved, there this positive becomes the medium through which absolute light shines, the absolute light breaks up into a fabulous play of colours, and the finite, the positive, points to something

other than itself, has in it a soul, to which this husk is an object of wonder; the whole world has become a world of myths. Every shape is a riddle. *This has recurred in recent times, due to the operation of a similar law.*

This positive interpretation of the Absolute and its mythical-allegorical attire is the fountain-head, the heartbeat of the philosophy of transcendence, a transcendence which at the same time has an essential relation to immanence, just as it essentially breaks through the latter. Here we have, of course, a kinship of Platonic philosophy with every positive religion, and primarily with the Christian religion, which is the consummate philosophy of transcendence. (MEGA2, IV, 1.1, pp. 105f.; MECW, I, p. 497; My emphasis)

3. Conclusion

It seems to me that Collenberg-Plotnikov and Müller correctly emphasize the influence of the theory of the 'end of art' within the Young Hegelians' thought. Hegel's aesthetics provided them with a perspective that detached art from religion. Nevertheless, a distance between Hegel and the Young Hegelians exists and can be measured, for example, by Bauer's refusal of religion as a mode of expression of the Absolute. It was this detachment that, in accordance with the Young Hegelian struggle, allowed for the reactivation of art as a *task* of intellectuals involved in political strife. In radically historicizing the Absolute Spirit, they turn art into a means for struggle, entrusting the mediation of political contradictions to art and interpreting their own philosophical activity within a creative, artistic framework. For Young Hegelians, the theory of 'the end of art' thus becomes a theory of 'the future of art.' Against this, the young Marx (in 1839) accepted both the historicization and the detachment of art and religion, but he did not aim to activate art in modernity either as a means for struggle or as a means for the resolution of struggle, considering it, instead, as a form of the Absolute, which it had already overcome. Even though Marx speaks of a "carnival of philosophy" within "iron epochs," suggesting that philosophy could wear other costumes in other times, he seems to argue that, in modernity, philosophy may not wear the costume of art. Within the prosaic conditions of the (pre-)German State, art can only be something

of the past, because only philosophy—that is, the critique and its “titanic struggle”—owns the *task* of mediation.

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Heidegger's Conception of Art and Cavell's Hollywood

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I assert continuity between Heidegger's conception of art and Cavell's philosophical engagement with Hollywood film. My claim is that despite Heidegger's animosity to photography and film, his doctrine enables and calls for engagement with them as media of true art. First, I show that Heidegger and Cavell's common understanding of artistic medium – as created rather than applied within the artistic event – undermines the widely unquestioned preclusion of Heideggerian approach to photography-based-media in artistic context. Second, I claim that in view of Heidegger's doctrine of the turning from danger to saving power, Heidegger's critique of photography and film as embodying the danger of technology does not forbid such approach, but rather calls for it. In the final part of the paper, I expose the constitutive Heideggerian elements of Cavell's philosophy of film. Besides the general concept of artistic medium and the logic of the turning that informs its realization in the medium of film, Cavell, as I show, is committed to a recognizably Heideggerian notion of the world-disclosing and community-forming function of art.

1. Introduction

In this lecture I am concerned with exposing and substantiating the continuity between two major projects in philosophy of art in the 20th century. The first project bears the name of Martin Heidegger, who had probably invested art with greater philosophical significance than any other thinker of his time, famously posing its essence in "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935-36) as advent of truth and describing its operation as "opening up the world" of an historical people. My belief motivating this paper is that Heidegger's philosophy of art captures the core of what we – moderns, late moderns, or whoever we are – still understand art to be, and that

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Heidegger is *the* philosopher to whom a committed art-lover should turn for clarification of her fundamental intuitions. The second project is that of Stanley Cavell, specifically his film- or Hollywood-project – beginning with the exploration of the ontology of film in *The World Viewed* (1971), and proceeding to the critical analyses of particular genres in *Pursuits of Happiness* (1981) and *Contesting Tears* (1996). I take this project to be an exemplary philosophical engagement with particular artistic phenomena – that is, an exemplary project to philosophical criticism. Exploring these two philosophical undertakings and feeling committed to both, I became increasingly convinced that Cavell's project is a continuation – or is best to be read as continuation – of Heidegger's philosophy of art, sharing its basic methodological assumptions and fulfilling its most profound promises. This is the general thesis towards which I will be moving in this talk.

The greatest challenge for the vindication of this thesis is also what I find to be the most deplorable aspect Heidegger's philosophy of art and its legacy: the reverse side of Heidegger's grandiose claims is that the methodological relevance of Heidegger's doctrine to the art of our age – or, indeed, of his own age – remains largely unconsummated. One of the ideas most consistently associated with Heidegger's philosophy of art is the twofold placement of art "in the highest possibility of its essence" at the Western humanity's Greek origins and in the future overcoming of the contemporary "age of being." In other words, Heidegger's conception of art is not taken seriously to provide a framework for positive engagement with the art of contemporary world.¹ Cavell's project, on the other hand, concerns film – which both he and Heidegger took as a paradigmatically modern medium. For Heidegger, however, this was just the reason to reject photography and film as artistic media, for they exemplify the understanding of beings, which the artistic event – would it take place in the modern age – is destined to overcome. At the center of my presentation today is an argument claiming that, rightly interpreted, Heidegger's philosophy of art – despite what he himself has apparently thought – both enables and calls

¹ Among the few exceptions – neither of which coincides in its strategy with the argument of this paper – I wish to mention the work of Diarmuid Costello, especially (2012) where he tackles specifically the question of the Heideggerian stance on photography, and of Iain Thomson (2011), whose sharp formulations of some Heidegger's ideas we shall adopt.

for critical engagement with photography-based-media as media of true art.² At the concluding part of my presentation, I will show why I think that it is *this* particular call which is answered in Cavell's engagement with Hollywood by articulating the constitutive Heideggerian elements of this project.

2. Art as Event of Truth

Heidegger's main thesis about art is that art is event of truth: "the essential nature of art is the setting-itself to work of the truth of beings" (Heidegger 2002, p. 16). What is meant by "truth" here is the unconcealment of beings as the beings they are, Dasein's – that is, ours – fundamental understanding of reality: of "what is and what matters"³. In *Being and Time*, such understanding is analyzed as a fundamental structure constituting Dasein's Being-in-the-world: circumspective and network-like realm of significance, the "always-already" of meaningfulness which underlies all of our ordinary practical engagements as well as most far-reaching theoretical or existential pursuits. The major idea that becomes dominant in Heidegger's thought of the 1930's and that informs Heidegger's conception of art is that our fundamental understanding of reality so construed is historical: it is inaugurated at a certain point, having thus a beginning, an origin. Heidegger's main thesis about art amounts to the claim that, in its essence, art is such an origin, one of essential ways in which a new understanding of beings is being inaugurated (Ibid, p. 32). It is in this sense that an artwork is said to "open up the world" of an historical people – an idea most famously exemplified in Heidegger's discussion of the Greek temple in "The Origin": the temple, so it is claimed, "first structures and simultaneously gathers around itself" the unity of material nature and social values that determines the existence of an historical community of the Greeks (Ibid, pp. 20-21). We must leave undecided here – as it is in Heidegger – the precise political scale on which the community sharing the world of sense should

² For the sake of my argument I conflate photography and film into one category and refer to them as "photography-based media" – a methodic unification, to be sure, justified by the fact that for Heidegger and Cavell alike there is an ontological continuity between these media, and the issues they raise form a single problematic field.

³ Iain Thomson should be credited for this concise formula (Thomson 2011, p. 43)

be taken. My argument will assume its interpretation somewhere in the range between a community of a particular polis, a nation (as Heidegger sometimes conceives of “the Greeks”), and “Western humanity” broadly construed.

What I wish to focus upon is the very idea of inauguration – captured by Heidegger’s term *event* (*Ereignis*) – and to accentuate its radical metaphysical content. The event of truth claimed to take place in art is not a happening of a particular occurrence within a given realm of meaningfulness, but the coming to be of such a realm as a whole. It is a point of an absolute origin not conditioned by anything but itself; it is in this sense that the work of art “belongs uniquely within the region it itself opens up” (Ibid, p. 20). It is important to make explicit that the absolute self-origination Heidegger ascribes to the event of work of art can’t be empirically given, for we can never experience something not preceded by anything but itself.⁴ Phenomenally, event of truth in this radical sense comes about as “upheaval of the ordinary” (Heidegger 1994, p. 39), the absolute beginning is given as transfiguration of what already is. It is one sense in which “the turning” defines for Heidegger the innermost constitution of the event (Heidegger 2012, p. 322). It is also the reason why adequately conceiving of the work of art, as Heidegger admits, amounts to “thinking everything in reverse” (Heidegger 2002, p. 21). The originary world-setting ascribed to the temple is a reversal of natural causality: the forces of nature, as well as some communal existence that empirically precede and condition the erection of the temple, are claimed to be its outcome; the temple “*first* gives to things their look, and to men their outlook of themselves” (Ibid, p. 21).

The same logic of the turning informs Heidegger’s doctrine of the *earth* – the second essential feature of the artwork alongside world-opening, according to the model of “The Origin.” Earth stands for the dimension of concealment that plays a constitutive part in the unconcealment of beings in Heidegger’s doctrine of truth. As far his conception of art goes, earth

⁴ Heidegger tackles this problem in his analysis of Kantian transcendental freedom (Heidegger 2002a) – the paradigmatic case of such absolute spontaneity – on which the notion of the event may be said to be modelled. For critical analysis of this modelling I refer to Jay Bernstein’s reading of “The Origin” in *The Fate of Art* (Bernstein 1992, pp. 166-135).

refers to the artwork's material existence, suggesting the way to think of what we would usually call artwork's medium not in terms of physical causality, but in terms of event. In the unconcealment of all beings which the world-opening is, one thing that necessarily comes to its own is the material opacity of concealment as its persisting condition of possibility and, indeed, as the unfathomable source of everything unconcealed (compatible, Heidegger thinks, with *physis* of the Greeks [Ibid, p. 21]). Although what thus comes to be manifested is a most general ontological principle, in the "coming-forth-concealing" of earth (Ibid, p. 24) the artwork's materials are disclosed not as uniform "staying-in-the-dark" (Ibid, p. 25), but as distinct regions of material meaning, integral of the world that is being set. In the world of the temple the materials of which it is wrought become what they are in truth for the first time: for example, "the rock comes to bear and to rest and *first* becomes rock" (Ibid, p. 24) – which is to say, comes to its being as a medium of architecture. Heidegger believes that (1) such creation of a medium is an inherent (logically necessary) part of the event of truth in art, and (2) only as an outcome of such an event does the material basis of the artwork become an artistic medium. This dual thesis – which is Heidegger's theory of medium in a nutshell – is one of the central ideas Cavell inherits from Heidegger and a major point we must have in view for elaborating a Heideggerian theory of photography based media.

3. Heidegger's Critique of Modernity and Photography-Based Media

Heidegger's conception of art as event of truth, as we have seen, is based on his belief that the understanding of beings that defines our Being-in-the-world is historical. To use Iain Thomson's helpful distinction, this is Heidegger's thesis of "ontological historicity," which is specified in Heidegger by the quite distinct thesis of "ontological epochality" (Thomson 2012, p. 8). The latter thesis claims that our fundamental understanding of beings comes (or came so far) in a succession of several epochs, each unified by a single ontological principle, that constitute the very history of being: the understanding of what is as *physis* in Greece, as God's creation – in the Medieval epoch, in modernity – as objects of representation, and at mod-

ernity's later stages – as standing reserve. This thesis determines some of Heidegger's further claims about art beyond the event thesis as we have presented it. Although I find it necessary to point that "ontological historicity" does not necessitate "ontological epochality," and the former can (and, I believe, should) be thought in much more flexible terms, we must accept the latter thesis for the sake of our argument here, since it is the premise of Heidegger's critique of photography based media and – to a great extent – of Cavell's appraisal of them.

Heidegger describes the modern age of being in visual terms, immediately relevant to photography, as "the age of the world picture." "The grounding event" of this age, however, took place not in an artwork, but in the metaphysics of the philosopher-mathematician Descartes, where, as Heidegger puts it, "what it is to be is first defined as the objectiveness of representing" (Heidegger 1977, p. 127). In the modern world beings are understood as external objects that gain their sole meaningfulness from the certainty of their representation for the subject, who by the means of science aspires to mastery over the inert objective realm. The objectivity of mathematical physics as a paradigm of access to material nature, Heidegger argues, is the other side of the modern subjectivism, in which "man becomes the relational center of that which is as such" (Ibid, p. 128). This subjugation of material nature stands in sharp contrast to its appearance in art as the non-subjective and forever "un-mastered" ground of meaning (Heidegger 2002, p. 21). Regarding the medium as transparent means of representation, and denying it thus the status of earth, is a major reason that makes the modern age inimical to the truth-disclosing essence of art.

The relation of art to the modern age is taken one step further in "The Question Concerning Technology," where, in the aftermath of the atrocities of the 40s, Heidegger provides his account of modern technology as an ultimate manifestation of the modern understanding of beings in its transition to its later stages. The essence of modern technology – dubbed *Gestell*, and aptly rendered in Lovitt's translation in quite photographic terms of *Enframing* – is the "gathering principle" governing all of the dominant practices of the late modern society. This principle is the understanding of beings as meaningless standing reserves, given to whatever human ends that may be imposed on them (Heidegger 1977, p. 24). For Heidegger, the self-posing of man as "the lord of earth" amounts to the most ex-

treme danger that threatens not only our physical existence (by the ways of atomic bomb and ecological crisis), but the very essence of man: our essential receptiveness to the unconcealment of being (Ibid, pp. 26-27). What Heidegger underlines in this essay, however, is that Enframing is itself a mode of revealing (i.e., surprisingly, a kind of *aletheia*), and thus is akin to, indeed rooted in, *poiesis* – a more primordial form of bringing into unconcealment which does not oppose itself to nature, but rather works in agreement with it to bring forth what is coming to pass. While Enframing is the mode of revealing manifest in modern technology, *poiesis* is the principle manifest in art – and since, as Heidegger argues, "the essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it," art, in the conclusion of the essay, is posed as the realm from which the salvation from the technological nihilism is to be hoped for (Ibid, p. 35).

Let us now situate photography in this picture. Being a medium of mechanical reproduction, striving for the first decades of its existence to acquire the status of an art, photography seems to be at the pivot of the critical opposition between art and technology. Yet, Heidegger seems to have thought that photography based media fall on the wrong side of the art/technology divide, and far from being a possible "earth" of the future event of art, exemplify the ontological impediments for its emergence. Indeed, due to its automatic process and intrinsic realism (praised by photography's advocates from Niépce to Walton), photography seems to be the quintessence of the process of "objectification of beings" in representation, characteristic of modernity.⁵ Heidegger directly relates photography to the modern alienation in the opening passages of "The Thing," exem-

⁵ This is the starting point of Costello's argument regarding the relation of Heidegger's doctrine to photography. We agree with Costello that the question whether photography, despite the fact that it "embodies precisely the problem that great art is supposed to contest", could fulfill the role of the "saving power" "depends largely on what is involved in understanding photography as an art" (Costello 2012, p. 101). For Costello, the solution lies in accentuating the "artistic character," i.e. the irreducible role of artist's creative individuality, suppressed in both Heidegger's conception of art and the realist theories of photography – from Talbot's "pencil of nature" to Walton's "mind-independence" (Ibid, p. 112). Our solution is making place for Heideggerian theory of photography by bringing the non-subjectivist agenda of his doctrine to its utmost conclusions.

plifying the technological shrinking of all distances in our age (that is, our loss of meaningfully articulated dwelling place) by the work of film that, as the example goes, exhibits "the germination and growth of plants, which remained hidden throughout seasons ... publicly in a minute" (Heidegger 2001, p. 165). However, rather than bringing remote things closer to us, Heidegger argues, the representation in the medium of film deprives us of the things nearest to us. This critique is not confined to the scientific use of film, suggested by the latter example. As it is made clear by the brief exchange on Kurasawa's *Rashomon* in "Dialogue on Language," Heidegger regards the film as "technical-aesthetic product" in which (in this case, Japanese) "world is captured and imprisoned ... in the objectness of photography" (Heidegger 1971, pp. 16-17). As it seems implied in both instances, and as Julian Young correctly underlines in his comments on the latter one, Heidegger's critique of photography is directed not towards its particular uses (not any artistic failure on Kurosawa's part), but towards the nature of its medium itself (Young 2000, p. 149).

How can we, then, positively apply Heidegger's conception of art to photography-based media?

4. The Turning: Heidegger and Cavell

The answer resides in Heidegger's account for the *manner* in which art is supposed to help us in overcoming the danger of technology. This overcoming, according to Heidegger, should take place as "the turning" which, as we already know, signifies for Heidegger the innermost structure of the event, and which in this particular historical context is manifested in a principle Heidegger finds announced in his favorite Hölderlin's lines: *But where danger is, grows/ The saving power also* (Heidegger, 1977, p. 42). What this means, for Heidegger, is that the overcoming of the technological understanding of being should take place from within the possibilities essential to its epoch (and not, as some may think, as a retrieval to a pre-modern understanding of being). Indeed, the turning from the technological challenging of being to new poetic disclosure could happen only when the danger of Enframing "first comes expressly to light as the danger that it is" (Ibid, p. 41). Now, if, as Heidegger seems to have thought, photography-based media are the exemplary manifestations of the danger of Enframing, the

true disclosure of their essence would be a part of the awaited safekeeping event. Since, as we already know, the coming to itself of artwork's material basis is for Heidegger a necessary feature of the artistic event (point (1) of his conception of artistic medium as outlined above), such disclosure of the photography based media may be legitimately expected, *if* an artistic event would take place in these media.

Point (2) of Heidegger's conception of medium is key to resolving the seeming contradiction, which appears to threaten our right to such expectation, not to say the celebration of its fulfilment which I claim to find in Cavell. The contradiction is the following one: Heidegger's account of the photography-based media seems to both – promote their candidature for the medium of the redeeming artistic event and to preclude its realization, since what makes these media exemplary of the danger of technology makes them at the same time essentially unfit for the artistic role. But now recall that in the event of art the medium of the artwork becomes what it is for the first time: in the event of the temple rock is first disclosed in its essence ("comes to bear and to rest") and is constituted as a medium of architecture. Cavell expresses this very idea stating that "the invention of the photographic picture is not the same thing as the creation of photography as a medium for making sense" (Cavell 1979, p. 38). Creation of a medium, rather than an application of a medium, as Cavell repeatedly emphasizes, is what takes place in art, and, indeed, is definitive of what art is. If we take this Heidegger and Cavell's conception of the event-nature of the artistic medium seriously enough, we would see that an essential preclusion of self-disclosure within a medium contradicts a major implication of this conception: we do not know what a medium of art essentially is before the artistic event had taken place within it. In the artistic event in which the danger of Enframing should *first* come to light as the danger that it is, photography based media, as the expected earth of this event, would disclose themselves with some essential truth-content exceeding the meaningfulness of their prior, non-artistic existence. Ontological considerations regarding the exemplarity and the danger of photography-based media on the basis of their pre-artistic meaningfulness may reasonably support the expectation of their role as the medium of the future event, but they cannot preclude the possibility of such an event, for what event implies is precisely a new determination of the world as a realm of possibilities, and

of the medium as a mode of material meaning.

This argument grounds the possibility of applying Heidegger's conception of art to an artistic event in photography based media. But did such an event actually take place? On this point Heidegger and Cavell disagree. Although – as we claim – Heidegger's doctrine of art sets the stage for Cavell's engagement with film, Heidegger did not recognize an event of truth in photography based media, while Cavell did.

5. Towards a Heideggerian Reading of Cavell's Philosophy of Film

I would like now to briefly outline two central Heideggerian moments of Cavell's project that structurally conform to Heidegger's earth and world. First, despite Cavell's celebration of the art of film, he is to a great extent committed to the idea of "coming to light of danger as danger" as the essence of the self-disclosure of the photography based media. Second – and this is the point that induces me to regard this project as *happy* Heideggerianism – Cavell recognizes the actuality of this self-disclosure as an outcome of genuine world-disclosing events of art in Heidegger's sense.

The first point is suggested by the very title of *The World Viewed* that alludes to Heidegger's "The Age of the World Picture" (familiar to Cavell in an early translation as "The Age of the World View") and thus acknowledges Heidegger's critique of modernity as immediately relevant to the ontology of film he is set to explore (Ibid, xxiii). Indeed, Cavell's own life-long engagement with the "event of skepticism" as "defining a public history in the modern period" (Cavell 2003, p. 21) bears on some recognizable Heideggerian motifs. Cavell describes the modern condition, where the conviction in its lived world becomes for the "subject" a matter of insatiable demand for certainty of representation, as "withdrawal of the world" (Ibid, p. 19) or indeed our "worldlessness and homelessness" (Cavell 1988, p. 32). In Cavell this withdrawal is first of all the "privatization of the world," our Cartesian individuation becoming unbearable isolation from the world and from others, repudiation of our capacity to share common embodied meaning (Cavell 2003, p. 19). In agreement with Heidegger, Cavell recognizes "the condition of viewing as such" – that is representation – as "our way of establishing connections to the world" in modernity

(Cavell 1979, p. 102). Yet, for Cavell, by making the process of viewing automatic – i.e. "removing the human agent from the process of reproduction" (Ibid, p. 23) – photography takes the modern ontology of representation to the point of the turning, enabling us to reflect on our historically determined metaphysical isolation and, in a certain sense, not less than to overcome subjectivity. By removing the actual self from our "looking out at [the world]... from behind the self," Cavell says, photography "wrest[s] the world from our possessions so that we may possess it again" (Ibid, pp. 21-23).

The term "world" in Cavell is intentionally ambiguous. On the one hand, in the ontological character of photographs as being "of the world" (Ibid, pp. 23-24) and in the definition of the medium of film as "succession of automatic world projections" (Ibid, p. 72) world refers to the uniform material reality inasmuch as it can reflect light. In this sense, the Cartesian understanding of beings is implied in the operation of the photo-cinematic apparatus. On the other hand, in Cavell's central claim that "the films of Hollywood constituted a world" (Ibid, pp. 36), what is meant is a realm of meaningfulness in which the material presence of things is not external and indifferent to human significance but is inherently permeated with it. Transfiguration of the world in the former sense into world in the latter sense is precisely what is at stake in *The Word Viewed*, and it is – we may say – *the* Heideggerian turning claimed in the project.

A genre is a central Cavellian notion operative in his analysis of the world-disclosing function of film thus understood. The world of a cinematic genre – in the sense the familiar genres of Classical Hollywood were, and in which Cavell will construe the genres of the re-marriage comedy and the melodrama of the unknown women – is a realm of meaning where the material nature as such ("the world viewed," i.e., photographically representable) is always already configured as a particular realm of human possibilities. One way of phenomenologically grounding this insight is to point that not everything physically representable is possible in a film of a particular genre (no "pie in the face" gags in a melodrama), whereas the necessities of a genre (the re-marriage of the pair in re-marriage comedies) are acknowledged as essential possibilities intrinsic, and in this sense "at home," in material nature.

For Cavell, the primary locus of the eventful turning in film is "violent

transfiguration of human beings as creatures of flesh and blood to their projections on the screen" (Cavell 1996, p. 122). The uniquely cinematic mode of human individuality, created in such transfiguration and captured in Cavell's notion of the "star," is the central element in the world-forming operation of the cinematic genres (Cavell 1979, p. 36). According to Cavell, one of the essential features of the medium of film is a unique ontological status of the screen performer. For example, Cavell argues for the essential ontological precedence of "Humphry Bogart" to any character he has played (and which we usually do not remember by name). At the same time Bogart as a name of a star does not refer to an historical flesh and blood individual, but to an individuality immanent to its appearance in this set of films; it is thus not an expression of a subjective act (as a stage performance) but a subject of a study – or an acknowledgment – of an historical figure of human existence (Ibid, pp. 28-29).

My claim that the world constituted by Hollywood in Cavell could be interpreted as the world of Heidegger's temple is supported by Cavell emphasis on the major social scale implied in his interpretation of some of its films as "great art" (Cavell 1996, p. 8). Hollywood classics of the 30s and 40s, which are at the focus of Cavell's discussion, were important not only to small specialized audiences, as the traditional arts in the same period, but to a general audience compatible with what Heidegger refers to as historical people (Cavell 1979, p. 5). Apropos Kafka's short story "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk," Cavell raises the possibility of the singer "creating the people for whom she sings" and claims that this allegory is most apt for the relation "of an artist ... to a movie public (where the public is apparently openly *all* of the people, the populace, whose lives are not different ... from screened lives)" (Cavell 1996, p. 61). The social standing of film is not a sociological fact about a particular community (perhaps, its obsession with entertainment), but an indication of film's ontological status as world-disclosing, community-forming event. The importance of the Hollywood films to their public, Cavell argues, exceeded mere entertainment: classical Hollywood at its best was articulating for its audience the foundational, though at times contradictory, values of its historical community – the "inner agenda" or a "shared phantasy" of a nation (Cavell 1981, pp. 17-18).

Cavell identifies the community, whose inner agenda the Hollywood

films were articulating, with America – both as an actual historical nation (with constitutional democracy as its form of political organization) and as the utopian horizon of a perfected human community (Ibid, pp. 151–52), “this new yet unapproachable America” (an Emerson’s phrase Cavell borrows for the title of his another book) – akin to the Kantian “realm of ends” (Ibid, p. 78). It is the first sense where Cavell’s project is closest to Heidegger’s vision, for as much as the community of the Greek temple, America is taken in this sense to be an actual historical phenomenon. Taking the formation of such a phenomenon as the focus of artistic achievement is the point of Cavell’s Heideggerianism that I wish to claim here. Needless to say, though, that this inheritance goes against the grain of Heidegger’s agenda, and quite dramatically indeed: for just at the time the movies at stake were made, Heidegger was, in the Nazi Germany, not only formulating the conception of art implied by Cavell, but also preaching against America’s “ahistoricity and self-devastation” (Heidegger 1996, p. 54). This fact does not pose a philosophical threat to my argument, however, since redeeming some ontological elements of Heidegger’s legacy by rejection of some of its political elements is part to the “healthy” inheritance of Heidegger I ascribe to Cavell.

Yet, the utopian dimension of America as the world supposedly opened up in Cavell’s Hollywood event may be taken to mark a serious – that is, philosophically problematic – departure from Heidegger. It is essential for Cavell’s notion of this event that “discovery of America,” as well as the very eventness of this event, remains forever negotiable. As Cavell continues about the metaphor of Kafka’s story, it remains a question whether the singer creates the people or her singing is just a by-product of this people’s everyday speech (Cavell 1996, p. 61) – or, more precisely, it remains a matter of judgment and criticism. Cavell speaks of the films he discusses as engaging in conversation with their culture (Cavell 1981, p. 151) – conversation in which the status of these movies and of this nation is continuously put for decision. I deliberately use a Heideggerian expression here so as to underline that even here Cavell may be efficiently related to Heidegger’s model, where the world-disclosing procedure of art is described as putting for decision by an historical humanity of its values, destiny, etc. (Heidegger 2002, pp. 26, 38). Yet, for Cavell, it is not *decision* but *conversation* which is the key-notion. Conversation simultaneously defines the

essential relation of the movies to their culture, extended in Cavell's act of criticism (Cavell 1981, p. 7), and the regulative principle of this culture (the democratic ideal, if you wish), emblemized in the movies by the modes of conversation within the romantic couples whose narratives they depict (Ibid., pp. 141-160).

Does Cavellian open-ended conversation replace the momentary upheaval of Heideggerian event? I prefer to believe that Heideggerian event is the idea in terms of which this conversation is – or should be – conducted.

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Beauty, Grace and Morality in Schiller's 'On Grace and Dignity'

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ABSTRACT. According to standard interpretation, Schiller's discussion of grace provides the theoretical and systematic framework for his attempt to refute Kantian ethics. Since the harmonious state of grace requires a balance between reason and sensibility, duty and inclination, Schiller is able to bring forward the claim that in order to reach that desired state, the predominance of reason must be relinquished.

I shall, however, argue that this interpretation misrepresents both the textual basis and Schiller's systematic concern in his essay *On Grace and Dignity*.

Schiller develops his conception of grace as *moving beauty* in contrast to the purely sensual *architectonic beauty*. The essential difference lies in the fact that grace is an accomplishment which can solely be realised by the subject itself. For grace - as a condition of the subject - is the effect of the moral capacity of reason. Grace is thus attained when an agent's moral purpose originating in the sphere of reason passes into his natural movements. What Schiller seems to indicate is that the more an agent cultivates his moral agency, the more it is going to agree with his sensual nature; thereby producing a beautiful soul the appearance of which displays grace.

It is therefore not to deny that Schiller touches on the moral aspect of Kantian philosophy if he addresses the dualism of duty and inclination, in order to elaborate his concept of a beautiful soul. However, as Schiller seems to conceive of the same as the effect of the cultivation of moral ideas, he cannot intend to confute Kant's theory pertaining to the foundation of ethics. For the Kantian separation of duty and inclination which lies therein must already be accepted in order to conciliate the systematic divide. Therefore a close reading of the text strongly suggests that Schiller's concern lies elsewhere.

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1. Introduction

With his essay *On Grace and Dignity*¹ Schiller partakes in the discussion of the phenomenon of grace, a discourse which was quite vivid in the 18th century.² Schiller's remarks on grace as well as a "beautiful soul" have turned out to be rather influential since his thoughts are still being adopted regarding the contemporary understanding of human beauty.³

According to standard interpretation grace is construed as the specification of the sort of freedom, the impression of which serves as a prerequisite of the notion of beauty that Schiller had developed in his *Kallias-Letters*. Most scholars usually conclude the following two systematic consequences from that specific interpretation.

Firstly, the newly introduced concept of grace resolves the logical fallacies of the *Kallias-Letters*, thereby superseding the theory of beauty. Although Schiller adamantly adheres to the definition of beauty which he brought forward as *freedom in the appearance* in the *Kallias-Letters*, he only now finds the conceptual means to clearly characterise the aforementioned freedom.⁴

Secondly, the primary aesthetic discourse provides the theoretical framework for Schiller's attempt to refute Kantian ethics. Since the harmonious state of grace requires a balance between duty and inclination, Schiller is able to support his claim that in order to reach that desired state, the predominance of reason must be relinquished.⁵

I do, however, disagree with this reading and shall particularly call into question the uncritical entanglement of beauty and grace which has been claimed in scholarship.

Having said this, I will not offer a complete interpretation of Schiller's

¹ Hereinafter all direct citations from the *Kallias-Letters* will be cited according to the translation by Zepp-LaRouche, Helga (1988), *Friedrich Schiller: Poet of Freedom*. Volume II, Washington, DC: Schiller Institute. Further reference to Schiller's writings refers to the so-called "Frankfurter Ausgabe", denoted as *FA* following volume and page number, further reference to Schiller's correspondence refers to the so-called "Nationalausgabe", denoted as *NA* following volume and page number.

² Cf. Pomezny (1900).

³ Cf. for instance Berghahn's remark's concerning Schiller's relevance. Schiller (2006), p. 170.

⁴ For instance Schiller (2006), p. 146 as well as p. 171; furthermore *FA VIII*, p. 1322f.

⁵ Guyer (2006), pp. 187-205, Koukou (2011), pp. 40-50, Brelage (1965), pp. 230-254.

essay in this paper; and I will not attempt to do so on account of two reasons. Firstly, such an interpretation would require a full and most of all very precise account of the *Kallias-Letters* which I am not able to provide here.⁶ Secondly, it would be necessary to approach Schiller's concept of dignity, its connection to Kant's and Reinhold's theories of will and the sublime, respectively, and eventually, its (logical) (co-)dependence on grace.⁷ Undoubtedly those issues pose relevant questions – all of which I will, however, exclude from my paper altogether. Instead I shall merely attempt to lay part of the groundwork for a complete account of Schiller's concept of grace and therefore I shall only concern myself with establishing the relation between the concepts of grace and beauty. This promises to shed some light on Schiller's position towards the relation between the phenomenon of beauty, broadly construed, and morality.

It is in this respect indeed rather noteworthy that Schiller introduces his findings on the matter by referring to an ancient myth which centers around the goddess of beauty and her belt of grace. I shall begin there by addressing the theoretical framework established by Schiller's consideration of said myth. From there I shall move forward to discussing a quite important distinction pertaining to grace and beauty themselves and eventually draw some conclusions with regards to the relation between beauty and grace on the one hand and grace and morality on the other hand.

2. The Myth of Grace and Beauty

According to ancient mythology, the goddess of beauty is in possession of a belt which bestows a graceful posture upon every subject that comes to wear it. Thus, in order to enchant Jupiter, father of the gods, Juno solicits said belt from Venus.⁸

Schiller concludes two things from this narrative.

At first, apparently, the Greek myth differentiates beauty from grace by representing them separately.

In case Venus gives her belt away to Juno she still remains perfectly

⁶ Regarding a first impression of my reading of the *Kallias-Letters* cf. Sommer (2015), pp. 464–475.

⁷ Regarding Reinhold's influence on Schiller, cf. for instance Heinz (2007), pp. 27–39.

⁸ *FA VIII*, p. 330.

beautiful while Juno becomes graceful under the *effect* of the belt. Since the goddess of beauty does not herself wield the power to bestow grace upon a person, but requires the *assistance* of an object to do so, it follows that beauty cannot be quite the same as grace. To be more precise, beauty, incarnated by Venus, and grace, symbolised by the belt, are essentially, not merely gradually different from each other.⁹ Additionally, it is important to emphasise that Juno aims at enchanting Jupiter, not merely please him. The belt must therefore be able to evoke love, not only aesthetic pleasure, as beauty is supposed to.¹⁰

As a consequence, if Venus parts with the belt, one can only judge that her corporal appearance remains an ideal of beauty. Accordingly, it has been all along merely her physique that could have been considered to be beautiful for the architectonic quality, as Schiller terms it, of what renders her beautiful does not extend to her intellectual features.¹¹

Notwithstanding the above, it must secondly be recognised that Juno can receive the desired belt and its effect from none other than Venus, the goddess of beauty herself.¹² While in accordance with the myth, grace remains a moving¹³ or, if one permits, interchangeable beauty, it is yet strongly suggested that it come from (architectonic) beauty alone. If grace, in fact, is not to be separated entirely from beauty, the question arises in what regard grace is dependent on architectonic beauty.

Schiller's rather poetic than logical introduction begs the question which greater purpose it serves with respect to his discussion of grace. In other words: how do the myth and his following philosophical conclusions relate? Do his further remarks fit into the narrative framework with which he opens his essay? He himself certainly seems to be of this opinion since he asserts that the imagination adumbrated all along what reason could only later clearly conceive. He writes:

The tender emotion of the Greeks differentiated quite early what

⁹ As a result, it can at least be doubted that Schiller refers to and endeavours to develop further the ideal of beauty that Kant had conceived in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Cf. *AA V*, pp. 231–235, cf. *FA VIII*, p. 332–334, especially p. 333 as well as p. 341.

¹⁰ *FA VIII*, p. 330ff.

¹¹ *FA VIII*, p. 335.

¹² *FA VIII*, p. 330.

¹³ *FA VIII*, p. 331.

reason was not yet able to elucidate, and, searching for an expression, borrowed it from the imagination, since the understanding could as yet offer it not concepts. This myth, therefore, deserves the philosophers respect [...].¹⁴

3. The Difference between Grace and Beauty

Schiller renders the myth this demanded respect when he holds that grace not offhandedly be qualified as beauty. Consequently he introduces a distinction between "architectonic beauty" and grace, or "moving" beauty.

Hereinafter I am not going to focus on every aspect of architectonic beauty and grace, respectively, but foremost on the defining difference that dissociates them. Architectonic beauty does only apply to the physical appearance of an object under which a human being is comprised as well, and exclusively so at least in an aesthetic regard.¹⁵

Furthermore, it does not extend further than the realm of nature, or the "jurisdiction" of general natural law, as Schiller might phrase the relation.¹⁶ Only what appears before the senses pertains to architectonic beauty; a person's capacity of reason, be it moral or otherwise, does not apply. Hence, under the category "architectonic beauty" fall all those properties of an object whose representation do not require understanding, but merely intuition.¹⁷

In contrast to this purely sensual architectonic beauty Schiller brings forward his conception of grace as a *moving beauty*, as had already been mentioned earlier.

It is indeed a *moving* beauty, as, in case with the belt, it can be given or transferred to any person.¹⁸ Venus, who has parted with her belt, may be regarded as a suited example to underline this contrast. For she remains beautiful, even without the belt, but stops to be graceful; which means all

¹⁴ Zepp-LaRouche (1988), p. 337; cf. *FA VIII*; p. 334 as well.

¹⁵ Cf. especially *FA VIII*, p. 341.

¹⁶ *FA VIII*, p. 335.

¹⁷ *FA VIII*, p. 341.

¹⁸ Schiller lauds the belt as a symbol of grace within the Greek myth since it precisely meets with the criteria that the concept of grace has to fulfill. Mainly, it can be passed along between the goddess of beauty and another subject which is why it cannot be depicted by a fixed property of neither Venus nor any other subject. Cf. *FA VIII*, p. 332.

there is left to constitute her beauty are her corporeal features which do not extend beyond her physique.¹⁹

What, then, is the qualitative “more”, as it were, that grace has to offer?

The essential difference lies in the fact that grace is an accomplishment which can solely be realised by the subject itself; not by nature or an artist.²⁰ For grace - as a condition of the subject - is connected to the moral capacity of reason. According to that grace or a graceful posture comes about when the moral purpose originating in the sphere of reason passes into the natural movements of an agent.²¹ What Schiller seems to indicate here is that the more an agent cultivates his moral agency - his moral ideas as Kant might say²² - the more is his reason going to agree with his sensual nature; thereby producing a beautiful soul the appearance of which displays grace.²³ In contrast to architectonic beauty, grace is based upon the merit of practical reason the effects of which can indirectly be represented in nature. Namely then, when freedom and morality are not only the determining factor for an action, but also their expression.²⁴

As to the process of the hinted cultivation, Schiller leaves no other clue as for the reader to assume that it is brought upon by the benefit of aesthetic pleasure; in other words: the enjoyment of beauty. Architectonic beauty, that must be. This reading is strongly suggested by the fact that

¹⁹ *FA VIII*, p. 335 – Since Schiller is quite explicit as to the purely physical quality of (architectonic) beauty and even illustrates his position by the example of Venus, it remains surprising how easily grace is often identified as the objective quality of beauty which was at the center of the *Kallias-Letters*. Needless to say that thus far I have not yet clearly shown either that the sphere of Schiller's objective criterion and the architectonic beauty coincide, but his systematic distinction strongly supports this reading. Cf. especially *FA VIII*, p. 340ff where Schiller very possibly alludes to his reasoning of the *Kallias-Letters* with regards to the objective quality of architectonic beauty. Additionally cf. *FA VIII*, p. 292-295 where Schiller uses the narrative of the good Samaritan to demonstrate an application of his aesthetic theory in an “improper sense” (“uneigentlichem Sinne, *FA VIII*, p. 292) with regards to moral beauty.

²⁰ Needless to say that I do not mean to dispute that an artist is able to depict graceful characters in a work of art, but the fact remains that the exterior influence of an artist is not suited to render a person gracious beyond the scope of a depiction.

²¹ *FA VIII*, p. 333 as well as 353ff.

²² *AA V*, p. 356.

²³ Cf. for instance *FA VIII*, p. 344 as well as p. 359.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

grace can only be passed along by beauty, as it was described by the Greek myth wherein exclusively Venus was able to give the belt to Juno.

Schiller's argument would in this case present itself as follows. The effect of beauty brings sensual feeling successively more into line with moral feeling.²⁵ Since the conflict between the two spheres, as it were, with regards to the requirements of morality begins to resolve, the moral actions of an agent begin to appear much more natural to the (aesthetic) beholder; or to better put it: a moral action which is carried out graciously conveys the impression of being carried out in harmony with the sensual desire, or at least not against the same. What this argument entails with regards to the moral agent himself, I must leave untouched at this point.

As a consequence, there are two aspects to consider. Firstly, architectonic beauty takes effect on the moral nature of a person. Secondly, the appearance of this cultivated effect is qualified as grace which is essentially a harmonious display of duty and inclination. Therefore, it must strictly be differentiated between beauty on the one hand and grace on the other.

4. Strict and Wide Sense of Beauty

Admittedly, Schiller's terminology adds to the confusion which has been occurring with regards to the relation of beauty and grace. As he subsumes what he calls *architectonic beauty* as well as grace or *moving beauty* under the term *beauty* in general, it would appear to suggest itself that they both pertain to the same phenomenon. However, such an interpretation would obscure the systematic distinction which Schiller explicitly draws between beauty and grace. One might rather say that they both pertain to the phenomenon of beauty in terms of different aspects. This manner of speaking would be insofar correct as although grace is (merely) an effect and can thus be separated from beauty, it always remains an effect of beauty. In this regard, grace is indeed dependent on beauty. But this does not apply vice versa, which Schiller already remarks at the beginning of his essay.

All grace is beautiful, for the belt of grace is a property of the goddess of Gnidus; but not all that is beautiful is grace, for even without this

²⁵ Cf. especially *EA VIII*, p. 340; moreover regarding Schiller's reading of Kant, cf. *AA V*, p. 354.

belt, Venus remains what she is.²⁶

And a few sentences further, he states:

Grace is therefore not an *exclusive* prerogative of the beautiful; rather it can also pass, although only from the hand of the beautiful, over to the less beautiful, even to the not beautiful.²⁷

Schiller does, in fact, reference the myth in the quotations cited above, but they serve to underline the apparent parallels between his interpretation of the myth and his own understanding of the relation between beauty and grace.

For, in Schiller's thinking, too, every graceful posture is necessarily beautiful as it is the product of a beautiful effect; whereas not every beautiful object must necessarily be gracious. Moreover, the fewest of beautiful objects can, in fact, display grace since the term does apply to human beings alone, as Schiller emphasises rather strongly.²⁸

One might also argue that once a person, initially regarded as a beautiful object, as it were, became gracious, it raises above the merely architectonic judgement. For in this respect, not its physical features are evaluated, but rather its aesthetically formed moral personality.

As for the relation between beauty and grace, it can accordingly be concluded that grace does not fall under the phenomenon of beauty in the strict sense. At least, not when beauty is construed in terms of objective properties and a theory of objective beauty with which the *Kallias-Letters* are primarily concerned.²⁹ Grace can be subsumed, however, under the phenomenon of beauty in a wider sense, that is to say when the cultivating effect of aesthetic pleasure is to be taken into account. This consideration also sheds light on the relation between grace and morality or freedom.

²⁶ Zepp-LaRouche (1988), p. 337.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *FA VIII*, p. 333ff.

²⁹ It would at this point both necessary and productive to pose the question what Schiller precisely means when he uses the word „objective“ and accordingly, whether Schiller resorts to the Kantian meaning of „objective“ regarding the aesthetic discourse. A closer look at the *Kallias-Letters* in this respect might provide scholarship with new insights as to Schiller's fundamental terminology.

5. Conclusion

That brings me to my final point, as one must note that my exegetical findings bear some consequence as to the claim of the critical concern of Schiller's essay as far as Kantian ethics are concerned. This claim usually provides, as I had mentioned in my introduction, the theoretical background in which context Schiller's remarks on grace have been interpreted thus far.

On Grace and Dignity can undoubtedly be read and may very well be an examination of Kantian ethics and aesthetics, respectively. However, as the distinction between architectonic beauty and grace clearly shows Schiller is far more concerned with the effect which beauty takes on the (human) subject. This issue is explicitly hinted at in the *Kallias-Letters*³⁰, but remains as such beyond the scope of Schiller's objective aesthetic theory.

As a result, it is not clearly evident that Schiller refutes his own aesthetics which he had conceived in the *Kallias-Letters* nor that he extends his theory of beauty in the strict sense.³¹ Instead he preoccupies himself with the relation between culture and morality as he does in the *Letters to the Prince of Augustenburg* and subsequently the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Men*.

Thus, Schiller's concepts of grace and a beautiful soul indeed are of moral significance. It is not to deny that Schiller touches on the moral aspect of Kantian philosophy if he addresses the dualism of transcendental idealism, which Schiller construes as a dualism between duty and inclination, in order to elaborate his concept of a beautiful soul. However, since grace requires an agent's movements to be molded by pure practical reason Schiller does not seem to attempt at all to refute Kantian ethics but rather to develop it further. As a matter of fact, a beautiful soul provides the approximation of inclination and duty - a thought which is not entirely alien to Kantian philosophy.³²

³⁰ *FA VIII*, p. 292-295; cf. footnote 18 as well.

³¹ As a matter of fact the term „theory of beauty“ (Theorie des Schönen) is used by Schiller explicitly, but always refers to the *Kallias-Letters* or an objective criterion of beauty in general. Cf. *NA XXVI*, p. 246, furthermore *NA XXVI*, p. 336.

³² Of particular interest in this context are Kant's remarks regarding „practical love“ (praktische Liebe) in the *Critique of practical reason* as well as the connection between eth-

Taking into account what Schiller sets out to do by addressing the discussion of grace, one must read his remarks on Kantian ethics rather closely. As Schiller seems to conceive of a beautiful soul as the effect of the cultivation of moral ideas, he cannot intend to confute Kant's theory on the foundation of ethics. The Kantian separation of duty and inclination need already be accepted in order to conciliate the divide. Therefore a close reading of the text strongly suggests that Schiller's concern lies elsewhere. If that concern is indeed the *effect* of beauty rather than beauty itself, Schiller's endeavour might be construed as a development of Kant's final remarks on aesthetics in the third critique.

However, be that the case or not, it would appear to be promising at least, to read the essay closely along the proposed regard. For instance, one would have to specify in which aspect of freedom both beauty and grace share and how precisely Schiller construes the cultivation of moral agency. One would have to answer the question whether Schiller differentiates between freedom in an aesthetic and an ethic sense.³³

Contrarily, one might arrive at the conclusion that my interpretative proposal introduces much more questions than it is able to provide answers for. Nevertheless, only when grace is not considered to be the conceptual answer to the (supposed) fallacies of the *Kallias-Letters*, those questions can arise and give scholarly debate a new and hopefully productive perspective. The necessity of posing those questions, however, is already and foremost warranted by the text itself and cannot be foregone.

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ics and aesthetics in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Cf. AA V, p. 88f, also pp. 351-357.

³³ Düsing tries to answer this question. Cf. Düsing (2014), pp. 73-89.

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Nietzsche's Non-Aesthetics. Nietzsche's Radical Critique of Traditional Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. By both opponents and supporters Nietzsche is often presented as one, if not *the*, central figure of modern aestheticism. In most approaches, however, little effort is spent on understanding what exactly Nietzsche means by terms like “art”, “aesthetics” etc. Following insights from Bull, Heidegger, Menke, and Laruelle the aim of this paper is to offer a close re-reading of some central passages of *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Genealogy of Morality*, and *Twilight of the Idols* which all demonstrate that Nietzsche should be read as a radical critic both of traditional philosophical aesthetics and of art as an institution separated from the rest of society. He should be read as a non-aestheticist.

Art is boring. (Peter Fuss)

While it is easy for an aesthete to indulge into the powers of the outside like a good after-dinner drink, “letting loose, freeing up, and putting into play,” undoing can fulfill the higher purpose of nursing a hatred for this world [...]. For it is only when we locate something intolerable outside ourselves that we will “leap beyond shame” and “transform [our] paltry undertakings into a war of resistance and liberation” [...]. (Andrew Culp¹)

1. Introduction: A World Without Music!

By both opponents and supporters Nietzsche is often presented as one, if not *the*, central figure of modern aestheticism, i. e. the ideology that art is an autonomous realm within modern society which represents a certain other- or holiness within it (and is possibly its last resort). Besides the sentence with women and the whip, that one about music and error is surely his best-known. There is hardly a music teacher or other mediocre musician who has not cited it as a personal inspiration. And there

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¹ Culp 2016, p. 29.

are few sentences in the history of philosophy² whose meaning has been so terribly misunderstood. The main aim of this paper is to correct this misunderstanding and to demonstrate the – albeit provoking – opposite: That Nietzsche is no aestheticist at all but a radical critic of modern aestheticism.³ Nietzsche does not teach to replace traditional religion with a new cult of art like so many of his contemporaries and his followers – including especially the ones that tried to aestheticize politics –, he tried to show a way out of religion in all its manifestations once and for all. He does not teach to flee from the “falseness” of life into the pure realm of music: He urges us to change a life that needs the escape into a fictional realm of dreams to be worth living.

Obviously, I cannot give a detailed analysis of the development of Nietzsche's conception of art throughout his whole oeuvre in a limited paper like this. I will focus, however, on some key passages from his earliest and from his latest writings that should clearly evidence the huge shift within Nietzsche's thinking over those almost two decades: Whereas he indeed stands in for an aestheticist point of view in *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche 2015; BT), he clearly denounces such a view and proposes an entirely different one in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche 2012; GM) and *Twilight of the Idols* (Nietzsche 2011c; TI).

Of course, I am far from being the first to note that non-aesthetic trace within Nietzsche's philosophy. I will, however, give a new interpretation to it. In order to undertake this, I will begin my elaboration by discuss-

² For the moment, I will act as if Nietzsche can be regarded as a “philosopher” somehow. It does not seem obvious to me, however, that he regarded even himself as such – at least certainly not in certain stages of his intellectual development. While I cannot discuss that important – and all-too-often forgotten – aspect of the exact relationship of Nietzsche's odd thoughts to philosophy in any detail in this article, it should become clear, however, that Nietzsche surely is not a philosopher in the traditional sense of the word: His critique of philosophical aesthetics obviously implies a fundamental critique of philosophy as metaphysical scholarship as such. Inasmuch as Nietzsche is a non-aestheticist, he is surely a non-philosopher as well. Both aestheticists and philosophers should finally stop (mis-)using him for their anti-Nietzschean purposes.

³ I have developed a critique of the usual understanding of the other sentence (that about women and the whip) in Stephan (2014). There, I make a point which is similar to the one made here: One should regard Nietzsche's sentence not as a sexist piece of advice but as a philosophical diagnosis that exactly expounds the problems of a sexist culture. It should be read as a critique of sexist violence, not as its affirmation.

ing Bull's, Heidegger's, and Menke's different approaches to Nietzsche's non-aesthetics and contrast them with my different approach which is systematically inspired by a tradition that goes from the avant-garde movements over Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno, and Debord to Deleuze, Rancière, and Laruelle; the last one being the inventor of the term "non-aesthetics" which will be explained in this section as well.

2. What Is "Non-Aesthetics"?

2.1. From Bull to Heidegger

The most recent prominent critic who repeated the old rumour of Nietzsche's (fascist and reactionary) aestheticism is Malcom Bull in a book bearing the provocative title *Anti-Nietzsche* (2014). There, he presents – with reference to *The Birth of Tragedy* – Nietzsche as an inconsequent nihilist who '[a]lthough he welcomed the devaluation of all moral values, [...] invested the aesthetic with heightened significance.' (ibid., p. 11) In order to overcome Nietzsche, we should 'read him like losers', i. e. from a non-aesthetic point of view, a point of view which is explicitly uncreative, unproductive, anaesthetic (which is *not* non-aesthetic), and unartistic; which is tasteless, boring, and philistine.⁴ Leaving all the other shortcomings of his reading of Nietzsche aside⁵, he never discusses, however, what Nietzsche means by the terms 'art' and 'aesthetic' and how these terms may have changed their meaning during the development of his thought.

This is especially odd since Bull dedicates lengthy sections of his book to a discussion of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche and tries to show a structural similarity between Heidegger's exclusion of animals from 'existence' and Nietzsche's (alleged) exclusion of certain human beings (or even: races) from true creativity.⁶ Heidegger, however, was probably the first to highlight the special meaning of terms such as art, artist, aesthetic, and so on in Nietzsche's writings – thereby polemizing against Nietzsche's aestheticist followers (among them of course – yet hidden between the

⁴ Ibid., pp. 36-40.

⁵ I have dedicated a lengthy critique to Bull's book in an article called *Anti-Bull* (Stephan 2015).

⁶ Cf. esp. Bull 2014, pp. 79-104.

lines – his fascist ones that are the main targets of Heidegger's entire reading of Nietzsche). During the winter term of 1936/37 Heidegger devoted an entire lecture to Nietzsche's aesthetics, entitled *Will to Power as Art*⁷. The title reveals its main thesis: That "art" for Nietzsche is *not* a special sphere of human culture in which special objects – works of art – are produced which stand in a special relationship to values such as Truth, Goodness, or Beauty, but art *is* will to power and thus, since will to power is the essence of all beings, art is the essence of all beings.⁸ Art is essentially the production and self-production of life. The artist produces life insofar as (s)he takes part in this violent self-production (which consists in a constant interplay between creation and destruction). Insofar as nihilism is the negation of production (and thus: life), '[a]rt is the exquisite counter-movement against nihilism.'⁹ Romanticist aestheticism – such as that of Richard Wagner – is a pseudo-counter-movement against the ubiquitous nihilism of modern societies since all it has to offer is the uninhibited indulging in wild emotions, which equals nothingness.¹⁰ If there is an archenemy of true art (and thus: life) it is modern aestheticism. The first step in overcoming nihilism is accordingly to overcome aesthetics. This goes especially for philosophical aesthetics: The study of the realm of art is transferred from the realm of metaphysics (i. e. the study of oversensual ideas such as Truth, Beauty, Goodness, etc.) to physiology, i. e. the modern scientific study of body and life (and even forces and machines).¹¹ While in truth we experience reality as chaos, art is the power to control it, to give it a certain form. Life, thus, takes place in the infinite interplay between truth (the experience of chaos) and beauty (the experience of order and lie).¹² In this interplay, art is (or, at least: should be) the dominant

⁷ Cf. Heidegger 2008, p. 1-224. All translations in this article are my own.

⁸ 'Die Kunst ist nach dem erweiterten Begriff des Künstlers das Grundgeschehen alles Seienden; das Seiende ist, sofern es ist, ein Sichschaffendes, Geschaffenes. Nun wissen wir aber: Wille zur Macht ist wesentlich ein Schaffen und Zerstören. Das Grundgeschehen des Seienden ist "Kunst", besagt nichts anderes als: es ist Wille zur Macht.' (Ibid., p. 69)

⁹ 'Die Kunst ist die ausgezeichnete Gegenbewegung gegen den Nihilismus.' (Ibid., p. 73)

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 86 f.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 90 f.

¹² Cf. ibid., pp. 555 f.

force: 'In art it is decided what truth is; this means for Nietzsche always: what the true is, i. e. what essentially exists.'¹³ Also, the true philosopher is always an artist 'insofar he shapes on existence as a whole'¹⁴.

Thus, we are creative in any instant of our existence: In any minute, we shape the chaos of the world according to some creative lies that we invent. Philosophers, artists, prophets, great politicians or scientists etc. might be especially powerful creators since they do not just follow given norms of shaping but invent new ones – however, we all possess this primordial capacity, we all have the power to become creator and inventors – and we all should strive to become ones. This reading of Nietzsche surely puts him in the line of a Foucauldian-Deleuzian ethics of joyful productivism: The production of life is seen as an end in itself; we have no choice but to affirm it.

As I will elaborate in the main section of this paper, I agree with this reading of Nietzsche in principle (despite I disagree – partly strongly – with many details of it). Nietzsche does not care much about 'art' in the narrow sense of the word: He is concerned with the dominance of nihilism and pseudo-productivity (of which official art is surely a part) in modern culture. When he praises creativity, he does not think of people who paint their walls in a "creative" manner, are part of a band, write novels etc. but of people who actually try to invent new forms of life.

Thus, if we ask if Nietzsche is an aestheticist the answer can be both 'Yes' and 'No'. He surely is no aestheticist in the sense of fans and admirers of the institution of art as it exists in modern societies; he surely is an aestheticist inasmuch he thinks that it is worthy in itself to create new forms of life, to be productive, to be experimental.

One might still follow Bull (and Heidegger himself) and ask if this ethics does not lead to a hyper-nihilism and to the exclusion of beings who do not have the power to produce – possibly, Nietzsche (and with him the maybe most consequent Nietzscheans after World War II, Deleuze and Foucault) is a hidden support of totalitarianism, fascism, neo-liberalism, and what not. Surely, this ethics is based on a basic assumption that can-

¹³ 'In der Kunst fällt die Entscheidung, was die Wahrheit, dies sagt für Nietzsche immer: was das Wahre, d h. was das eigentliche Seiende ist.' (Ibid., p. 71)

¹⁴ 'Dieser Philosoph [der "Künstler-Philosoph"; PS] ist Künstler, indem er am Seienden im Ganzen gestaltet[.]' (Ibid., p. 71)

not be logically proven: That life is good and that it is therefore good to help life to flourish. Obviously, there are many good reasons to neglect this basic assumption in a world of genocides, terrorism, and limitless exploitation of nature and human beings (to name but a few evils of our time). However, we would not be able to see such terrible things as “evils” if Life could be reduced to such violence – we still criticize life in the name of life. Within the deep hate we might feel confronted with in current world-society there is still a hidden love which is primordial to it. Surely not a love directed to the world as it is but to the world as it could be – but whose fragments are already before our eyes. It is maybe this attitude which could lead us to become artists – artists of a new world opposed to the affirmative adorners of the old one.¹⁵

Before we can dive in into Nietzsche himself and learn more about life and how to learn to love it, is it inevitable, however, to do a few more warm-ups. An important point of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche has been forgotten: The precise nature of his relationship to traditional aesthetics. For him, Nietzsche is not only a rebel against traditional aesthetics but still remains within its realm: He only pushes it towards its limits and brings it to its flipping-point, but he does not actually overcome it.¹⁶ Against Nietzsche's affirmation of life, which is an ethics of production, the late Heidegger demands an ethics of Harkening to the Call of Being, a readiness and openness toward the Event which would be able to cure us of the evils of modernity. Despite his obvious contempt for them, Heidegger seems to be very close to Wagner and romanticism in general in this regard: Behind the evils of modernity there seems to be a pure place of origin to which we have to return in order to heal again – be it pre-Socratic Greek antiquity or Germanic mythology. The purpose of true art seems to be to present a genuine Truth to us that links us back to our roots. But how can we be sure that this origin is not already polluted by “defiance” and “machination”? Obviously, we can never be, and this seems to be the reason why Heidegger, after his wild adventures during the 30s and 40s, finally ends up like Wagner: As a Schopenhauerian who dreams of apocalypse, who seeks refuge from the evil world in silence, asceticism, and meditation (and his

¹⁵ Of course, all of these arguments can be found in Nietzsche.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 75.

endlessly demonstration of despising for Schopenhauer might only indicate their deep intellectual familiarity which Heidegger feared to admit – *he* wanted to be one who was harkening). For Nietzsche, there are indeed no roots – and if there are such, they have to be invented by us. But why should rootlessness be a problem at all? Why become plant or stone if one can become a bird, a tiger, or a mouse? Is rootlessness not something good, a necessary condition for the flourishing of life? Even plants need air in order to mate and thus to develop further and to spread their seeds – and who wants to become a stone? Possibly people like Heidegger, Schopenhauer, Hitler, and their “stoned” followers – but surely not people like Nietzsche.¹⁷ Non-aestheticists are strictly anti-fascist.

2.2. From Menke to Laruelle

Menke clearly distinguishes his own project of re-founding philosophical aesthetics from Heidegger:

‘Nietzsche’s reflection on art moves within the traditional path’, as Heidegger says correctly but has understood wrongly. ‘This path is defined in its particularity by the name “aesthetics”.’[¹⁹]

One has to note that he does not offer an explicit argument to support this claim against Heidegger; neither does he even name the exact misunderstanding of Heidegger. Implicitly, it is rather obvious, however: Their main point of difference is exactly their relationship to Nietzsche. While Heidegger develops his own philosophy of art (or, one might even dare to say: his aesthetics) by distancing himself from Nietzsche, in *Kraft* (i. e. *Force*) Menke develops a clearly Nietzschean aesthetics even if the major part of his explicit discussion of Nietzsche does not take place until the book’s sixth chapter.¹⁸ Explicitly, he grounds his conception of ‘Kraft’ in Herder and Baumgarten – Heidegger himself states, however, that Nietzsche often uses the word ‘Kraft’ to refer to ‘Will to Power’¹⁹. In this instance, the difference between Heidegger and Menke becomes obvious:

¹⁷ Menke 2008, p. 107.

¹⁸ In the subsequent volume *Die Kraft der Kunst* (2014) Menke quotes Nietzsche more prominently and extensively.

¹⁹ Heidegger 2008, p. 61.

Heidegger defines 'Kraft' as 'ability which is collected in itself and ready for an effect, the power to ...'²⁰ The decisive point of Menke's conception of 'Kraft' is, however, to distinguish sharply between 'Kraft' as ability and 'Kraft' as force. While 'Kraft' as ability indeed enables us to do something successfully (be within the realm of praxis or of theory), 'Kraft' as force transcends our conscious aims: It stands as a metaphor for that which lies beyond our practices and abilities but yet enables and endangers them. 'Aesthetics' are defined by Menke as the sphere in which we are confronted with this "dark" side of our existence, in which we experience the uncanny force of 'Kraft' without being actually endangered by it.

What does it mean to read Nietzsche not as a thinker of ability but of force? While Heidegger reads Nietzsche as a thinker who favours activity over passivity, production over destruction, life over Death, clarity over disorder, form over content, Menke turns the tables upside down: He presents Nietzsche as an advocate of passivity and de-subjectification (or, in Heidegger's view: as a Wagnerian). In this understanding, Heidegger's failure seems to be that he could not see that aesthetics are not a mere part of metaphysics but an actual alternative to it – a separate realm within modern culture in which the experience of something radically *other* is possible.

This is definitely an aestheticist point of view in the tradition of Schopenhauer, Wagner, and romanticism (and, one might add: Adorno). Aesthetics and art may not be seen as a realm in which a distant origin reappears but in which in the midst of doomed modernity something "Holy" appears – surely, art is its last resort. Aesthetics are a result of modernity – but they represent a different form of modernity, a modernity not of domination but of reconciliation.²¹

One might ask if this view is not undialectical: What if aesthetics and art do represent an alternative form of modernity indeed, but a realm which opposes modern normality only in order to affirm it? As we will see shortly, Nietzsche has no doubts about the affirmative character even of the most critical forms of art: Art has to be tragic, critical, utopian,

²⁰ 'Kraft, das in sich gesammelte und wirkungsbereite Vermögen, das Imstandesein zu ...' (ibid.).

²¹ Also Bertram presents Menke's philosophy of art as an exemplary version of such an aestheticist view (2014, pp. 35 ff.).

subversive, non-productive etc. exactly in order to play a *productive* role in the functioning of modern society as a whole. The confrontation with the force of '*Kraft*' may actually disturb some confused idealists: In sum, it enables capitalist society to work. If religion was the opium of the masses of the 19th century, art is the opium (and maybe even: the cocaine) of the creative elites of the 21st – and especially critical art. Critical theory may even play a very productive role within post-modern cultural industry as well, as long as it does not reflect on its own social position.

In his impressive attempt to lay a new foundation for critical social philosophy, *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*, Hartmut Rosa confronts Menke's aesthetics with a similar objection: Against Menke (and in that case: Nietzsche, too) he insists on the fact that in art we do not only experience a sublime happiness which consists in the mere promise of happiness: We experience not the mere appearance of happiness but actual happiness as we experience an actual relation of resonance between the world and ourselves.²² We experience this kind of happiness not only – as Menke suggests – in particular works of "high" art such as Beckett's plays or Wagner's operas but in any form of art even in the most "primitive" forms of pop or techno. This insight enables Rosa to move one big step beyond Menke (and one might add: Adorno) and develop an actual critical theory of the function that art (even in its highest forms) plays in modern societies: It replaces religion as the main sphere in which individuals are compensated for the lack of happiness that they experience in their everyday life. In art we experience not something mystical and dark but something very clear: The feeling of resonance, of being in a dynamic, vivid relation of responsivity towards the world, which we are deprived of in our everyday lives. And this feeling of resonance is even intensified in works of art that reflect our daily experience of alienation, that are tragical, negative, subversive, and so on since we can more easily relate to them.²³

From this, we might follow that every form of art in its institutionalised, "autonomous" form, as a realm separated from society, is affirmative art in the sense that it – willingly or not – affirms the functioning of capitalist society. If we insist on the destructive, death-affirming character of

²² Rosa 2016, pp. 482 f.

²³ Ibid., pp. 472-500.

this society, it follows that institutionalised art, art in the narrow sense, cannot be truly life-affirming. As – as already Marx knew – critical theory can only be truly critical as it reflects and tries to transcend its own boundaries as mere theory (and thus tries to change its own form, its own institutionalisation, i. e. its own praxis), critical art can only be truly critical insofar as it ceases to be mere art, insofar as it tries to overcome the separation between art and life and tries to become part of the life-affirming movement which tries to create new forms of life.

Of course, this kind of art and its corresponding aesthetics do not have to be invented but already exist: There is a whole tradition of artists and aestheticians who were unsatisfied with being mere artists and mere aestheticians but tried to be actual creators. Let us name but a few: Schiller's vision of theatre as an educational institution, Wagner's vision of opera as a democratic art (which he later betrayed), the avant-gardists' attempts to radically reform modern life, Benjamin's and Debord's critique of capitalist aestheticism, and, recently, Rancière's attempt to think aesthetics as an always-already political enterprise. Despite their huge differences, these attempts have in common that they do not want to reform or revolutionize modern society from the point of view of art as a holy realm of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness (or: the Sublime), but they realise that art has to transform itself into an impure, ugly, and dirty enterprise in order to transform itself *and* modern society at the same time. They do not want (as Heidegger) to aestheticize society nor do they want to keep art as a holy governor (*Statthalter*) of utopia such as Menke and Adorno – but to politicize art.

Laruelle has proposed the term 'non-aesthetics' in order to describe this attitude²⁴: 'Non-aesthetics' refers to the mutual merging of philosophy and art and the political and art; philosophy becoming aesthetic and aesthetics becoming philosophical and politics becoming artistic (i. e. a conscious part of the movement of the creation of new forms of life) and art becoming political. In other words: As "non-Euclidian geometry" signifies the attempt to project traditional, narrow Euclidian geometry onto a new, broader plane in which new forms and figures and new and richer

²⁴ I will cite Nietzsche always giving the number or (translated) title of the section or aphorism in addition to the page number.

connections to and mergings with other disciplines become possible, non-aesthetics is not anti-aesthetics insofar it does not simply want to destroy art – such a cheap attempt would remain deeply metaphysical as we can see both in Plato, and Christian and Muslim iconoclasts who hate art because it is too alive not because it is too metaphysical (i. e. too dependent on given metaphysical values and word-views) – on the contrary, it takes art and aesthetics as a starting point in order to become *more* than art and *more* than aesthetics. Something richer, something more alive, and something more productive (while this “productivity” has to be distinguished sharply from capitalist pseudo-productivity – it may express itself even in forms of mere destructivity under given circumstances).

Is Nietzsche (as Heidegger claims) a non-aestheticist and non-artist or (as Menke claims) a aestheticist (and maybe also: an artist)? On the one hand, I can only repeat Menke: Heidegger correctly calls Nietzsche (without using the word) a non-aestheticist, but has understood the actual meaning of that idea wrongly. Menke, on the other hand, correctly stresses the subversive, Dionysian character of Nietzsche's thought against Heidegger's misreading but limits this subversion to the narrow realm of the “Holy” by reading Nietzsche as an aestheticist. In order to get the right picture, we have to contradict both.

3. Nietzsche Ruminated Once More

3.1. The Dionysian and the Trauma of Revolution

Both Heidegger and Menke take the *Birth of Tragedy* as the starting point of their analysis – and so will we. If there is a work of Nietzsche which can undoubtedly be called “aestheticist” it is this first essay. Deeply inspired both by Schopenhauer's aestheticist ideology (which is not too far from both Menke's and Heidegger's approaches) and Wagner's dream of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, it presents itself from the beginning as a productive contribution to ‘aesthetical science’ (BT, p. 25; I[²⁷]). It is here, where Nietzsche declares famously: ‘[O]nly as *aesthetic phenomenon* are existence and world eternally *justified*’ (BT, p. 47; V).

In his preface to the book, written in 1886, he describes the main aim of the book as ‘*to view science under the optic of the artist, art under that of life....*’

(BT, p. 14; *Attempt of a Self-Critique*, II) One has to understand, however, that this preface is explicitly meant to be a 'self-critique'. Accordingly, this sentence should be understood as a critical comment on the treatise's first sentence: While the essay presents itself as a scientific theory, it is in fact an artistic construction – that means at least that it is unauthentic, it lacks a proper self-understanding of its own methodology. Early Nietzsche has, from the point of view of the older one, not yet become what he is. What this is remains at least ambiguous, however: A poet? Apparently not, since late Nietzsche clearly states that he is not able to 'sing' while the young Nietzsche could have (BT, p. 15; *Attempt of a Self-Critique*, III). Late Nietzsche presents himself – at least in this particular text – as a psychologist and a scientist, a strict analyst of morality who regards his early work as 'badly written, clumsy, embarrassing, *bilderwüthig* and *bilderwirrig*, sentimental, here and there sweet up to the feminine, uneven in tempo, without will to logical tidiness, very convinced and therefor positing itself beyond proof[.]' (BT, p. 14; *Attempt of a Self-Critique*, III) He calls the famous sentence mentioned above 'insinuating' (BT, p. 17; *Attempt of a Self-Critique* V) and heavily polemicizes against the religious world-view implied by it. For the late Nietzsche, the Nietzsche of *Zarathustra*, there is no need for any kind of metaphysical consolation – be it even aesthetic. Rather, we should learn to laugh in the face of the worst evils of life just like Zarathustra teaches. (BT, p. 22; *Attempt of a Self-Critique*, VII) To put it in other words: For the late Nietzsche, we should not comfort ourselves with watching bacchantes, we should become them ourselves. We should leave the institutions of art behind.

Of course, already the 'aesthetics' of the *Birth of Tragedy* are unusual – to say the least. It is no surprise that Wagner did not recognise it as an accurate reconstruction of his aesthetic project. Aesthetics are not analysed immanently but are reduced to two non-aesthetic faculties which do not belong to the realm of art only but form the basis of human existence as a whole: dream, the faculty of form, and intoxication, the faculty of content. Young Nietzsche needs a decent dose of Schopenhauerian metaphysics in order to support the rather bold claim (although endlessly repeated by our pious atheists) that art is a realm in which some sort of "inner truth" of the world comes to appearance.

Beyond this metaphysical element – which obviously contradicts later

Nietzsche's vigorous critique of objectivism –, already young Nietzsche develops a “proto-sociology of art” which directly refers to the later Nietzsche's cultural criticism²⁵: Art is a means for society to confront itself with suppressed impulses in a form that cannot actually disturb social order. In order to fulfil this task, art even has to be critical, subversive, “forceful”, tragic: In comic art – which ideologically conceals the actual problems of society – the suppressed cannot really be confronted and therefore remains unconscious and, thus, dangerous, as it may lead to an explosion someday.

Early Nietzsche combines this claim with an explicitly reactionary cultural-political agenda. It is strange that so many “progressive” readers of the book (including Menke) fail to acknowledge this point. The conception of *Volk* plays a central role in its conception. It is not so much a single genius but it is a whole *Volk* which should be seen as the true Dionysian artist. However, this is explicitly not the heterogenous, chaotic *dêmos* of Attic democracy (BT, p. 52; VII) – in other words: it is not the *peuple* of revolutionary France, of modernity –, but the archaic “authentic” *Volk* of *Volkslied* and *Volkssprache*; it is Heidegger's *Volk*, it is German *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Kulturnation*. This original mass of bacchantes is not a destructive rabble but a well-ordered and productive collective – whose order is not artificial, however, but springs from a natural authenticity. It constitutes tragedy but it also constitutes itself by assembling inside the theatre and viewing its own aesthetic projections on the dramatic scene. Their concrete Dionysian experience, however, appears to be quite “subversive”: Citing Schiller's *Ode to Joy* (having in his mind Beethoven's version of course) Nietzsche describes it as an overwhelming feeling of unity in which all social boundaries and hierarchies are forgotten and ‘slave is a free man’ (BT, 29; I). In aesthetic *Volksgemeinschaft*, all contradictions between classes are reconciled. Only momentarily, however: When the show is over, the members of the mass become individuals again and lead their everyday lives according to their place within social order. Having ex-

²⁵ Adorno correctly highlights this central element of Nietzsche's ‘aesthetics’ – and, thus, clearly sees its non-aesthetical character: ‘Of all, until now Nietzsche has contributed the most to the social study of music [...]. Any sociology of music which prohibited itself this speculative element would remain as below its object as below the level of Nietzsche's insight.’ (Adorno 1973, p. 365)

perienced this symbolic unity, they can now bear their usual sorrow more easily: While in the empirical world man is *homini lupus* and some have to work hard while others laze around, in the “true world” which opens its doors for a short moment in art, the actual unity of *Volk* is shown.

Young Nietzsche polemicizes against ‘Alexandrian’, democratic culture explicitly because it does not limit social equality to the symbolic realm of art but acts as if this equality could become real one day. The attitude of the ‘fifth class [*Stand*], i. e. that of the slave’ (BT, p. 78; XI) becomes dominant within culture and with it the slave’s gaiety and carelessness²⁶. The interesting point about this critique is, however, that Nietzsche does not argue for it from a merely external point of view but tries to show that this culture is internally contradictory: On the one hand, it is based on the exploitation of a majority of slaves, on the other hand, it acts as if this inequality could and should actually be overcome and thus ideologically empowers the slaves until they actually revolt – and, consequently, destroy their own culture. (BT, p. 117; XVIII)²⁷ Modern, democratic culture, thus, is essentially unauthentic and self-contradictory: It is based on an ideological lie about its own violent essence.

If there is a proto-fascist side in Nietzsche, it can surely be found in this Wagnerian conception of the aestheticization of politics. Even anti-Semitic undertones do not miss.²⁸ The concrete political meaning of this theory becomes fully obvious in a series of letters and notes in which Nietzsche laments faked news according to which the revolting workers of the *Commune* destroyed the Louvre and all its works of art. Young Nietzsche viewed this event as a deep crisis, as an attack against culture as a whole²⁹ – just as we might be deeply irritated by and angry at the iconoclasms ex-

²⁶ Cf. early Heidegger’s cultural criticism which uses exactly the same metaphors.

²⁷ Also later in his works, Nietzsche repeats this claim in various instances. It is the most sophisticated version of his anti-egalitarianism.

²⁸ Cf. the distinction between ‘Aryan sacrilege [*Frevel*]’ and ‘Semitic sin’ (BT, pp. 69 f.; IX) and the strange talk of ‘malicious dwarves’ – just like the *Nibelungen* in Wagner’s opera – from which German culture should be purged (BT, p. 154; XXIV) (Nietzsche later reinterprets this passage as being an allusion to Christian priests [Nietzsche 2011b, p. 310; *The Birth of Tragedy*; I] – a move which is completely implausible and is clearly motivated by his desire to distance himself from his early anti-Semitism.)

²⁹ Cf. my detailed analysis of this often-overlooked episode in Stephan 2016b, pp. 266 f. (fn. 29).

ecuted by the “Islamic State” and other terrorist organisations.

The strange thing about young Nietzsche's enthusiasm for *Volk* is, however, that its existence is already defined as being Apollonian: It possesses always-already a “natural form” (a metaphysical conception later Nietzsche would forcefully reject), it exists primarily as a *dream*, an aesthetic spectacle. Would it not be much more plausible to link the imagination of a horde of bacchantes unleashed with the picture of plundering workers? Is it not young Nietzsche himself who remains too optimistic in this regard, who does not view the Dionysian consequently enough, who still combines it with romantic ideals? Later Nietzsche will put the word “*Volk*” in quotation marks³⁰ and will radicalise his affirmation of the Dionysian: This leads him to a fundamental break with his own bourgeois identity and his early aestheticist ideology (which was not very “untimely” at that time). By becoming who he is, Nietzsche had to move beyond of all these illusions – and so do we.

Maybe, Nietzsche fell into madness because he was not brave enough to undertake the last final step of this development: To see his own struggle for individual liberation and the workers' (and women's) struggle for collective emancipation as two sides of the same coin. This last step would have enabled him to come out of his bourgeois-aestheticist closet and to become a part of an actual collective enterprise for the fight against capitalist economy of Death in the name of the ugly beauty of life; a total unleashing of the Dionysian and the drive for experimentation from any institutional constraints.³¹

3.2. Master vs. Slave Art: While Artists Aren't Authentic Producers

The aesthetic is painted in an entirely different manner in *On the Genealogy of Morality* 16 years later. First of all, the true “artist” is described neither as an individual genius nor a homogenous *Volksmasse* but is a social class of masters – whose work of art, however, is not art in the narrow sense of the word but social life in its totality:

Who is able to command, who is ‘master’ by nature, who appears forcefully in work and gesture – what has he to do with contracts?

³⁰ BT, p. 14; *Attempt of a Self-Critique*, III

³¹ I have elaborated this idea in Stephan 2016b.

With such beings one does not count, they come like fate, without cause, reason, consideration, excuse, they are there like thunder is there, too terrible, too sudden, too compelling, too 'different' just to be hated. Their work is an instinctive creation of forms, impressing of forms, they are the most involuntary, unconsciousness artists that exist: – in short there stands something new where they appear, a construction of domination that *lives*, in which parts and functions are defined and made respective, in which nothing finds a place which is not inserted a 'meaning' in respect to the whole. They do not know what guilt, what responsibility, what consideration is these born organisers; in them acts this terrible egoism of artists who gazes like o and feels itself justified in its 'works', like the mother in its children. (GM, p. 325; II, 17)

These masters produce better works of art than any "artist" in the narrow sense could do. Accordingly, the poet Theognis is introduced in another passage in the book as a mere 'mouthpiece' (GM, p. 263; I, 5) of Greek nobility – who surely gives very good artistic expression to their values but who does not *create* them, who is only a "second maker" in this regard. Also in the third section of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche describes the artist – taking here Wagner as an example – as a mere passive figure who is not able to stand alone, to be independent, but who fully depends on someone else who dictates to him his taste and his values: Artists

have always been valets of a morality, or a philosophy, or a religion; aside from the additional fact that they unfortunately have been often enough all-too-lissom courtiers of their followers and sponsors and well-sniffing flatterers of old or newly emerging powers. (GM, pp. 344 f.; III, 5)

In rather strict Marxist terms, Nietzsche regards art in the narrow sense as a mere ideological sphere without any philosophical interest: Not only artists do not stand independently within the world, they do not stand against it – they do not produce, they only reproduce it in a more or less felicitous manner.³²

Philosophers are characterised in this section by their strong individuality and self-reliance which clearly distinguish them from artists. They

³² GM, p. 344; III, 5.

are truly able to think against the world and its powers – they seem to be more suited to becoming genuine creators who actually are able to engage in the task of not just passively describing existing values of a society, but in creating new ones and thus creating an entirely new social order, just like the masters did in former days.

To take part in this re-evaluation of all values, philosophers, however, have to overcome their dependence on an ascetic ideal of 'wisdom' as mere passive contemplation, which has dominated philosophy since its beginning. In particular, they have to change their relationship towards art entirely: While in traditional aesthetics (e. g. in Kant and Schopenhauer), art is viewed from the standpoint of the mere uninterested spectator (which is the general relationship of traditional philosophy towards the world), art – just like the world in general – should be viewed from an engaged, involved, creative, and active perspective which is artistic in itself. That means: A perspective that *knows* that perception is not only a passive but always also an active relationship toward to the world, that theory is always-already praxis in itself. In an explanatory note towards the book's first essay, Nietzsche writes: 'All sciences have henceforth to prepare the future-task of the philosopher: This task understood in the direction that the philosopher has to solve the *problem of value*, that he has to define the *rank order of values*.' (GM, p. 289) The 'problem of value' cannot be solved in a solely theoretical, contemplative manner: It has to be solved practically, *decisions* have to be made.

While the problem of the artist consists in the fact that he is too unreflective and thus too engaged into the world and its dominating powers, the problem of the traditional philosopher is that he is too unengaged, too similar to the religious ascetic. What is needed is a figure which is artist and philosopher at the same time: Whose perception is consciously always creation and whose creation is consciously always perception – whose perception is therefore *real* perception.

Like the quoted remark from the first essay already implied, one can reformulate all these issues within the language of values: True art is the genuine creation of values, i. e. practical and theoretical "truths" which govern social life.³³ This genuine creation is first and foremost a social

³³ For the history and complexity of the conception of "value" cf. the comprehensive

enterprise – that is, the result of a continuing struggle of power between classes of masters and slaves. Art in the narrow sense plays only a mere supporting role within this struggle as artists take up existing values and give them an aesthetic expression within their works of art. They are very uncreative – true artists are powerful groups of individuals who change society according to their collective will.

In modernity, however, Nietzsche seems to have in mind another form of genuine creativity: The activity of the authentic philosophers who finally has moved beyond his ascetic boundaries and has truly become what he is. In these figures, art as the art of the creation of values becomes finally independent from social powers and becomes an autonomous force which fights for nothing but its own good, its own truth, its own beauty. Here, we can clearly see the modernist and avant-gardist tendency of Nietzsche's aesthetics: The artist-philosopher or philosopher-artist should take the position of a master and replace both existing elites (i. e. capitalists – for whom Nietzsche had nothing but disgust) and priests (i. e. the leaders of the slaves) as the leading creators of values of society.

Obviously, there is a contradiction between these two narratives: While the first one resembles historical materialism, the second one adds an idealist element to it – and the relationship between both is not very clear. Both narratives have in common, however, that both the artist and the aesthetician in the traditional sense are confronted with non-aestheticist polemic: It is not seen as a realm of genuine, but only of secondary creativity. In order to get rid of his confinement within already-existing powers, the artist would have to become a philosopher; in order to overcome the limits of traditional contemplative aesthetics, the philosopher has to become an artist – that is: a genuine creator – himself.

3.3. *Music Sucks: While a World Without Music Wouldn't Be an Error*

In order to get the full picture of Nietzsche's non-aesthetics we have to view another dimension of his criticism of traditional aesthetics in *On Genealogy of Morality*: The perspective of the slaves, i. e. those who are uncreative and therefore the mere victims of their masters' will. They are

essay *Werte. Warum man sie braucht, obwohl es sie nicht gibt* by Sommer (2016).

degraded to a status of mere passivity, even their thoughts are not free since all language and all values are solely the artistic creations of the masters. One can say that the artist in the narrow sense, the institutionalised artist, is also a slave in this regard, a mere tool according to the masters' will. If he works well – i. e. his creations actually reflect the values of the masters, glorify their way of life, inspire them to new honourable deeds –, he gets rewards; if not, he is punished. Of course, this “glorification” can also take a critical, subversive, tragic form: The masters will even enjoy being confronted with the contradictions of their existence from time to time. Their whole worldview is shaped by a tragic sense of affirmation of life in the face of the worst evils. They are authentic in the sense that they are conscious of the contradictions of their existence – and affirm it despite of them.

Since the slave can only think using concepts created by his masters, there is first and foremost no way in which he can develop an authentic relationship towards his own existence. While the master's way of life is based upon a deep affirmation for the world, all the slave is left with is a deep sense of negativity, of *ressentiment*. He hates the life-world that surrounds him – and this pure hate, this mere negativity, is all the remaining “creativity” he has left. For Nietzsche, the best he can become is a villain who has a clear cynical consciousness of society: He sees it as a play of brute forces, stripped from all value and meaning, and tries to manipulate them in his own favour. While he is no master, this is as close as he can get to being one. Also, the traditional ascetic philosopher may be a kind of villain. Both the villain and the traditional philosopher are far from being genuinely creative, however.

There is another type of slave, however: the priest. Just like the master (and the philosopher) he possesses a strong will to power. In him, *ressentiment* and this will to power are merged: Thus, he possesses the power to affirm – but he does not affirm affirmation, but he affirms negation.³⁴ Accordingly, what he does is *inauthentic creation*, he is an *anti-aesthetic artist*: It is the creation of a system of values – and, thus, a whole social order – which is based on the negation of genuine creativity. It is a society based

³⁴ This understanding of the psychology of the priest follows the paths laid out in Deleuze 1983.

on ascetic values and the glorification of passivity.³⁵ This is, of course, the

³⁵ In a very interesting article, Menke (2013) attempts to argue that slave morality can be understood as a felicitous attempt by the slaves to affirm their passivity and to re-evaluate passivity as a virtue – an attempt that he – unsurprisingly – sees as the opportunity for a culture which is based on an emancipatory self-conception, a reconciliation between activity and passivity (a thought that obviously stems from Adorno's vision of peacefully lying on the water in aphorism 100 of *Minima Moralia* (2001, pp. 295–298)). While such an authentic affirmation of passivity is possible for Nietzsche in the case of masters who choose passivity voluntarily (an example for that would be the philosopher), they do this only in order to gain more power, to demonstrate, or to test their power. Slaves, however, do not choose their passivity voluntarily, thus they *cannot* authentically affirm it. (In order to support that claim one has not – as Menke asserts – to accept the rather implausible point – which is indeed sometimes made by Nietzsche in his weaker moments – that there are slaves or masters “by nature”. Of course, their slavery is a matter of second nature, they are born into a social condition which systematically prevents them from becoming truly active.) The same goes for the priests in Nietzsche's description. In it, there is no room for an authentic affirmation of passivity and a society led by the ideal of passivity would be a nihilist culture of ‘last men’. Of course, this does not prevent Nietzsche from polemizing against pseudo-activity (and thus, modern glorification of labour) in various instances.

From a Nietzschean point of view, thus, the affirmation of passivity is never a truly liberating response to experiences of victimisation. It does not empower the weak; on the contrary, it only increases their status as victims but making an identity out of it. What follows from this odd move, is exactly *ressentiment* and its awful fruits can be observed not only in so many “progressive” circles but also in German *Pegida*-movement. A Nietzschean answer to experiences of passivity would be exactly the opposite: To stop defining oneself as a victim, to try to become active again, to rebel against those structures that make you passive.

Accordingly, I do not see any political profit in Menke's “progressive” re-interpretation of Nietzsche's critique of slave-revolt. On the contrary: If one wants to fight capitalism, one has to teach workers, blacks, women etc. to actively rebel against the passivity enforced upon them; not to “enjoy” their passivity somehow or even to see it as a virtue. The problem with capitalism is not that people are “too much subjects” or “too autonomous” but that they are forcefully desubjectified and deprived of their autonomy. First and foremost, they have to become subjects in order to fight. Menke's apology of “force” does strip anticapitalist resistance from any force it still might possess. It is unforceful.

Adorno is very aware of this problem despite of his (however: ambiguous) philosophical apology of passivity. This goes even for his reflection of aesthetics: ‘Fostered passivity integrates itself into the total system of cultural industry as one of progressing stupidification. [...] [T]he *fan* whose need towards that which is imposed upon him may increase up to the point of dull euphoria, the sad relict of old intoxication [*Rausch*], is taught a passivity by the total system of light music which transmits itself probably also to his thought

ultimate reason why Nietzsche thinks that true creativity can take place in modernity only in great individuals or small elitist circles: Because it is dominated by this ascetic spirit of passivity and negativity.

Just as the artist in the narrow sense had been the mere tool for the amusement of the masters, he has now become the mere tool for the priests and, thus, the amusement of the slaves. The relationship between art and ascetic culture is ambiguous, however: Since all art is affirmative and creative somehow, ascetic ideology is characterised by a deep mistrust in all forms of art. Under the dominance of ascetic ideology, art is forced to affirm uncreativity and negativity: It is forced to become bad art. In ascetical aesthetics, it has to subordinate itself solely under metaphysical values: the Good, the True, the Beautiful. Since these values possess, ultimately, no foundation in sensible reality, art becomes over-sensible, it has to serve the impossible task of representing something that cannot be represented (for one simple reason: it does not exist, it possesses only a parasitical, secondary actuality).

According also to late Nietzsche, the socialist movement of his days would serve as a perfect example for such a movement of *ressentiment*: They cannot do otherwise but to destroy the art that has been created in order to glorify the values of the former aristocratic masters (which is displayed in museums like the Louvre), they have to create a new art dominated by “modern ideas” such as liberty, equality, and solidarity, by realism, and, ultimately, by *décadence* (which means mainly the absence of aesthetic form, i. e. of the Apollonian, within art).

As a contemporary example of a movement of *ressentiment* Islamism can surely serve well: From a Nietzschean perspective, it can easily be regarded as a movement driven primarily by hate and envy, not by a genuine will to produce something positively new. Their hate for art can easily be seen as a symptom of their hate for life in general – and it is, as Connell Vaughan demonstrated in detail at his most instructive presentation for the annual conference of the European Society for Aesthetics 2016 in Barcelona – deeply inauthentic: The “Islamic State” glorifies its destruction of works of art by producing highly-aesthetised movies of it. One main feature of

and his social behaviour. The befogging effect which Nietzsche feared from Wagner's music, has been taken over by the light one and has been socialised.’ (Adorno 1973, pp. 208 f.)

these movies is that they are highly emotional and intoxicating music is added to them.

While in Islamist politics, art is degraded to a mere instrumental role in order to deliver aesthetic support for an anti-(*not*: non-)aesthetical ideology, there is also an “autonomous” form of ascetic art: In the third section of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche describes ascetic culture as a culture which does not actually solve the problems and contradictions of life but only varnishes them. He gives a detailed analysis of the various techniques of varnishing. Among these techniques, art – especially music – plays a decisive role: Using its soul-manipulating force, it can easily be used to distract slaves from their actual sorrows – and even to implement diverting pseudo-emotions into their minds. Art, and especially music, thus serves primarily as a measure of consolation. It works especially well when combined with artificial intoxicating ideas. Wagner’s operas serve as a main example for this consoling type of art – and Adorno correctly stated that in his polemic against Wagner, Nietzsche already sketched a critique of modern cultural industry.³⁶

What to make out of Nietzsche’s alleged praise for music under these premises? Let us have a close look at the whole aphorism:

How little is necessary for happiness! The tone of a bagpipe. –
Without music life would be an error. The German even thinks God
as singing songs. (TI, p. 64; *Sayings and Arrows*, 33)

It is hard not to see that the sentence about music in the middle of this aphorism is not meant as a philistine apology of the “magic of music” viewed in its context: A first suspicion should be raised by the fact that the example for music here is not a sophisticated composition but the simple tone of an instrument which is largely considered to be rather “primitive”. More suspicions should occur when one keeps in mind what late Nietzsche has to say about happiness and Germans.³⁷

What Nietzsche has in mind here is music as a means for reaching fictional, symbolic pseudo-conciliation. A music that is bad music indeed insofar as it lacks all formal structure – even rhythm –, which is reduced

³⁶ Cf. for example Adorno 2001, pp. 411–413.

³⁷ Cf. the instructive analysis of this aphorism in Vogt 2005.

to mere musical material, tone; i. e. which is pure Dionysian music or music in its purest Schopenhauerian form. It is this music that fits well to an ascetic form of life: In ascetic ideology, all life is viewed from the perspective of metaphysical values; accordingly, it is judged as being an error. Or, to turn it upon its feet: Ascetic cultural is based upon the judgement that life is an error. It is only from the point of view of this judgement that music is necessary for happiness. A truly happy, reconciled life (such as the masters live it in Nietzsche's imagination) would not need any music of this kind; it would prefer complex music which showed life not only in its beauty but also in its ugliness and complexity.

These entire considerations can be summed up by the short remark by Nietzsche that Beauty is based on the judgement "I am ugly"³⁸. Of course, this goes only for ascetic aesthetics. Life-affirming aesthetics would be based on the judgement "I am beautiful".

3.4. Beyond Nietzsche

It should have become evident by now how low late Nietzsche thinks of art and aesthetics in general – and especially that of his life-time. Of course, he could not see the emergence of an entirely new kind of art only a few years after his death: The attempts of the avant-garde movements to overcome the boundaries of art in the narrow sense can be regarded as a response to Nietzsche's critique of the place of art within modern society. Since in modern society all individuals are more or less reduced to slaves, to a mere "herd without herder"³⁹, art is more or less completely reduced to its social function of giving fictive distraction and consolation to the depressed and emptied, of making the unhappy happy at least for short moments.

In order to escape this dead end, art has to attack the ascetic values of modernity – not just theoretically, but also in its actual aesthetic practice. It has to spread unhappiness amongst the slaves, it has to call on their '*instinct of freedom*' (GM, p. 325; II, 17), their genuine creativity, which still exists despite all efforts to tame it. Nietzsche's writings can serve – and evidently have served – as a blueprint for similar attempts. Their main aim is not to spread a certain philosophical doctrine but to encourage the

³⁸ GM, p. 326; II, 18.

³⁹ Cf. Nietzsche 2011a, p. 20; *Proem*, V.

reader to stop being a mere “sheep”, but to start living and thinking for him-/herself. Obviously, such an art has to stop being mere art – it has to become non-art, it has to engage in philosophy, politics, science, religion, etc.

Accordingly, after Nietzsche philosophical aesthetics – if it actually wants to understand modern art – can no longer work with traditional categories such as Beauty, Goodness, and Truth – and even the Sublime would be an inadequate conception to describe modernist productions. First and foremost, however, aesthetics has to emancipate its own production from the orientation towards these categories and become free aesthetic production itself – in the name of love for a world which is yet to be produced.

From a modernist point of view, however, Nietzsche himself appears to be as a figure of transition: He rightly criticizes the old but fails to fully immerse himself into the new. He is only a prophet. He is still not non-aesthetic enough.

This last point can be seen in various elements of his aesthetics and his entire philosophy, especially in its contempt for the movements of women and workers for emancipation. While he dreamt of wild Dionysian outbreaks and life-affirming resistance to the major tendencies of his time (namely: the capitalisation of the entire life-world), he could not see that an actual movement which embodied his visions and hopes already existed in these rebelling workers, slaves, women, ... His bourgeois ideology only allowed him to view them as a repetition of Christianity – and he correctly stressed the resentful, moralistic elements of many parts of these movements. He could not see however – in opposition to most parts of his avant-gardist successors – that the authentic parts of the modern socialist movements had nothing to do with Christian *ressentiment* or asceticism, on the contrary: They were driven by a genuine, self-conscious will to power, an authentic drive to create a world in which everyone can produce and consume freely according to his or her individual desires. It was this vision – driven by the highest affirmation of life imaginable – that brought the protagonists of these movements to their deep refusal of institutionalised art, and sometimes indeed to outbreaks of iconoclasm. This iconoclasm has to be distinguished sharply, however, from the iconoclasm of premodern or of reactionary movements like Islamism: In the former, false images are destroyed in the name of the imagine of a coming world more beautiful

than all of them – in the later, images are destroyed in order to destroy all images and thus all life. As Deleuze (1983) correctly stresses, the key point about Nietzschean thinking is to learn to distinguish between symptom and type: A certain phenomenon may be a symptom of two essentially different types who share only a superficial similarity. Nietzsche failed to make that difference with regard to modern socialism (and many of his reactionary pseudo-followers still do).

4. Conclusion

Bull, Heidegger, and Menke are wrong or at least not satisfying in various regards. While Bull fails to see the modernist, emancipatory main line of Nietzsche's thought – which shows itself especially in his non-aestheticism –, Heidegger, who ignores Nietzsche's social philosophy completely and is thus blind enough to read Nietzsche's analysis of various power relations as a metaphysics, also transforms Nietzsche's non-aesthetics into just another spiced-up variation of traditional aesthetics. Menke, finally, also ignores the connection between Nietzsche's 'aesthetics' and his cultural criticism and social analysis and thus transforms him into just another champion of modernist aestheticism – ignoring that authentic modern aesthetics have to be non-aesthetics in essence: His philosophy of force remains unforceful.

It has been shown that Nietzsche has to be regarded primarily as a social philosopher on the edge between early and late modernity, a citizen of the 20th (or even: 22nd) century lost by an odd coincidence in the 19th – but still too bound up in Victorian-Wilhelminian ideology that he was not able to see certain tendencies of his time in their full meaning. Of course, if we truly want to engage in contemporary non-aesthetics, we also have to lay Nietzsche aside.

The big problem of our day is clearly that it is hard to see a similar emancipatory force comparable to the workers' and feminist movements in Nietzsche's time or the emancipatory movements following the Second World War. Therefore, it may appear plausible and (unfortunately) very realistic to return to Nietzsche or even go back to earlier thinkers (just like Menke does). Bull delivers a more "optimistic" approach in this regard – it seems dubious, however, if his picture of emancipation is not driven

by *ressentiment* and therefore falls back behind Nietzsche instead of going beyond him. The situation is even more hopeless when it comes to contemporary art, which more and more replaces Nietzsche's avant-gardist project for an unforceful post-modernism, which is nothing more than a mere sub-category of cultural industry, which uses its traditional role as an autonomous realm for the experience of an alterity only as an ideology to foster business. If one truly wants to experience some kind of actual "alterity", contemporary "high culture" is surely the wrong place. It is only in those few places and times where authentic resistance is practiced where genuine life shows itself in blinks of the eye.

Surely we (as non-aestheticists and non-artists) cannot wait for a new emancipatory movement to come. If we cannot invent this movement, we can at least prepare ourselves for its emergence – an event which will possibly take place in the not-too-distant future given the current structural crisis of the global empire⁴⁰ –, open ourselves for harkening to its call, sharpening our gaze in order to recognise its traces and emissaries. Going back to Nietzsche before forcefully going behind or beyond him appears to be a first step in order to undertake this preparation.⁴¹

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⁴⁰ For the conception of "empire" cf. Hardt & Negri 2000.

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A little report on the conference written by me in German can be found online (Stephan 2016a). It focusses on the question of the destruction of art (which seemed to be one of the main issues in Barcelona) and also gives a short impression of the discussion following my own presentation.

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Aboutness and Aura: Toward a Benjaminian Critique of Danto

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ABSTRACT. In elucidating the distinction between art and “real things” A.C. Danto requires that an artwork be about something or satisfy the criterion of “aboutness”. His theory assumes that art exists at a distance from the world, and, like language, says something about it. Although the assumption seems innocent enough, it contradicts Benjamin’s understanding of reproducible art in his “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”. The mass reproducibility of film and photography, according to Benjamin, challenges the aesthetic predominance of “aura”, which is defined as “the unique apparition of a distance, however near [the work] may be”. Benjamin’s understanding of aura raises the possibility that the “distance” Danto regards as part of art’s fundamental character is in fact non-essential. This paper explores the relationship between aboutness and aura, and the resources in Benjamin’s understanding of film and photography for a critique of Danto’s theory.

A.C. Danto’s theory of art has been criticized for abstracting too radically from the content of artworks. Either the interpretation of Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*, which is central to Danto’s theory, is accused of neglecting Warhol’s intentions,¹ or despite its permissiveness, the theory is regarded as too essentialist to do justice to the historicity of works of art.² While these objections are, in my view, powerful, they do not provide an alternative conceptual understanding of art and its history that can account for the historical and interpretive sensitivity of Danto’s theory, while showing where it breaks down. I argue here that Walter Benjamin’s reflections on art in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” can provide the resources for such a critique. Specifically, Benjamin’s account of the effect of technological changes on the traditional concept of art and its “auratic” character contradicts Danto’s ontology.

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¹ See, for example, Paul Mattick 1998.

² See, for example, Noël Carroll 1998 and 1993.

1. Interpreting *Brillo Boxes*

In his interpretation of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, Danto views Warhol as a philosophical artist in the sense that he poses the question of what art is—what makes an artwork an artwork. The physical indiscernibility³ of the *Brillo Boxes* from their counterparts on a supermarket shelf exhibits, for Danto, the necessity of a historical, theoretical context that provides the background conditions under which a work can qualify as art. It is only because Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* have the history of modernism's increasingly self-reflexive concern with the self-definition of art behind them that they can qualify as art in the present. An artwork must be *about* something, according to Danto, and the context of an art tradition is required for the possibility of this expressivity. Danto's theory includes not just a set of conditions that an artwork must satisfy but also a Hegelian historical narrative, wherein pop art and related movements occupy a privileged place, marking the point at which art hands off the project of its definition to philosophy and art's historical project comes to an end.

Danto compares the artwork's aboutness to the representational character of language. Artworks, he writes, "stand at the same philosophical distance from reality that words do".⁴ This gap between artworks and reality not only opens art to philosophical theorizing, but is the subject matter of that theorizing, much like language's capacity to model the world becomes the object of philosophy. The philosophy of art thus becomes an investigation of the question of what sets artworks at a distance from real things, and art like Warhol's and Marcel Duchamp's therefore verges on the philosophical, insofar as it shows that this distance is not produced by anything inherent in the work.

One alternative way to read Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, however, throws into question the view that the expressivity of art depends on this distance from reality. Such an interpretation sees Warhol's work not as revelatory of a gap between artworks and "real things", but as an implicit critique of the cultural forces keeping this mythical gap open. The mechanisms that transfigure these *Brillo Boxes* do not confer the ontological status of "art"

³ Or near indiscernibility. Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* were in fact slightly larger and constructed from plywood.

⁴ Danto 1981, p. 82.

on them; they are rather a particular socio-cultural atmosphere, which is politically dubious. That is, Warhol's work, by drawing the supermarket into the art gallery, shows that the designation of "art" and the distinction between the commercial and the artistic is conventional, institutional, ideological, and, therefore, vulnerable.

A number of commentators have made such an argument about Warhol's work by drawing on Walter Benjamin's interpretation of "aura" and mechanically reproducible art.⁵ In brief, the idea is that Warhol's work puts to work Benjamin's theory of the destruction of aura—"the apparition of a distance" in the work "however near it may be"—through the technology of mass technological reproducibility.⁶

One of the virtues of Danto's theory is that it seems not to depend on any single interpretation of Warhol's work. It appears able to accommodate alternative interpretations like the one just sketched. Even if the Benjaminian reading of the work is right, it seems to depend on the more basic conditions of expressibility and interpretability that Danto's theory sets out. In other words, even if the work is attempting to draw attention to the ideological transfiguration of objects carried out by the artworld in connection with late capitalist cultural conditions, its very ability to make such a statement seems to depend on a prior and more basic ontological transfiguration carried out by the art-historical context. In criticizing the transfigurative independence the artworld generates from the real world, the work depends on that independence. It is the artworld—the environment of art theory and art history—that makes the work's expressivity, its *aboutness*, possible.

But the Benjaminian interpretation of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* complicates the criterion of aboutness as it is satisfied on Danto's interpretation. Again, on the latter interpretation, the work, in its material indiscernibility from a real thing, draws attention to the theoretical conditions that must be operative in making art art. On the Benjaminian interpretation, however, the work problematizes the barrier between the artwork and real thing by showing how the cultural-institutional atmosphere artificially sets

⁵ See, for example, Crone 1970.

⁶ Benjamin 2008, p. 23. I quote from the second version of Benjamin's text, which best reflects Benjamin's intentions for the essay.

a mundane object apart from the rest of the world.⁷ Danto's interpretation depends on a deeper stability in the historicized concept of art—the essentialist bedrock beneath Danto's historicism⁸—since *Brillo Boxes* qualifies as “art” in the same way as all other artworks have qualified. Although the interpretive context changes as well as the artworks themselves, the basic relationship between the works and this context must remain the same. But the Benjaminian interpretation presumes a concept of art not only subject to critique, but subject to change—change, moreover, capable of coming from the artworks themselves.⁹

In other words, on the Benjaminian interpretation of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* it is the centrality of that relation in defining art that is being challenged. The apparent necessity of an interpretive context that carves out a special sphere for artworks, whatever that context's content, is being challenged, and shown itself to be historically conditioned.

2. Aura in Retreat

The question that arises here is the relationship between the criterion of aboutness and the concept of aura. Aura, as Benjamin defines it, has typically been guaranteed in the history of art by the uniqueness or authenticity of the work, its ineliminable material and media-based difference from any material object and from any attempted reproduction of it. The possibilities of technological reproducibility throw uniqueness as a condition of art into question, especially when film turns reproducibility itself into a medium.¹⁰ For Benjamin, these new media and the changes that accompany

⁷ Danto sets his theory apart from merely institutional theories of art like George Dickie's.

⁸ See Carrol 1993, p. 89–99.

⁹ Cf. Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel's end of art thesis. Heidegger argues that Hegel's end of art thesis applies to only a particular understanding of artworks, going back to the Greeks, and not to art *überhaupt*. The possibility of art representing the absolute is, therefore, not closed off, but to be determined by the future of artworks themselves. The argument I want to make against Danto, as will become apparent, is similar to the one Heidegger makes against Hegel. Heidegger 1977, p. 204.

¹⁰ Benjamin 2008, p. 28. The question of original versus copy is thus rendered moot. Erwin Panofsky makes a similar point when he refers to the “medium of the movies” as “physical reality as such”. Panofsky (1997), p. 122.

them in the production of art—modernism, surrealism, and mass art—are not a death knell for art itself, but for a particular concept of art hinging on the artwork's aura, which stems from art's origin as a cultic practice.

Aura survives the secularization of art by means of the Renaissance's cult of beauty and the self-claimed independence of art in the 19th century's *l'art pour l'art* movement. But with photography and film, Benjamin writes, "exhibition value beings to drive back cult value on all fronts."¹¹ The reproducibility inherent in film, its accessibility to the masses, and the manner in which can penetrate space and time all contribute to a tendency to destroy the authoritative and cultic value of auratic art.

"But cult value does not give way without resistance".¹² Indeed, the ideological fetishization of reproducible art in 20th century societies, especially under fascism but also capitalism, is quickly becoming the norm by the time Benjamin writes his essay. Films like Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* use the medium of film against its aura-destructive tendency and reanimate it with the cultic aura of nationalism and fascism. Likewise Hollywood films are imbued with the auratic cult of celebrity, and photography and film in general become an integral part of what Susan Sontag calls an "aesthetic consumerism."¹³ Whereas film seemed capable of undermining a bourgeois conception of art and reflecting the industrialized experience of the masses back to them, it is instilled in western Europe and America with new commercial forms of the auratic.

Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, and many of his other works, can be said to rehearse this process. They are mass-produced objects reanimated with the auratic. The uneasiness one feels when viewing them is, on this interpretation, not the product of the indiscernibility (or possible indiscernibility) of the boxes from something one might find on supermarket shelves, but from seeing mundane, mass-produced objects turned into cult objects by the context of the "artworld". The effect of Warhol's work is the result of a displacement of one kind of aesthetic experience, consumerism, to the realm of another, the artworld. Whether one ultimately takes Warhol's intention to be critical or celebratory, the work takes advantage of a cultural distinction between high and commercial art, and it is in relation to

¹¹ Benjamin 2008, p. 27.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Sontag 1977, p. 24.

this distinction—and not that between artwork and “real thing”—that the significance of the work is to be found.

Danto is right, from this point of view, that the work throws into question the nature of art. But it does not shed light on the ontological conditions that have always undergirded art. Instead it points to the aesthetic character of present commercial experience, and the recalcitrance of auratic art, which can even attach itself to the mundane objects of mass production. It reveals that aura is not, or at least not only, the product of the conditions of uniqueness or the authenticity of a work created by an individual in a singular time and place, but of an institutional context and authority.

3. The Concept of Art

The Benjaminian interpretation of *Brillo Boxes* depends on a much more fluid understanding of the concept of art than that on offer from Danto—one which depends on the state of technology of a given culture. Thus, he writes of the Greeks, “The state of their technology compelled the Greeks to produce eternal values in their art. To this they owe their preeminent position in art history—the standard for subsequent generations.”¹⁴ The technological character of Greek art, determines, at least to some degree, the concept of art – the singularity and authenticity of the work, the veneration of the audience, the “genius” of artist. Film as a technology breaks down many of these values by making the product multiple and reproducible, delivering it to the audience in their own particular situation, and giving rise to the individual’s “legitimate claim to being reproduced.”¹⁵

This would seem to require the development of a new concept of art—one that undermines the attendant concepts of genius, contemplation, authenticity. Instead film and photography are treated both by theorists and producers according to the concept of art that came before it. Theorists asked “whether photography was art” when they should have asked “the more fundamental question of whether the invention of photography had not transformed the entire character of art.”¹⁶ Hollywood identifies and

¹⁴ Benjamin 2008, p. 27–28.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

exploits the marketing opportunities by creating a publicity machine, turning its directors and into stars, and producing escapist fantasy that denies to the proletariat the opportunity, Benjamin thinks, to see itself reproduced, to recognize itself, to understand “themselves and therefore their class.”¹⁷

Whatever one’s evaluation of Benjamin’s disappointed hopes in the political power of the reproducible arts, his history of art in terms of the degradation of the auratic reveals the dangers of attempting an analytic definition of art. Despite (and perhaps also because of) the historically and interpretively indexed criteria of Danto’s theory, and their consequent permissiveness, the theory does assume certain a particular picture of art that places art outside the world of “real” objects and asks what conditions must obtain for it to play its expressive role and to be open to interpretations of a certain kind. What is glossed over here is the possibility that this apparently obvious and harmless assumption—this distance between art and world—is itself the result of privileging of certain kinds of art and artists (sculpture and painting being perhaps the most obvious culprits), and certain kinds of reception conditions (the museum and gallery, the connoisseur and critic).

4. Conclusion

As we saw, Danto speculates on the relationship between philosophy of language and his philosophy of art, suggesting both are concerned with the distance of their objects from reality. He writes in particular of Wittgenstein in this regard, reading the turn in Wittgenstein’s thought as moving from a position that countenances a pictorial relationship between language and world in the *Tractatus* to one that rethinks that connection in terms of use.¹⁸ But it would be more natural to characterize Wittgenstein’s later work as giving up entirely on the notion of language as disconnected from the world. Wittgenstein comes to see this picture as one generated by privileging factual descriptive language above all others.¹⁹ In the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁸ Danto 1981, p. 82.

¹⁹ Benjamin’s own philosophy of language is similar in combatting this privileging of descriptive or “designative” language. See Benjamin 1996.

same way, Benjamin's philosophy of art comes to see the assumed distance between art and our experience of the world as generated by the privileging of certain forms and technologies of art. Benjamin shows that the placement of the work outside the world is not a condition for the applicability of an interpretive framework, but itself a particular framework—albeit a dominant and recalcitrant one.

What certain art movements and media in the 20th century point toward is the possibility of a continuity of art with the objects of real life, received, like architecture, Benjamin writes, in a state of distraction rather than contemplation.²⁰ Far from such works declaring the end of art, they show the possibility of art being “absorbed” into human experience (whether to good or ill effect) in an immediate way, instead of occupying a separate sphere to be venerated or contemplated at a distance.²¹

Danto's theory is evidence of the recalcitrance of a theoretical and institutional structure of art which insists on preserving a distance between art and the objects of everyday life, a distance that is by no means necessary and can be collapsed by the media in which art is made and the uses to which it is put. This a concept of art that, like the theories Danto imagines make art possible at various stages in its history, itself has an origin and history and an application. Benjamin tries to document the possibility that this concept of art will (1) continue to be applied to art media to which it is no longer well-suited, and (2) become a way of generating and maintaining certain ideological roles for art.

Danto verges on admitting the limited application of his theory when he seems in “The Artworld” to deny the cave paintings of Lascaux the status of art, since art is impossible without aesthetics.²² Here Danto's theory seems dangerously close to being a theory of what we call “art”, rather than a theory of art. To say that we require a context of art theory and history to determine former is not to say very much: what we call art depends on what we think it is. What interests Benjamin, however, is not what is called “art” but humankind's desire and efforts to reproduce itself and its experience, and the means it has at its disposal in given epochs to do so. Where theory denies these efforts the status of art and constrains

²⁰ Benjamin 2008, pp. 39–41.

²¹ Ibid., p. 40.

²² Danto 1964, p. 581.

them, either in the past or the future—where art theory, in other words, puts itself before art practice—it is arguably no longer theory, but ideology.

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Image Character in Installation Art Practices

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ABSTRACT. In this article, I explore some remarkable 'participative' features of installation art and transmedia artworks to highlight if and how they can raise what we could call the 'image character' of installation itself. I contend that what is mainly at stake in contemporary so-called 'participatory art' is neither a transmedial way to augment a single narrative through social awareness, nor a collaboration between artists and audience (as it was in experimental theatre and happenings in the 1960s and 1970s), but an "affiliation" with the work of art based first of all (following Adorno) on the 'mimetical' share of its image-making.

Through integration of multiple media forms installation art has been regarded, at least for the last three decades, as being able to generate new ways for the audience to understand and experience art. Its widespread 'participative' motive moreover – a highly ambiguous motive – asks not to simply consider transmedial shaped technology as a new medium to express artistic concepts, but to assess how it gives way to intersecting aesthetic and social exchange.

A few years ago, Claire Bishop spoke of installations as 'participatory art', referring to them as a way of "reconfiguring everyday actions as performance" (Bishop 2012: 238). She conceived *Artificial Hells* as a form of rethinking of the relationship of art with the social and its political potential. The book, in fact, puts itself "in the wake of [Nicolas Bourriaud's] *Relational Aesthetics* and the debates that it occasioned", though the announced intention to stress more the cases of artists interested "in the creative rewards of participation as a politicised working process" than "in a relational *aesthetic*" (Bishop 2012: 2-3). A choice which sounds, skimming through the book and its primary reconstructive motivation, like a *petitio principii*, if compared to Bourriaud's strategic attempt to grasp in

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1990s artistic records of human relations the political hosted *in* the formal-aesthetic feature of ‘relational art’. Bourriaud had described a group of artists in the 1990s inventing alternative informational networks of global capitalism (Bourriaud 2002: 28, 31). According to Nicolas Bourriaud the social is “the material” of an artwork, while the production involved in contemporary social engaged art practice is equivalent to an aestheticisation of the social.¹ In Bourriaud’s view, relational art seems to be the art which promotes a social experiment in artistic experimentation and which tends towards “collective production”.²

Since her 2006 essay on ‘social turn’ in contemporary art, Bishop admits that participation is an uncertain and ambiguous issue. In her reconstruction of the claims of the so-called ‘relational art’ in its community/collective aspirations, however, Bishop indulges in her indebtedness to theatrical models to excess, renovating ambiguity about the possibility that her participation in artistic and installation projects since the 1990s could be regarded *as* a political form³.

Bishop’s main thesis is that the aesthetic and political ambitions of ‘participatory’ art come down to a ‘politics of spectatorship’, which becomes a true behavioural indicator based on a “prescriptive approach to art” (and politics).⁴ Ethics substitutes politics, and the social-spectatorship value substitutes artistic value. In Bishop’s view, the key word is ‘prescription’: the ethical dimension has prevailed over any other alternative value in these artistic productions. Bishop, however, believes that an ongoing search for such values is still essential (to get out of Hell).

What actually usually happens is that in so-called ‘participatory art’ both aspects – the political and the aesthetic that relational art creates – seem to disappear to the benefit of an obscure ‘socialization’. Here the ‘social’ establishes itself as the only binding assumption capable of determining, simultaneously, the aesthetic and political nature of relational works as well as their point of contact, that is the (socialising) political nature of the aesthetic and the (socializing) aesthetic nature of the political, as Bour-

¹ Bourriaud 2002: 57.

² Bourriaud 2002: 15.

³ “Participatory art (...) uncertain and precarious as democracy itself”, Bishop 2012: 284.

⁴ Bishop (2012). Cfr. also Bishop (2004), pp. 51-79.

riaud's theses clearly show.

The social / artistic overlap leads us straight to a second problem or risk entailed in this type of artistic production, which mirrors the difficulty involved with the circular definition of 'relational art'. It is the situation whereby the spectators, not unlike the 'form' they interact with, are born already relational, domesticated, the prototype of a *fictional* socialisation, midway between a tribal (or lobby-like) gathering and entertainment. Because of this, there is a major difficulty in recognising any political value to the "temporary communities" that are invited to come together and interact with the installation, which would, however, originally be consensus-based communities, missing – as Jacques Rancière has pointed out – the element of dissensus and discussion that should inform the political.⁵

The problem thus becomes to establish whether there really are all the ingredients needed to produce an "ethical-political system", that is if the stake can be, for relational art, "to reconstruct a lost political arena".⁶

It is also true that the spectators are subject to the same short circuit and simplification as the coincidence that forcedly equals the means with the ends, and makes the definition of relational art circular: called to be a protagonist and co-author of the artwork, the spectator's margin for action does not go beyond the instrumental freedom envisaged by the device. The preventive 'domestication' of the spectatorship downgrades the 'relation' which relational art enhances experimentally. This seemingly prevents it from becoming, against what Bourriaud contends, something that replaces or compensates for insubstantial or evasive political relations.

However, by stressing the fact that relational forms are nothing but "deviations" from pre-existing images and forms able to give rise to "random experimental encounters", Bourriaud trustfully embraces the situationist heritage, trying to fill the idea of relational aesthetics with the forms of life introduced and theorized by International Situationist movement: *détournement*, *dérive*, construction of *situations*. Yet, Bourriaud avoids ending up in the "overcoming" of art which the Situationists predicted in the name of a more genuine, non-spectacular institution of places and communities.⁷

⁵ On this topic, see Rancière 2004 : 160-161; Tavani 2014: 81-103.

⁶ See Tavani 2014: 95.

⁷ See Debord 1967, §§ 191, 192. The International Situationist set up in 1957 near

In *Artificial Hells*, Bishop chooses community-based art from historic avant-garde in Europe during the first decades of 20th Century to ‘neo’ avant-garde of 1950s and 1960s, to find as a landing-place the “resurgence” of participatory art in the 1990s focusing mainly on “delegated performance” and “pedagogic projects” as the “two prevalent modes of participation in contemporary art” (Bishop 2012: 3-4).

Despite Rancière’s argument – recalled by Bishop – sustaining that the politics of aesthetics is a *metapolitics* (which has little to do with a different, not party-based politics, but rather involves an *indirect* way to be politically productive), in Bishop’s view collective authorship, artistic and theatrical orientation “towards the social”, and process-based “participatory actions” are *ipso facto* considered as a means to generate “artistic models of democracy” (Bishop 2012, 30, 38, 4-5). Bourriaud’s claim that relational aesthetics fosters democratic relations was, instead, more prudentially addressed not properly or exclusively to interact between people, but also between ‘levels of reality’ normally ‘kept apart from one another’ (Bourriaud 2002: 8). For this reason, according to Bourriaud, the relational cannot be overestimated to the detriment of the formal-aesthetic. The form of a relational installation cannot be reduced to the things the artist produce but is “the principle acting as a trajectory evolving through signs, objects, forms, gestures” (Bourriaud 2002: 20-21). Only on this basis “a work may operate like a relational device containing a certain degree of randomness, of a machine provoking and managing individual and groups encounters” (Bourriaud 2002: 30). In the catalogue *Contemporary Art: from Studio to Situation*, Bourriaud declares that “democracy is a montage of forms” (Bourriaud 2004: 48), revealing a closer attention to Theodor Adorno’s idea of the aesthetic as the paradoxical unification of disparate factors and materials: aesthetic form being a structure where disparate elements are stitched together to form a whole consisting in the “tensions” between the elements.

Theodor Adorno saw the aesthetic not only as an antidote to the modern regime of instrumental reason and rational calculation, but also as offering instances of otherness through a non-predetermined relation between different and even discordant elements (Adorno 1997). As such, the

Imperia (Italy) and dissolved in 1972.

aesthetic stages unpredictable paths to a form of non-dominating knowledge and relationships – in particular in a work of art. Jacques Rancière seems to be not so far from Adorno's seminal idea of an equal, non hierarchical, "paratactic" relationship between the various elements converging in a critical or aesthetic 'construction';⁸ equality as a presupposition can only operate when it is put into action: "equality only generates politics when it is implemented in the specific form of particular cases of dissensus" (Rancière 2004: 52).

Unfortunately the key point of the debate is often bound exclusively to 'artworld gaming' or to the possibility of art to rework the social,⁹ thanks to the nature of installations as technological arrangements producing huge amounts of information and images to deal with in a quasi-automatic way.

I would like to focus now directly on the question of the *image-character* of multimedia and relational installations. I contend that it could be useful to search for the *character of image* of installations considering it as distinct from the concrete images – technical, as well as social and relational – that they produce in the first place. This choice may be partly supported by what Adorno called "experience of images", partly by Gottfried Böhm's later suggestion not to consider images as 'bodies' alone, but also as "actions and forces" that they generate and that can claim their own value.¹⁰ In this 'transcending' value, imagination has not directly got a cognitive and epistemic role while reading the work of art; it rather enables the viewers to improve their *mimetic* need to get in touch with material, somatic, emotional, technical features of the installation, including its bio-social and bio-technical effects.

Considering the image in this 'transcending' sense with respect to the concrete images produced by an artwork may help us get out of the stand-still which Rancière described with reference to the literal or non-literal value of the issues generated and exhibited by 'participatory' art. In other words, what is at stake is trying and verifying whether and how the 'experience economy' promoted by contemporary art installations and perform-

⁸ I maintained the issue of a convergence of *aesthetic* and *critical* in Adorno in Tavani 2012:13-32.

⁹ See in particular the theorists of a "social turn" in aesthetics, like Bishop (2006) and Kester-Strayer (2005).

¹⁰ See Böhm 2006.

ances is not only obsessed with the target of an *institutive* managerial approach to the creativity exhibited in installations, but brings about an “experience of images” as an aesthetic experience in terms of *technical and evaluative comprehension* of the energetic outcome of installations as techno-artistic productions.¹¹

In Walter Benjamin’s *Passagenwerk* the image is announced by an alteration of perception, by a shock: inside the *passage* things, as historical objects, lose their neutrality and go as far as touching us.¹² Furthermore, Benjamin had reserved the term ‘tactical’ to express the relationship we have with an architectural space, in which reception occurs “in distraction”, given that the environment is perceived through use, which makes it look very much like film viewing in a cinema, with most of the attention based on “occasional looks” rather than extended contemplation.¹³ It seems to me that both suggestions, the image as a historical sign and the link of spatial-environmental experience to a ‘tactical’ or use-focused experience are fundamental statements to answer the questions raised above. In this kind of experience, habit allows us to manage with a distraction which does not mean inattention, but is rather *functional* to specific environmental occurrences like those generated by multimedia installations.

In the case of multimedia installations, however, a “perception in distraction” would not only be describing a certain way of perceiving in the presence of multiple perceptive stimuli, coming up one immediately after the other or simultaneously, but it would also be naming the type of somatic, aesthetic *and* cognitive experience in which the artifice draws its vital character directly from the practical attitude which prepares us for the *use* above all, for practice rather than for a mere vision or synesthetic perception of the installation and with the image-making of installation as a ‘transmedial’ technical object itself.

This idea of exchange and openness characterizes contemporary installation art especially when it foregrounds a paradigmatic shift from questions of artwork as an object or of ‘artworld’ to the notion of “field,” taken

¹¹ Here I am using and developing categories of Theodor W. Adorno’s aesthetic theory, whose possible persisting topicality of the category of “autonomy” of the artwork I have discussed elsewhere; see Tavani 2012.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See Benjamin 1992, § 15.

from Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, the “field” implies a dynamic space where antagonistic forces are deployed, a field of possibilities, of operation or challenging experience (1992, 72).

In the installation, the *power of exhibition* typical of the museum – a power to arrange, to place, to exhibit, whose overwhelming power was first investigated and handled as an instrument by Marcel Duchamp – is, in fact, combined with an architectural bio-power which supplies, through light devices, pathways, arrangement of spaces, a specific perceptive-emotive-cognitive experience, environmentally dedicated to contemplation and/or interaction.

‘Environment’ therefore shall be no longer viewed in a mainly architectural sense, given that the ‘environmentalisation’ of space seems to be rather due to both a widespread “context awareness” and to the physical presence of several viewers at the same time; i.e., to the resonance their movement rises through the frequent integrations of the dynamics of their bodies (visual, acoustic, thermal elements, etc.) within spaces of virtual action. Many installation artworks reveal to be constituted out of the paradoxes and discontinuities of a “mixed heterogeneous zone”.¹⁴ What is truly new, in other words, is the turning of the installation into the extensive physical terrain of deeds and contents coming from the virtual environment of electronic worlds – of actions and relations based on the collective and connective logic of the digital.

So the environment produced by multimedia installations concerns the generation of a *gaming* space in which “the multisensory mechanism of the body is supported, and interactive media are extending man’s space for play and action”.¹⁵

Importantly the structure of the installation makes the limit, threshold or border and passage explicit in a spatial and temporal sense. This means not only that the work of art presents itself “as a relationship” – acknowledged as communal and shared and not exclusive and circumscribed to installations – but that invites each viewer to experience a kind of aston-

¹⁴ On this topic see Crary (2003) and Petersen (2010).

¹⁵ From Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss’s comments on their installation *The Home of the Brain* (1992), quoted in Grau 2003: 219: “Many visitors said that they experienced the decoding of the image program and the possibility of discovering connection as a game”.

ishment, a meditational detachment as well as a sympathetic identification with the *living* environment.

In installations such as *Meccatuna* (2003) or *Tijuanatanjierchandelier* (2006) by Jason Rhoades, something peculiar happens: a sort of ordinary (though orderly) chaos reigns over the interlacement of multi-coloured ropes, neon signs, sculpture-chandeliers, cascades of ropes ending in vaporous, quasi-circular nests, the floor covered with striped red carpets like in a Mosque, camel-shoes, lanterns and various objects hanging all around – the installation as a whole creating an image/portrait or an object-like and spaced-like reformulation, with evident playful features, of the (Inter)net's interlaced structure and its self-containment, while showing a number of symbolic layers spread all around the exhibition area.¹⁶ While presenting themselves as *practices* that have taken on the fluid, performative *habitus* of 1950s – 1970s happenings and site-specific events, last-generation multimedia installations outline a new set of values and potentials, with a strong retroaction of the virtual-digital logic, as a collective-connective logic of the installation itself, appearing alongside its persisting process-like rather than 'object-like' character.

The changed *formality* of multimedia installations concerns in particular the appearance of an environment which increasingly turns to *everyday life*,¹⁷ which imposes a focus on everyday practices increasingly tied to the *living artifices* of technological arrangements. Considering their 'transmedial' and not just multimedial nature, a strong 'programmed' device is required also for installations that are more socially targeted to a 'relational' realisation. On the other hand, the situation put forward by an installation is real, and can be experienced personally and shared with others physically. This circumstance does not only make the overall *image* generated by the installation a composite, analogic-synthetic one, but provides all of the digital imaging stored in the programme with an external reference, adds to the computer-generated diffusive effects the opportunity of concretely affecting the here and now, which thus takes on the role of environment.

At this point it seems necessary to ask some questions. With their nat-

¹⁶ See Schaffner (2013).

¹⁷ I think of the exemplary parable of Allan Kaprow, from the *Environments* and the *Performances* in the late 1950s and 1960s to what he called "Activities" (in the 1990s), devoted to the study of normal human activity and perception in a way congruent to ordinary life.

ural drive to become an environmental phenomenon, what do multimedia installations reveal? The full achievement of life ‘mediatisation’? The need for the relational being to be remodelled or amplified? No doubt the resonance of artistic productions in our lives has long led us to focus on the foundations of such production rather than to develop a ‘theory of art’.¹⁸ But if this production takes shape mainly in the *living device* of multimedia installations, what are the foundations we should be talking about?

Going back to Adorno again, the necessary precondition to understand a work of art is being able to understand the work technically, as a construction, to enter the structure of the work so as to ‘perform’ it from the inside. However, a second step is required: the evaluation of the artwork through the intercepting of its “eloquence” or image-character.¹⁹ It is very likely that he wouldn’t have opposed the additional request that visitors would make to museums fifty years later, that is to go so deep into the work-installation as to be completely absorbed by an interactive multimedia environment. He may have objected to the idea whereby this type of participation not simply because apparently too entertaining or playfully organic to ‘culture industry’. Full immersion can’t exhaust a relationship with the artwork, given that in Adorno’s view even techno-artistic innovation must be able to introduce a dissenting note, some sort of diversion (and thus a ‘distraction’ too) from the system and the device, all the more so when these are particularly routine-based and systematic or, better, when the technical medium is taken as fetish.²⁰ Only the emergence of a distinguished artistic outcome generates an *image* as what I would call its *individualised force*.

According to Adorno, we call “expressive” the nature we experience as “image”: it’s not nature *tout court*, it’s not “simple nature”²¹, but it’s not the image of nature, its idea or mythical or ideal figure either. It is, rather, nature “taken as manifestation” (*Erscheinung*) alone, and never as a material to be handled or processed. For these reasons “even the aesthetic ex-

¹⁸ See Henrich 2001.

¹⁹ Adorno 1981: p. 131.

²⁰ Adorno 1979: 86-87.

²¹ An art aiming to defend repressed nature, says Adorno, would in turn become a ‘natural reserve’ of irrationality, what Hegel called “bad indeterminacy”. See Adorno 1981: 408.

perience of nature, like the experience of art, is an *experience of images*".²² The art of installation therefore entails a comprehension in terms of bio-technical revealing. The main instance of this experience, however, remains defined only in negative terms if captured in the quasi-automatic way of 'immersive attentiveness'. Let's go back then to what Theodor Adorno suggests when he describes the encounter with artworks as an "experience of images" able to grasp their meaning-making. The character of image of a work of art has to be understood on the ground of the presence of the two 'moments' of the artwork – appearance and expression – which he considered as antithetical outputs of its "dialectics". And which in multimedia installations clearly cannot be presented in the same terms. However, the idea of an 'experience of images' does not seem to be doomed to collapse together with the 'dialectics' of art. In order to manifest anything, an artwork must create some form; yet for this manifestation to express something, the mimetic attitude of art must not look to forms nor figures (myths) but to the formless, to the non-identical, to unchannelled energy. In the case of installations: technical and social energy.

To enter the gravitational field of the installation's programme it seems to rather be necessary to go beyond any acquisitive behaviour towards the artwork's formal architecture or the sensorial and emotive stimuli it contains. I contend that if we want to try an analysis of installation-art experience not reduced to context-awareness we need to intertwine the aesthetic position of the viewer inside the image produced by the installation with an evaluation and assessment of the image-making of installation; an outcome becoming available only avoiding a mere subsumption of the work of art to existing canons or standards (Adorno 1967).

The assessment therefore must concern first of all a recognition – that is to say, the installation ability to *individuate* itself, in line with what Adorno stated about the technological artwork's faculty to rise as a distinct entity with *its own* formation path,²³ which Bernard Stiegler has described more recently as occurring through "technologies of trans-individuation".²⁴

Thinking about the classical concept of aesthetic autonomy, Jacques Rancière rightly reminds us the necessity to fight against this 'own', the

²² See Adorno 1981:103, 427; translated from German.

²³ Adorno 1981: 94-96.

²⁴ Stiegler 2015: 159-166.

autos of art's autonomy, which sees the closure or the self-reflexivity of the work of art as a rule.²⁵ We should however maintain, under certain conditions, the possibility to recover a specific meaning of 'autonomy' we could also apply to techno-artistic production and installation art. This would be the claim: each and every entity, being loaded with features or properties, is originally related to its own individuation (including the technological one) as a *particular* path or output, whatever intertwined and multifocal it could be. If we refer it to individuation, 'autonomy' would not express an isolation or a self-centred reflection by the artwork,²⁶ but rather the concrete possibility to mark a diversion with respect to the general technical or technological medium. In this sense, individuation (being the outcome, not the starting point) cannot but concern the operational relation within the new technologies, and therefore also the work of an artist or a collective to the extent to which it is able to re-new or re-activate technology from the inside.²⁷

Considered in its image-character, a value or a meaning of installation art should consist in a "release of forces" through a *hint beyond the medium* with respect to the specific structure and logic of the artwork itself. If images – as Gottfried Böhm remarks – are not only bodies, but also the "actions and forces" they put forward they "may claim a value" – for Adorno being an 'eloquence' as the genuine outcome of an image-experience.²⁸

In conclusion, I would like to mention the case study of Do-Ho Suh's work (*The Contemporary Austin*, Jones Center, Austin 2014-2015). Drawing attention to the ways the viewer can inhabit a public space, the Korean sculptor and installation artist conceives the sculptural or architectonic presence of furniture or 'houses' as transparent structures made of monochrome polyester, at once luminous and ephemeral, inviting viewers to wander through their interior passageways. Installations become 'fields' where energy however proves to be not necessarily ephemeral, and rather generated by the intransitive communication of their image-making in the

²⁵ Rancière 2002: 134-137.

²⁶ On Adorno's insightful analysis of historical changes in the concept of 'autonomy' of art see Adorno 1981: 10, 86, 158, 96.

²⁷ Stiegler 2015: 162.

²⁸ "Art mobilises technique" says Adorno; as mobilisation, artwork is *Frage-Gestalt*. I have explored these topics in Tavani 2012: 157-174.

environment made up by the installation ‘inhabited’ by the viewers. What does ‘social practice’ mean related to this kind of site-specific installation? In my view, it is mainly a living-form practice, technically processed so to say by the installation, where crucial is the act of passing through spatial thresholds stimulating body and mind with diverging sensation – without any priority of ‘social’ sensations.

In Do-Ho Suh’s hanging or standing transparent architectures the density and intensity of the *interrogation* about living in and inhabiting an environment suspends itself forming, apparently, the very image-character of the installation.

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To Be Assessed. Peter Strawson on the Definition of Art

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ABSTRACT. In his paper 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art', Peter Strawson outlines a definition of art that can be summarized as follows: an individual is a work of art if and only if its criterion of identity is the totality of features which are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal. Strawson's account has been, so far, largely overlooked in the debate about the definition of art. I will defend a version of Strawson's account by spelling out and trying to amend its basic components; namely, 1) the criterion of identity; 2) the merit-conferring features; and 3) the aesthetic appraisal. Finally, I will address some objections that can be raised to a Strawsonian account of art.

'This work of art is not to be assessed'. Here is a sentence which seems to contradict our basic intuitions about what works of art are. Even the most experimental works in conceptual art or the most useful works in architectural art, or the most exotic works in non-Western art seem to be, in virtue of their being works of art, objects of assessment. In his paper 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art',¹ Peter Strawson characterizes the relevant assessment as an aesthetic one: 'The concepts 'work of art' and 'aesthetic assessment' are logically coupled and move together, in the sense that it would be self-contradictory to speak of judging something as a work of art, but not from the aesthetic point of view'.²

According to Strawson the property of being the object of a possible aesthetic assessment is a necessary condition for something to be a work of art. Certainly, this condition is not sufficient to define what a work of

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¹ Peter Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art', *The Oxford Review*, 3, 1966; reprinted in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), 178–188.

² Ibid., 201.

art is. We can aesthetically assess many things that are not works of art, as for example mountains, persons, or bicycles. Nevertheless, Strawson suggests a specificity in the relationship between the work of art and the aesthetic appraisal by stating that ‘The criterion of identity of a work of art is the totality of features which are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal’.³ The idea is that many things can be objects of an aesthetic appraisal, but only works of art are such that their criterion of identity is the totality of their ‘merit-conferring’ features.⁴ Thus, Strawson’s definition of art can be summarized as follows:

(SDA) An individual is a work of art if and only if its *criterion of identity* is the *totality of features* which are relevant to its *aesthetic appraisal*.

SDA has been, so far, largely overlooked in the debate about the definition of art. In this paper I will discuss SDA by spelling out and trying to amend its basic components; namely, 1) the *criterion of identity*; 2) the *merit-conferring features*; and 3) the *aesthetic appraisal*. Finally, I will address some objections that might be raised to a Strawsonian account of art.

1. The Criterion of Identity

Practices of art appreciation draw a distinction between the features of works of art that are merit-conferring and those that are not. Although a particular appraisal usually does not take into account all the merit-conferring features of the work appraised, a feature remains merit-conferring if it might be taken into account by some reasonable appraisal. Imagine two persons debating about a work of art *W*. One says ‘I think *W* is valuable because *p*’ and the other replies ‘No, I don’t think so, because *q*’. The features that are relevant to the aesthetic appraisal of *W* are all those to which the propositions *p* and *q* can make reference in a conversation involving rational speakers and concerning the aesthetic value of *W*.

According to Strawson the features that constitute the *identity* of a work of art are all and only its merit-conferring features. For example, we treat two copies of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* as two instances of the

³ Ibid., 202.

⁴ Ibid., 205.

same work of art since the features in virtue of which they differ, for example the font of the characters, are not relevant to an aesthetic appraisal of *The Waste Land*. No rational speaker would state that *The Waste Land* is a bad poem because the font of its characters is too small. In fact, two proper copies of *The Waste Land* share all the features that are relevant to an aesthetic appraisal of this work, and that is why we treat them as two instances of the *same* work of art.

By appealing to the *criterion of identity*, SDA entails that two things that instantiate the same totality of merit-conferring features are instances of the *same* work of art. Hence, works of art are entities that can be instantiated, namely types. Yet, this upshot seems questionable with respect to works of art that in our practices we treat as being unique particulars, as for example paintings. Strawson faces this objection by biting the bullet, that is, by arguing that any work of art is a type, i.e. a non-particular individual which functions as ‘a general rule for the production of its own particular instances’.⁵ That is, a work of art *W* functions as a rule that states: ‘an instance of *W* should instantiate all of *W*’s merit-conferring features’. According to Strawson, we treat paintings as particular individuals only because we lack techniques that allow us to replicate a painting in a way that preserves all of its merit-conferring features. On closer inspection, a painting is not a particular, but a type of which we are currently unable to produce more than one instance.

The ontological claim that all works of arts are types is highly debatable.⁶ This claim is debatable not only in the case of paintings, but also

⁵ Ibid., 205. Strawson specifies his account of types in this passage of his book *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959), 232–233: “The non-particulars here in question [i.e. types] are all such that their instances are artefacts. But the concepts concerned are not just rather broadly functional, like those of other artefacts such as tables and beds. Rather, to produce an instance, one must conform more or less closely to more or less exact specifications. Fully to describe a non-particular of this kind is to specify a particular, with a high degree of precision and internal elaboration”.

⁶ For a defense: Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1989); David Davies, ‘Multiple Instances and Multiple ‘Instances’’, *BJA*, 50, 4 (2010), 411–26; Andrew Harrison, ‘Works of Art and Other Cultural Objects’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 68 (1967), 105–128.

For a criticism: Sherri Irvin, ‘The Ontological Diversity of Visual Artworks’, in Kathleen Stock and Katherine Thomson-Jones (eds.), *New Waves in Aesthetics* (Houndmills: Pal-

in that of performances, especially those involving improvisation. More generally, Strawson's ontological claim is debatable in the case of works of art that are, more or less explicitly, intended by their makers to be particulars and not types. As Sherri Irvin puts it, "Ontological status, like other elements of a work form, is a resource artists can use to imbue their works with meaning".⁷

That being the case, it would be worthwhile to disentangle Strawson's definition of art from his ontology of art. I argue that we can do so by turning what Strawson calls "the criterion of identity of works of art" into a much less ontologically demanding 'criterion of appreciation'. Whatever its criterion of identity, a work of art essentially has a *criterion of appreciation*, which establishes the totality of *specific* features that are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal. For example, the criterion of appreciation of a painting establishes which specific colours and which specific shapes this painting ought to have in order to be properly appreciated.

The notion of a criterion of appreciation is strictly connected to that of a *suitable appreciator* since the former establishes all the features that the latter should take into account. That is to say that the work of art is not only something to be appraised, but something to be appraised in a specific way, namely, in the way in which a suitable appreciator should appraise it. This specificity does not concern the normative content of the appraisal (e.g. good, bad, beautiful, ugly) but the descriptive features to be taken into account in order to properly formulate the appraisal.

The work of art is an entity with a special status, a special power within a certain community; it is a social object, that is, following John Searle's formulation, an entity *X* on which a community bestows a status function *Y*, which involves rights and duties, commitments and entitlements. The status function of the work of art is precisely its criterion of appreciation. The work of art is an entity that we are mandated to appreciate as a suitable appreciator would do, that is, by taking into account the totality of its merit-conferring features. The distinctive power of the work of art as a social object is its prescription to assess it, and to assess it in a special way

grave Macmillan, 2008), 1–19; Anders Pettersson, 'P. F. Strawson and Stephen Davies on the Ontology of Art: A Critical Discussion', *Organon F*, 16 (2009), 615–631; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, (1980).

⁷ Irvin, 'The Ontological Diversity of Visual Artworks', 11.

established by the criterion of appreciation. It is worth stressing that the assessment may be either positive or negative. The prescription does not concern the normative content of the assessment but rather the features to be taken into account in formulating the assessment. Thus, this definition makes room for the possibility of bad art. The point is not that the work of art is to be positively assessed. The point is that the work of art is to be assessed, either positively or negatively, and, in principle, all the merit-conferring features specified by the criterion of appreciation should be taken into account in the assessment.

The criterion of appreciation of a work is usually determined by its maker, but it can also be shaped by the cultural practices within which this work is produced and appreciated. In fact, the criterion of appreciation is not a Platonic form, but rather a historical product like a rule of law or a norm of behaviour, and, as such, it can change in virtue of negotiations within cultural practices.

To some extent, the criterion of appreciation is similar to what Irvin calls 'the artist's sanction'. She characterizes the latter in the following way: 'The artist's primary sanction-creating activity, now as before, is to present an *object* within a particular context. When an artist puts forward an object with certain features, he or she is sanctioning the set of *artwork* features that, given the context and the conventions connecting the object and the artwork, the suitably informed audience will take the artwork to have'.⁸ Yet, what I call criterion of appreciation differs from Irvin's notion of an artist's sanction in two respects. Firstly, the criterion of appreciation may be established not only by the artist but also by the appreciators, as members of a normative practice. For example, our current criteria of appreciation of some ancient Greek statues establish that they ought to be colourless, although we know that Greek sculptors painted their statues and intended them to be appreciated as coloured.⁹ Secondly, Irvin claims that the artist's sanction establishes the features that are relevant to the

⁸ Sherri Irvin, 'The Artist's Sanction in Contemporary Art', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 63, 4 (2005), 322.

⁹ An analogous historical change in the criterion of appreciation happens in the case of some works of classical music, as argued by Lydia Goehr in her book *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (London: Clarendon Press, 1992).

interpretation of the work; instead, in the Strawsonian view I propose, the criterion of appreciation primarily establishes the features that are relevant to the *aesthetic appraisal* of the work. As I will argue in the third section of this paper, all works of art call for an aesthetic appraisal; yet, it is debatable whether all works of art also call for an interpretation.

To accommodate the above considerations, here is a different formulation of SDA:

(SDA*) An individual is a work of art if and only if it is to be assessed according to *a criterion of appreciation* establishing the totality of features which are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal.

2. The Merit-Conferring Features

Strawson names the features that are relevant to the aesthetic appraisal of a work of art its *merit-conferring features*, and conceives of them as the features that constitute the work's appearance.¹⁰ Still, as pointed out by such scholars as Kendall Walton, Arthur Danto, and Jerrold Levinson,¹¹ the features that are relevant to the aesthetic appraisal of a work of art are not always only perceptually manifest features but also hidden relational features, which depend on context and history. Examples of hidden features are 'being created by a certain maker in a certain historical situation' or 'belonging to a certain genre'. Since such features are relevant to the aesthetic appraisal, the criterion of appreciation must concern also them.

Still, there is a sharp difference between the possession of manifest features and that of hidden features. A work of art can lose or lack some manifest features, but it cannot lose or lack those hidden features that are part of its own history. Indeed, what is relevant for appreciation is not just the work's possession of hidden features but the appreciator's epistemic access to them. If the appreciator of a work of art lacks the proper pieces of information about its hidden features, these features are out of reach and cannot contribute to the aesthetic appraisal of that work, even

¹⁰ Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art', 206.

¹¹ Arthur Danto, 'The Transfiguration of the Commonplace', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 33, 2 (1974), 139–148; Jerrold Levinson, 'What a Musical Work Is', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 70, 1 (1980), 5–28; Kendall Walton, 'Categories of Art', *Philosophical Review*, 79, 3 (1970), 334–367.

though the work keeps having them. Thus, the criterion of appreciation of a work of art *W* establishes that, among *W*'s merit-conferring features, the manifest ones should be exhibited by a perceivable entity while the hidden ones should be knowable by a suitable appreciator of *W*. That is why, I contend, captions and catalogues often play a crucial role in practices of art appreciation.

By including among the merit-conferring features both manifest and hidden features we can effectively take works of contemporary art into account. For example, we can explain the difference between an ordinary urinal and Duchamp's *Fountain* by considering that the latter has a criterion of appreciation that the former lacks, and this criterion includes also hidden features. If this is right, the notion of a criterion of appreciation underlies the process that Danto (1974) names 'the transfiguration of the commonplace',¹² by means of which an ordinary object becomes a work of art. *Fountain* is not any urinal whatever. It is an entity whose proper appreciation requires the experience of certain manifest features and the possession of a certain stock of information about its history of making. Duchamp famously asserted that the urinal that he called *Fountain* was selected for its lack of *aesthetic properties*.¹³ Yet, by selecting this urinal and presenting it in a certain context, he bestowed it with a criterion of appreciation and exposed it to an *aesthetic appraisal*.

In discussing the alternative between aesthetic and institutional or historical accounts of art, Nick Zangwill points out that 'the most common objection to any aesthetic account is that it cannot cope with the more experimental products of twentieth-century art',¹⁴ while institutional or historical theories can do so. Yet, a *hybrid* account, which is based on the notion of an *aesthetic appraisal* and on that of an *institutionally* or *historically* established criterion of appreciation, also can cope with 'the more experimental products of twentieth-century art'. It can do so provided that the criterion of appreciation can select both manifest and hidden features as

¹² Danto, 'The Transfiguration of the Commonplace', 139.

¹³ Cf. Thomas Adajian, 'The Definition of Art', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/art-definition/>>.

¹⁴ Nick Zangwill, 'The Creative Theory of Art' (1995), *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 32 (1995), 316.

relevant to aesthetic appraisal.

That being the case, we can rephrase SDA* as follows.

(SDA**) An individual is a work of art if and only if it is to be assessed according to a criterion of appreciation establishing the totality of features, *both manifest and hidden*, which are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal.

3. The Aesthetic Appraisal

The distinction between aesthetic properties and aesthetic appraisal is crucial in order to understand a Strawsonian account of art. Strawson clearly asserts that what he calls merit-conferring features are not the aesthetic properties of the work but the features of the work that are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal. For example exhibiting certain shades of red is not an aesthetic property and nevertheless it is relevant to the aesthetic appraisal of Rothko's painting *Four Darks in Red*. A feature of a work of art that is relevant to its aesthetic appraisal is not "anything which has an evaluative name" but 'something on account of which evaluative names are applied'.¹⁵

From this perspective, every work of art, even if it lacks aesthetic properties, can still be the object of an aesthetic appraisal. This brings us back to our starting point: "this is a work of art but it is not to be assessed" remains an unacceptable contradiction. The free creativity of the artists has its own limits, like any freedom, and in this case the limits are set by the fact that an artist cannot make a work that is not to be assessed. Even if a certain artist had this intention, her intention would be destined to remain unfulfilled.

Although contemporary art challenges the notion of *aesthetic property* and upsets the notion of *aesthetic attitude*,¹⁶ the notion of *aesthetic appraisal* remains untouched. If there is a revolutionary effect of contemporary art, this is precisely the disentanglement of the notion of *aesthetic appraisal* from those of *aesthetic property* and *aesthetic attitude*. In contemporary art expositions, there may be works that lack relevant aesthetic properties,

¹⁵ Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art', 204.

¹⁶ George Dickie, 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1.1 (1964), 56–65.

and visitors, unless they are particularly naïve, give up aesthetic attitudes in front of such works. Nevertheless, even the most skilled and experienced visitors do not give up the aesthetic appraisal. Contemporary art does not rule art criticism out. Rather, it favours a special kind of art criticism, which can make aesthetic appraisals in spite of the lack of aesthetic properties and aesthetic attitudes.

From Strawson's perspective, the aesthetic appraisal can be disentangled from the notion of aesthetic property and aesthetic attitude since what makes an appraisal aesthetic is not which entities it is about, or which experiential states it is accompanied by, but its own way of being an appraisal. More specifically, Strawson states that, with respect to other kinds of appraisals, as for example moral appraisal, aesthetic appraisal is such that 'to the former [...] general rules and principles are essential; to the latter, quite irrelevant'.¹⁷ Thus, according to Strawson, the hallmark of the aesthetic appraisal is its independence from general rules and principles.

I argue that we need a more detailed account of the aesthetic appraisal in order to use it as a component of a definition of art. The independence from general rules and principles is arguably an important characteristic of the aesthetic appraisal, but there are more fundamental components, which can be found in Kant's basic conception of the judgment of taste, namely in what Zangwill calls 'an *austere* explanation of what Kant means'.¹⁸

From this perspective, the essential components of an aesthetic appraisal are its *subjectivity*, i.e. its deriving from subjective states of pleasure or displeasure, and its *normativity*, i.e. its making claim to correctness, thereby requiring that other subjects share this appraisal. Such a normative request of sharing involves that the value the appraisal ascribes to a certain object does depend neither on the appraisal itself nor on the appraising subject, but rather on some publicly shareable features of this very object, which constitute the 'dependence base' of its value.¹⁹

Thus, Strawson is arguably right in stating that an aesthetic appraisal is such that "what is said in amplification and support [of this appraisal]

¹⁷ Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art', 200.

¹⁸ Nick Zangwill, 'Aesthetic Judgment', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/aesthetic-judgment/>>.

¹⁹ Zangwill, 'Aesthetic Judgment'.

is not general, but consists essentially in drawing attention to particular features or parts of the object praised, and their relations to each other in the object”.²⁰ Yet, this is not the whole story. Such ‘particular features or parts of the object praised, and their relations to each other in the object’, in fact, constitute a ‘dependence base’ for the value that the aesthetic appraisal ascribes to its object. I argue that, when the appraised object is a work of art, its ‘dependence base’ is established by its criterion of appreciation. This leads us to:

(SDA***) An individual is a work of art if and only if it is to be assessed according to a criterion of appreciation establishing the totality of features, both manifest and hidden, which are relevant to its *aesthetic appraisal*, i.e. an evaluation that a) derives from a subjective state of pleasure or displeasure; b) makes claim to correctness; and c) attributes to the object a value that depends neither on the appraisal itself nor on the appraising subject, but rather on a publicly shareable ‘dependence base’.

Ultimately, a work of art is an object the aesthetic appraisal of which is socially governed by a specific criterion of appreciation, which is bestowed on this object thereby publicly establishing the “dependence base” of its value. By constituting a work of art in this way, the criterion of appreciation enables practices of art criticism, which consist in arguing for a certain aesthetic appraisal of a work by making reference to the features established by the criterion of appreciation of that work. Likewise, the criterion of appreciation enables practices of conservation, which consist in attempts to keep a certain work of art in the state specified by its criterion of appreciation; and also practices of restoration, which consist in attempts to bring a certain work of art back to the state specified by its criterion of appreciation.

4. Counterexamples and Objections

In order to defend my Strawsonian account of the work of art as an individual entity bestowed with a criterion of appreciation establishing the

²⁰ Strawson, ‘Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art’, 200.

totality of its merit-conferring features, I shall argue that *all* works of arts have this criterion (*necessity claim*), and *nothing but* works of art has it (*sufficiency claim*). That is to say that SDA*** shall face two kinds of counter-examples, namely *alleged false positives* and *alleged false negatives*. The alleged false positives threaten the necessity claim since such entities seem capable of satisfying the definition but we are not inclined to treat them as works of art. The alleged false negatives threaten the sufficiency claim since we are inclined to treat such entities as works of art but they seem incapable of satisfying the definition. I will start by addressing objections concerning false positives and then I will turn to objections concerning false negatives.

4.1. Alleged False Positives

The Strawsonian definition of the work of art I am defending has two components, namely, a normative one and an aesthetic one. The *normative* component states that the criterion of appreciation specifies how a certain work of art *ought* to be appreciated by specifying which features of this work are relevant to its appreciation. The *aesthetic* component states that this appreciation is an *aesthetic* appreciation. The general strategy I will adopt in order to face alleged false positives consists in showing that a certain entity, which is not a work of art and yet seems capable of satisfying the definition, in fact satisfies only one component, either the aesthetic or the normative one. On the one hand, there are things that are objects of aesthetic appreciation but not in a way that is governed by a criterion of appreciation. On the other hand, there are things that are governed by some normative criterion but this criterion does not specifically concern their aesthetic appreciation. In this way, I will defend the claim that the possession of a criterion of appreciation is necessary for an entity to be a work of art.

Objects that cannot be works of art

Many entities are objects of aesthetic appreciation and nevertheless they are clearly not works of art. Consider the Moon. It can be the object of aesthetic appreciation, and nevertheless it is not a work of art. Yet the Moon is not a false positive for our definition, since it can be an object

of aesthetic appreciation but it lacks a criterion of appreciation. In our cultural practices, there is no prescription to assess the Moon, and there is no *proper way* in which the Moon *ought to* be aesthetically appreciated. There is no particular colour or shape that the Moon *ought to* have in order to be properly appreciated. These features can change and we can keep aesthetically appreciating the Moon without the need to restore its previous features. Nor do we need a stock of information about the Moon's history in order to properly appreciate it. In sum, the Moon and a work of art may be both objects of aesthetic appreciation but only the work of art has a criterion of appreciation that mandates us to assess it and establishes the features which are relevant to its aesthetic appraisal.

Objects that are not works of art but can become works of art

A similar strategy can be used in order to explain why such artefacts as clothes can be objects of aesthetic appreciation but are not works of art. Consider a particular suit. You can appreciate its colour, its shape, its texture. Yet suits normally do not mandate us to appreciate them according to their criteria of appreciation as works of art do. One could object that in order to properly appreciate a suit this should have the features it was originally designed to have, and in this sense also a suit has a criterion of appreciation. But this is not the way in which we normally appreciate clothes in our cultural practices. We do not care whether we are appreciating a suit as having all the manifest features it should have, or whether we have the information about its history that we need in order to properly appreciate it. At most, we *mend* clothes, but we do not *restore* them. In our cultural practices we just appreciate a suit for the features it currently exhibits, regardless of the features it should exhibit in virtue of being that individual suit, and regardless of what we should know about its history. We like or dislike it, and that is all. Suits just have occasional appreciators, not suitable appreciators.

Nevertheless, nothing prevents us from starting to appreciate clothes by bestowing criteria of appreciation on them. Maybe there already are clothes that are appreciated in this way in some cultural practices. In this case, I simply acknowledge that these clothes are treated as works of art, at least within the community that bestows a criterion of appreciation on

them. This seems to be precisely the way in which something starts being treated as a work of art. For example, films started being appreciated as works of art when communities of appreciators started bestowing criteria of appreciation on them. The first appreciators of cinema as art did not content themselves to enjoy a film, but aimed at appraising a film properly screened while having all the relevant information about its history. In this way, in the first decades of the XX century, some films started to be treated as works of art. Nothing prevents us from ontologically upgrading clothes in a similar manner.

A similar argument can be provided in the case of food and wine. Usually, when we appreciate a particular apple pie, we do not bestow a criterion of appreciation on it. Eating an apple pie does not involve a prescription to assess it as a suitable appreciator would do. Certainly an apple pie should be in a certain way in order to be an apple pie, for example it should be made of apples. But this sort of constraints concerns the general features that this entity should have in order to belong to the kind of apple pies, not the individual features that this apple pie should have in order to be properly appreciated for the individual apple pie it is. It is worth noting that the criterion of appreciation of a certain work of art establishes *all* the *specific* features of this *individual* work that are relevant to its appreciation, not just the kind to which this work belongs. By contrast, when we appreciate an apple pie, we care at most whether we are really appreciating an apple pie and not a cheesecake, or whether this apple pie is fresh. In fact, what matters for the appraisal of an apple pie is whether it tastes good or it does not. We do not care about its complying with an alleged criterion of appreciation specifically bestowed on this particular object.

Still, nothing prevents the members of a community from starting to appreciate an apple pie by caring whether it has all the features that it should have in order to be properly appreciated, and also whether they have the information one should possess in order to properly appreciate this pie. In this case it seems to be reasonable to acknowledge that they are treating this apple pie as a work of art. Dishes or wines become serious candidates to the status of work of art precisely when they are not only aesthetically appreciated but also bestowed upon with criteria of appreciation within a practice of food and wine criticism. Treating a particular wine as a work of art involves that this wine should be appraised not simply for

what it currently tastes like, but rather for what it should taste like for a suitable drinker, i.e., a drinker who can experience all the relevant manifest features of that wine and has access to all the relevant information about its history of making.

Kinds having some instances that are works of art and others that are not

The notion of a criterion of appreciation provides us with an effective explanation of why some members of a certain kind are treated as works of art and other members of the same kind are not. Consider buildings. We treat some of them as works of architectural art but not others. This corresponds to the fact that in our cultural practices we bestow criteria of appreciation on the former but not on the latter. We appreciate an ordinary building simply for what it is, whereas in appreciating a building that we consider a work of art we care whether we are taking the proper features into account, and whether we have the relevant information that allows us to properly appreciate it.

The same attitude shows up if we compare the maintenance of buildings in general with the maintenance of buildings that are considered works of art. In both cases, the maintenance can concern not only features that are merely functional but also features that are aesthetically relevant. Nevertheless, only in the case of works of art the maintenance is committed to a criterion of appreciation, which establishes the features that should be maintained in order to warrant a proper appreciation of the building in question. Interestingly, the maintenance of buildings that are considered works of art often involves also the addition of some caption or legend that allows beholders to supplement the manifest properties of the building with knowledge about its hidden historical properties.

A criterion of appreciation allows us to distinguish works of art from ordinary objects of the same kind also in the case of images or texts. For example a certain poem is a work of art while a certain article in a newspaper is not, in spite of the fact that they are both texts. The reason, I argue, is that the article lacks a criterion of *aesthetic* appreciation. We can aesthetically appreciate the article, but we do so simply by reading it. We do not care whether the article we are reading is exactly how it should be in order to enable a proper *aesthetic* appreciation of it, and whether we have

the proper stock of information that allows us to enjoy a proper *aesthetic* appreciation of it.

One might object that both the article and the poem have conditions of correctness since they should not contain typos. Yet such requirements, in the case of the article, do not constitute a criterion of *aesthetic* appreciation. According to our cultural practices, the suitable reader of an article, unlike the suitable reader of a poem, does not base her judgement on this article upon a totality of features that are relevant to its *aesthetic* appraisal. Rather, the readers of an article are basically interested in what is communicated by it, and the conditions of correctness of that article just aim at warranting the proper understanding of its meaning. Hence, a translation in a foreign language does not generally affect the proper appreciation of an article provided that its meaning is preserved. By contrast, the translation in a foreign language significantly affects the appreciation of a poem whose criterion of appreciation establishes that a suitable appreciator, in order to properly appraise this poem *aesthetically*, should read it in the language in which it was written.

A similar discourse can be made for images. In our culture, some images have a special status that mandates us to assess them as a suitable appreciator would do, that is, by taking into account the totality of their merit-conferring features. There are the images that we treat as works of art. Yet, many other images that we can find in magazines or websites do not mandate us to assess them in specific ways. We can assess them if we want, but there is no prescription to assess, and there is no criterion of appreciation that specifies such a prescription.

4.2 Alleged False Negatives

With respect to the Strawsonian definition of art I am proposing, alleged false negatives are things that seem to lack a genuine criterion of appreciation and nevertheless, in our cultural practices, we are inclined to treat as works of art. I will argue that a closer inspection of such things reveals an underlying criterion of appreciation, which may be not as evident as in other cases but still governs our aesthetic appraisal of the things that we treat as works of art.

Functional works

Some works of art fulfil a function that does not consist simply in being the possible object of an aesthetic appraisal. Noël Carroll discusses the interesting case of memorial art,²¹ but one can consider other cases of ‘functional works’ such as works of propaganda art, works of religious art, or works of pornographic art. Furthermore, most works of architectural art surely fall into the category of what I call ‘functional works of art’.

My point is that having a function is not incompatible with having a criterion of appreciation that specifies the totality of features that are relevant to their aesthetic appraisal. On the one hand, the criterion of appreciation is precisely what differentiates functional works of art from other similar things that fulfil the same function but that we do not treat as works of art. On the other hand, functional works of art differ from purportedly functionless works of arts because the criterion of appreciation of the former establishes, among other things, that the function they fulfil is relevant to the aesthetic appraisal of the work. In other words, the way in which a functional work fulfils its function is a hidden feature, which is part of the “dependence base” of the aesthetic appraisal of this work. For example, ‘being a work of Nazi propaganda’ surely is a hidden feature that a suitable appreciator of Leni Riefenstahl’s film *Triumph des Willens* ought to take as relevant to the aesthetic appraisal of this work of art.

Damaged works

In our cultural practices, we appreciate some works of art in spite of the fact that they are damaged and therefore they do not comply with their criterion of appreciation anymore. For example, we keep on appreciating Leonardo’s *Cenacolo* as a work of art in spite of the fact that the totality of features possessed by the particular object we can currently find in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan does no longer comply with the criterion of appreciation established by Leonardo when he painted the fresco.

My explanation is that the criterion of appreciation of damaged works of art becomes twofold. On the one hand, we know that these works are

²¹ Noël Carroll, ‘Art and Recollection’, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 39, 2 (2005), 1–12.

not how they ought to be, that is, they do not fit their primary criterion of appreciation, and that is why we have practices of art restoration. On the other hand, inasmuch as a satisfying restoration is not possible, we bestow upon a damaged work a secondary criterion of appreciation, i.e. a substitute, a criterion of appreciation *faute de mieux*. This criterion *specifies how this work ought to be*, in order to be properly appreciated, having acknowledged that the primary criterion of appreciation cannot be satisfied anymore.

Absolute performances

One might wonder whether works of art that aim at the absolute singularity of an event, as for example certain performances by Marina Abramovich,²² really involve a criterion of appreciation. I argue that they do, though in a peculiar way. In a performance of this sort, the criterion of appreciation specifies that the merit-conferring features are inextricable from the event itself, and therefore they should be experienced by attending that particular event. Let us call ‘absolute performance’ a work of art that consists in a performance and whose criterion of appreciation establishes that only a beholder that is present in the particular context of that performance can properly appreciate that work.

In the case of an *absolute* performance, a recording cannot count as an instance of the work. It counts, at most, as a representation of it, just as a photograph of a painting does not count as an instance of that painting but only as a representation of it. The difference is that a painting, as a material object, remains in principle accessible to any viewer, unless it is highly damaged or destroyed, whereas a performance, as an event, could only be properly appreciated by the audience that attended it while it was occurring. In this sense the criterion of appreciation of an absolute performance sets a significant limit on the number of spectators that can have a proper experience, and a proper appraisal, of that work of art. Finally, it is worth noting that sport events, as events, are ontologically similar to artistic performances, but, unlike the latter, they generally lack criteria of appreciation that govern their *aesthetic* appraisal.

²² According to David Davies, another example of absolute performance is *The Köln Concert* by Keith Jarrett; cf. Davies, ‘Multiple Instances and Multiple ‘Instances’’, 425.

Process works

Works of art such as Urs Fischer's self-destructing wax candle sculptures in turn are similar to the 'absolute performances' discussed above. What matters for the proper appreciation of Fischer's wax sculptures, indeed, is not just the sculpture as a concrete object but rather the process through which the sculpture decays into a mere lump of wax. Still such a 'process work', unlike an absolute performance, does not seem to require that a suitable appreciator attend the totality of the event, which might last several days or even months. This seems to be too demanding a requirement for a human being, even if he or she is an art appreciator. Similarly, Andy Warhol's *Empire* and Christian Marclay's *The Clock* are cinematic works of art whose excessive duration challenges the cognitive endurance of appreciators. A limit case in this sense is *Organ²/ASLSP*, the performance of a musical piece by John Cage, which began in 2001 at St. Burchardi church in Halberstadt, Germany, and is scheduled to have a duration of 639 years, ending in 2640.

My explanation is that such 'process works of art' have a twofold criterion of appreciation, much as damaged works of art do. In the case of process works, the *primary* criterion of appreciation concerns an ideal, possibly non-human, appreciator who would be capable of properly enjoying the work in its entire duration. Yet, since human beings surely are empirically incapable of fitting so demanding a criterion, the work also has a *secondary* criterion of appreciation. This criterion is, just as in the case of damaged works, *a substitute, a criterion of appreciation faute de mieux*. The *criterion* establishes that a suitable appreciator of a process work should attend some relevant temporal portions of the temporally enormous process that constitutes the work. It is worth noting that the secondary criterion of appreciation plays a key role in the appreciation of both damaged works and process works, but in different ways. In the case of process works, the secondary criterion remedies a shortage of cognitive capacities on the part of the work's appreciator with respect to the primary criterion: by contrast, in the case of damaged works, the secondary criterion remedies a shortage of merit-conferring features on the part of the work itself with respect to the primary criterion.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to develop Strawson's account of the work of art in order to provide a hybrid definition of art, namely SDA***, which has both a historical-institutional component and an aesthetic component. More specifically, I have argued that the historical-institutional framework provides the work of art with a criterion of appreciation that functions as a dependence base for the aesthetic appraisal. I have tried to show that this definition allows us to take into account not only the most typical cases of works of art but also some borderline cases that usually raise serious problems for aesthetic conceptions of art.

An important upshot of the Strawsonian definition of art I have defended is that it shows how practices of criticism, conservation, and restoration are connected to the notion of a work of art. The dependence of the aesthetic appraisal on the criterion of appreciation is arguably the main rule of the language game of art criticism, and practices of art conservation and restoration aim at warranting that this criterion be satisfied so that this game can be correctly played. Since the criterion of appreciation involves not only manifest perceptible properties but also hidden historical properties, the conservation of a certain work of art depends not only on the conservation of material artefacts, but also on the availability of the relevant pieces of information that are needed in order to properly appreciate this work. Thus, also art historians can significantly contribute to the conservation of a work of art through the clarification of its criterion of appreciation. Furthermore, the art critics themselves can in turn contribute to shaping the criterion of appreciation of a certain work by highlighting certain features of it (especially hidden features) which were hitherto overlooked within a certain cultural practice.

Ultimately, the notion of a criterion of appreciation can help us to better understand not only what works of art are, but also what it is to take care of them. Art criticism, art history, art conservation and art restoration are all practices that, though in different ways, essentially concern the criterion of appreciation of a work of art. A proper understanding of the notion of criterion of appreciation might profitably link the philosophical debate on the definition of art to the historical research and critical reflection on works of arts themselves.

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Aesthetic Value Judgements and the Challenge to Objectivity

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ABSTRACT. Art, as a practical declination of the complex way in which human beings interact with their surroundings, might be defined as a borderline territory between individual, subjective taste and the claim for universal value judgements. While rejecting any account of 'objectivity' as correspondence to objects, we shall explore the pragmatist position outlined by John Dewey about art experience, as well as Hilary Putnam's claim to an 'objectivity without objects', which rejects any special realm of universal properties. In order to avoid mysterious entities we are probably uncomfortable with, we might admit a sort of realism 'with a human face' also in the aesthetic domain. Since the discourse about aesthetic value seems to cling to emotions, which are necessarily subjective, we shall demonstrate the plausibility of an 'emotional' account of aesthetic value judgements which does not renounce to objectivity, contra any relativism and emotivism.

*Beauty is truth, and truth beauty – that is all ye know on Earth,
And all ye need to know.* (John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*)

I. Introduction

In what follows we shall explore the possibility of objective value judgements about art. In some cases it seems indeed that any variability of our aesthetic evaluations disappears: when we talk about Greek sculpture or German poetry and classical music, it seems that there is little room for divergences. Is it perhaps possible to talk about an objective or absolute value of art, in order to give an account of these cases? On the other hand, 'anachronistic evaluations' of artworks might provide evidence to the contrary: as a matter of fact, some artists who have nowadays found general consent among critics were not appreciated in their time (Van Gogh, Kafka, Bach, just to mention a few well-known examples).

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Within the analytic debate, the question of the evaluation of works of art has often been neglected. First of all, because of a widespread accepted dichotomy between facts and values, according to which only 'statements of facts' are capable of being 'objectively true', while value judgements are completely outside the sphere of reason. In this sense, aesthetic and ethical judgements are meaningless if not bound to peculiar aesthetic/moral properties. A second obstacle to the formulation of value judgements is represented by an empiricist account of emotions, on which emotions constitute the most 'irrational' part of human life. Since emotions are conceived as the main responsible for aesthetic experiences, their obscure irrationality seems to contradict the possibility of an inter-subjective agreement on our aesthetic judgements.

In what follows we shall try to get rid of both obstacles, in order to secure the possibility of objective aesthetic judgements without renouncing to emotions. The challenge is to recognize that our aesthetic judgements claim objective validity and, at the same time, that they are dependent on a subject who 'feels' and 'experiences' the values in question, *contra* any emotivism and relativism.

While rejecting any account of 'objectivity' as 'correspondence to objects', we might look for a weaker approach to the question of aesthetic value, one that sees objectivity in the common exercise of rational, logical and emotional abilities within a certain form of life. We shall explore the pragmatist position outlined by John Dewey about art experience, as well as Hilary Putnam's claim to an 'objectivity without objects', which rejects any special 'Platonic' realm of universal properties. We might admit a sort of realism 'with a human face' also in the aesthetic domain, reformulating the notion of 'objectivity' as a form of well-grounded inter-subjectivity.

2. The Challenge to Objectivity

In the current philosophical debate on the matter we (still) find the contrast between two opposing views already refused by Kant: the empiricist account, which argues that an aesthetic judgement such as 'x is graceful' can only be subjective, since everyone has their own feelings about it – feel-

ings which are utterly personal¹, – and the rationalist view, now reshaped under a ‘realist’ label, claiming objectivity for our value judgements insofar as they make reference to specific aesthetic qualities exemplified by the object. According to realists, when we define something as ‘beautiful’ we consider ‘beauty’ as a real property of the object, something that we grasp as well as we perceive colours and sounds. A realist account shares the neo-positivistic dichotomy between fact and value, on which only ‘correspondence’ to specific properties can guarantee true statements about them.

Yet, is this dichotomy tenable? Is it really possible to make a sharp distinction between verifiable ‘objective’ facts and merely ‘subjective’ values? It would seem not, since science itself presupposes values: epistemic values (reasonableness, simplicity, coherence, etc.) are values, too, even though they have been considered by logical positivists as ‘objective descriptions’ opposed to ‘subjective evaluations’ (Ayer 1936, pp. 104–126). In this sense, evaluation and description are interwoven and interdependent.

Kant challenges the empiricist view as well as the rationalist one, significantly pointing out the contrast between the claim to universality of our aesthetic judgements and their emotional ‘subjectivity’. In his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), Kant deals with the question of a subject who formulates an aesthetic judgement, stating for instance ‘this flower is beautiful’. This judgement has two characteristics. Firstly, it aspires to universal validity, since it behaves *as if* beauty were a *real* property of the object, and *as if* the subsequent pleasure expressed were objective. Nonetheless, we deal here only with a *subjective* universality – as it is evident in the deduction of pure aesthetic judgements (§ 31). Secondly, an aesthetic judgement is singular from a logical point of view: we can only say that *this* flower at *this* time is beautiful, because only this object falls right now under our perception. We are not allowed to say that *all* flowers are beautiful; I need an individual experience of the object in question, before uttering my judgement.

¹ As well known, according to David Hume ‘taste’ is an individual ability to respond to things. Ultimately, aesthetic qualities are nothing but projections of human feelings on objects. An agreement on value judgements might be found only by making reference to a community of experts, who have a better perception of what is valuable. On the difficulties of Hume’s argument, see Levinson 2002.

Hence I cannot decide *a priori* if something is beautiful or not. The correctness of an aesthetic judgment cannot be decided through proofs of any kind: I cannot force anyone, who holds a different opinion, to change her aesthetic judgement. Kant points out (§ 20) that a genuine aesthetic judgment implies the possibility of obtaining *argumentatively* (not demonstratively) other people's approbation, "under the presupposition that there is a common sense (by which, however, we do not mean any external sense but rather the effect of the free play of our cognitive powers)" (Kant 2000, p. 122). The judgement of taste is allowed to claim (subjective) universal validity, since it is based on a *Gemeinsinn*, on a common sense, that permits us to communicate with others. In this sense, the objectivity claimed by aesthetic judgements might be better understood as a form of *inter-subjectivity*.

Since the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense, the latter must be able to be assumed with good reason, and indeed without appeal to psychological observations, but rather as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition, which is assumed in every logic and every principle of cognitions that is not skeptical (Kant 2000, p. 123).

Kant's solution of the antinomy of taste ultimately rests on the 'free play of the faculties' – on the interplay of intellect and imagination, which elicits a specific form of aesthetic pleasure. Similarly, Dewey defends the decisive role of imagination, and the importance of inter-subjective criteria for the justification of our aesthetic judgements, also rejecting the standard dichotomy between realism and empiricism. As we shall see, Dewey's aesthetics share Kant's insistence that there is an alternative to the rationalist and empiricist views, one on which judgments of beauty are subjective and singular *and* make a claim to universal validity.

3. An Inquiry of Intelligence

In 1923 John Dewey was appointed Director for Education at the Barnes Foundation² in Pennsylvania, so that he was exposed on a daily basis to

² Incidentally, we might mention that *Art as Experience* (1934) is dedicated to Albert Barnes.

works by Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir, Matisse, Picasso, to name the most famous. He was therefore well aware of the necessity of formulating *correct* value judgements about art. Dewey recalls in his texts a few examples of judgements formulated by important critics on the occasion of the Armory Exhibition in New York in 1913, which later revealed to be wrong. On that occasion, Cézanne had been defined as a “a second-rate impressionist who had now and then fair luck in painting a moderately good picture”; Van Gogh as a “moderately competent impressionist who was heavy-handed”; Matisse as “a painter who was content to daub his canvas”. We obviously know, *a posteriori*, that these criticisms are wrong. But how can we defend the possibility of *objective* aesthetic judgements, since they look so variable, even regarding masterpieces and great artists? What kind of value can we ascribe to an artwork?

In Dewey’s account of aesthetic value judgments, the value/fact dichotomy disappears. While traditional philosophy has erected a separate realm of values, which tries to conciliate with the realm of existence, for Dewey values permeate existence, and are immediately felt and possessed by the subject through emotions. This immediate aesthetic and emotional appreciation of an object needs a critical *justification*, which is what we usually define as an ‘aesthetic judgement’. Thus, an aesthetic judgment occurs whenever we want to see if we are *justified* in our experiencing something as elegant or beautiful, whenever we wonder if the ‘*given* value’ might be *justified by reflection* (Dewey 1981: 402).

Dewey distinguishes two traditional ways of formulating aesthetic judgements that remind us of the traditional dichotomy of realism versus empiricism, and have to be replaced by a genuine pragmatist attitude. A wrong aesthetic judgment can be twofold: ‘judicial’ or ‘impressionist’. A *judicial* judgement is an authoritative sentence based upon standards. Critics formulated judicial judgements during classicism in the eighteenth century, when the ancients provided models from which rules could be derived. The main difficulty of such a dogmatic kind of criticism is its inability to cope with the emergence of new modes of life – of experiences that demand new modes of expression. It is way too obsolete to understand any contemporary art scene, not to mention avant-garde. An opposite tendency is apparent in the second form of traditional aesthetic judgement, rejected by Dewey, and defined as an *impressionist* judgment,

which records an 'impression' that, at a given moment, is made on us by a work of art. Obviously, impressionist judgment denies the very possibility of objectivity, condemning itself to the chaos of a subjectivity that lacks objective control.

Against these two notions of an aesthetic judgement, Dewey defends a sort of 'third way' between them, holding that an aesthetic judgment is objective only insofar as we are able to provide *generally available reasons* in order to justify it – reasons that can be tested by other persons in their direct relationship with a public, shared object. An aesthetic judgment is therefore 'objective' in the sense that it can be checked by others, to whom the same objective material is available. That means, that even if

there are no judicial standards for works of art, which can *a priori* define an object as valuable, there are nevertheless *criteria* in judgment, so that criticism does not fall in the field of mere impressionism. [...] But such criteria are not rules or prescriptions. They are the result of a critical *endeavour* to find out what a work of art is as an experience (Dewey 1989).

What follows is that every judgement "involves a *venture*, a *hypothetical element*; that it is directed to qualities which are nevertheless qualities of an object" (Dewey 1989). Any aesthetic judgment is hence objective since it can be controlled, shared, even rationally defeated by others, but it is also subjective, insofar as it is formulated by a person who actively interacts with the artwork. In this sense, an aesthetic judgement can be considered as 'a social document' that requires not only shared criteria of correctness, but also a community of people that might control it. An aesthetic judgment is therefore a reflective operation, an inquiry of intelligence formulated by a human being with a certain personal history, who interacts with a certain objects that belongs to a shared world.

Thanks to Dewey's considerations, we can hence reshape our notion of objectivity as 'inter-subjectivity', as a form of validity grounded on generally available reasons within a certain social community.

4. Against Dichotomies

In his naturalist project, Dewey rejects any dualism between subject/object, experience/nature, art/science, defending continuity in any field of human

life. Thus, aesthetics becomes a fundamental test bench for Dewey's philosophy, since it is where all dichotomies seem to disappear, the authentic *locus* of anthropological integrity. Also emotion and cognition are not conceived as opposing psychological dimensions, but rather as intertwined abilities. For the pragmatist, the world around us affects us immediately: we are not abstract minds, disembodied consciousnesses, but rather living bodies who express through arts their freedom to define themselves.

In *Experience and Nature*, Dewey outlines a peculiar definition of experience, conceived as the result of an interaction between organism and environment, rejecting any empiricist account of experience as a chaotic flux of sense data; experience is not a mere collection of atomic data, extrinsically connected by the thinking subject. 'An experience' is one in which the material of experience is fulfilled or 'consummated', as for example when a problem is solved, or when a game is played to its conclusion. Art is conceived in complete continuity with ordinary experience: it is a paradigmatic case of an aesthetic experience, which combines activity and passivity, and in which emotional and cognitive attitudes intertwine. Art allows us to perceive – through imagination – possibilities that are not realized (yet), but that *could* be realized, outlining an effective criticism of the real conditions of life³; as a paradigmatic human practice, art aims at enhancing human freedom and self-reflection⁴. "In the end, works of art are the only media of complete and unhindered communication between man and man that can occur in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience" (Dewey 1989).

Dewey rejects the paradigm of aesthetic autonomy, which interprets art as a mere expression of the artist's emotions. An *emotion* does not express anything private, but it rather works as a *magnet*, that selects and reorganizes the material of an experience. The artwork that results from the emotional rearrangement of the material is something active that *does* something: it is *not* an inert product and should not be seen in isolation from the process that produced it. Dewey underscores the crucial role that emotional intentionality plays in the constitution of value-experience: "emotion in its ordinary sense is something called out by objects, physical

³ See Möllers 2015, who defines a norm as a 'positively marked possibility' that *should* be fulfilled.

⁴ Bertram 2014.

and personal; it is response to an objective situation”; “emotion is, so to speak, an attitude or disposition which is a function of objective things” (Dewey 1981, p. 390). Experience in the form of art solves a lot of problems that have troubled philosophers. In particular, against any dichotomy, “it demonstrates the gratuitous falsity of notions that divide overt and executive activity from thought and feeling and thus separate mind and matter” (Dewey 1981, p. 393).

Dewey’s account of emotions finds confirmation in the current philosophical debate on emotional intentionality⁵. Emotions are intentional states that are directed to peculiar objects; they are states for which we ask for reasons. *Why* are you angry? *Why* exactly are you scared? Facing these questions, we are all supposed to answer in an appropriately meaningful way. Emotions raise normative questions, about the extent to which they can be said to be rational, or can contribute to rationality. We find a public, objective dimension of emotions, besides a phenomenological-subjective one: emotions are connected to qualities of the objects, they can be differentiated, and evaluated as appropriate or not in an inter-subjective context⁶. Since irrationality usually works as a sceptical argument in support of relativistic theses, the recognition of an inner consistent structure within emotions constitutes a first step against value relativism. Therefore, aesthetic judgements are not just a question of individual preference: in this anti-relativist perspective, we might say that some judgements of beauty are more appropriate than others.

5. Towards a Realism ‘with a Human Face’

Deeply influenced by Dewey’s philosophy, Hilary Putnam, in *Ethics without Ontology*, rejects any ontological account of ‘objectivity’ as ‘correspondence to objects’, suggesting a sort of realism ‘with a human face’ that we might

⁵ For instance, fear is always fear *of something*, which is perceived – correctly or incorrectly – as dangerous: a specific formal object characterizes each kind of emotion. See Deonna, Teroni 2012.

⁶ Sociology of culture has to deal with the problems concerning translation and understanding of emotions within different linguistic and cultural context. Current intercultural research has identified a small number of universally recognized emotions, which can be translated into any language: joy, sadness, fear, anger, astonishment and disgust.

now apply to the aesthetic domain⁷.

According to Putnam, the dichotomy ‘fact versus value judgment’ has prevented us from realizing how description and evaluation are interwoven and interdependent. Following Dewey’s approach, and relying on Wittgenstein’s linguistic analysis, Putnam defends the entanglement of facts and values, claiming that values and normativity permeate the complexity of human experience. Value judgements are not as ‘subjective’ as a relativist might claim, and are not “completely outside the sphere of reason” (Putnam 2002): on the contrary, values can be rationally discussed, and, to put it differently, “there is a notion of rationality applicable to normative questions” (Putnam 2002). It is time “we stopped equating objectivity with description. There are many sorts of statements [...] that are not descriptions, but that are under rational control, governed by standards appropriate to their particular functions and contexts” (Putnam 2002, p. 33). The science itself presupposes epistemic values of coherence, plausibility, and simplicity.

The worst thing about the fact/value dichotomy is that “in practice it functions as a discussion-stopper, and not just as a discussion-stopper, but a thought-stopper” (Putnam 2002, p. 44). Indeed, if values are put outside the realm of rational argument, no discussion about them is allowed. On the contrary, value judgements are capable of “warranted assertibility and warranted deniability” (Putnam 2002, p. 110); they are cognitively meaningful, not only in ethics but also in aesthetics.

While defending the belief in the objectivity of value judgements, Putnam rejects any ‘Platonic’ realm of ethical (or aesthetic) properties. He follows Dewey’s rejection of any form of dogmatism: an aesthetic value judgement always entails a certain hypothetical element, hence, a certain risk of being wrong. When we formulate a value judgement, we need to make reference to our own experiences, so that the work of art becomes part of our experience. An interaction occurs between the object’s structure and the critic’s past, sensibility, and knowledge. We do not have any general rules, prescriptions, or quantitative standards which could possibly guarantee the correctness of our aesthetic judgements. “Art is a mode of prediction not found in charts and statistics, and it insinuates possibilities

⁷ Putnam does not explicitly deal with aesthetics.

of human relations not to be found in rule and precept, admonition and administration” (Dewey 1989).

Nonetheless, since critics insist on the public qualities of a work of art, others who have the same material at their disposal can evaluate their judgement. In this regard, the aesthetic value judgement can be defined as ‘*objective*’, insofar as it demands to be shared, in virtue of the common world we are all in. Any value judgement must have the possibility to be evaluated by other people: we need to provide *reasons* for our formulations, making reference to a common external world with which we constantly interact. Value judgements formulated by critics draw a sort of topography of a new country that might be useful for other travellers.

In order to defend our claim to objectivity for our aesthetic value judgements, we need to make reference to a ‘common sense’⁸, to a common *Lebensform*, within which our judgements can be communicated. In this respect, ‘objectivity’ means as much as controllable, inter-subjective, subject to shared criteria of correctness. In itself, the concept of ‘objectivity’ is devoid of any ontological dimension and becomes a merely epistemic concept. We might use Hilary Putnam’s expression of “an objectivity without object” (Putnam 2004), if we interpret it as a rejection of a realist account of aesthetic properties. It is now apparent that, although the experience of an aesthetic value is rooted in our sensibility and contingency, it is possible to formulate ‘objective’ aesthetic judgements. A reshape of our concept of ‘objectivity’ has been required, insofar as objectivity does not mean correspondence to peculiar, aesthetic properties.

Art, as a practical declination of the complex way in which human beings interact with their surroundings, is a borderline territory situated between individual, subjective taste and the claim for universal value judgements. Although it often seems to exceed the context of human practices, art is not separate from the wider context of human activities and abilities, and cannot be considered as isolated.

To share John Dewey’s and Hilary Putnam’s view of an ‘objectivity without objects’ means to uphold a sort of ‘quasi-realist’ approach, defending both the realist claim to objective aesthetic judgements and a pragmatist, anti-dogmatic view on values. A realism ‘with a human face’ in

⁸ In Kant’s sense, as *Gemeinsinn*.

the aesthetic field attempts to outline a third way between relativism and dogmatism: we might recognize that our aesthetic judgements claim objective validity, that they are based on thick arguments, on rational, shared criteria and, at the same time, that they are dependent on our emotional responses to things. Objectivity and anthropocentrism are not antagonist any more: an aesthetic judgement is always *anthropocentric* – since there is always a personal, emotional experience involved – but, at the same time, it can be *objective*, namely in the sense of being rationally justified by good reasons and hence interpersonally valid.

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Statecraft: Vandalism and Iconoclasm in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT. Not only is vandalism increasingly subject to digital documentation, but the aesthetic nature of vandalism itself is different as a result of the digital. No longer is vandalism a local destructive act, it has become an act performed primarily for broadcast to global markets. This paper uses the example of Islamic State (IS) iconoclasm to explore the way in which digital media is strategically used by vandals and considers the responses of the heritage industry to respond to such destruction.

It illustrates how the deliberate digital documentation and subsequent global broadcasting of the destruction of cultural heritage by Islamic State forms an aesthetic strategy of a nascent state and not simply blind iconoclasm but vandalism in the service of state formation.

Yet, just as digital documentation fans vandalism it undermines its potency, eliminating the possibility of complete destruction. By considering recent attempts to restore destroyed artefacts via 3D printing this paper connects vandalism and the idolatry of preservation within the larger plot of the iconoclast economy. In doing so it connects fantasies of aniconism and iconodilism. To combat the extremism of both positions this paper proposes an attitude to destruction, inspired by Japanese *kintsugi*, which simultaneously recognises the fragility and the resilience of artefacts.

I. Preface: The New Arch

...iconoclasm... is when one does not know, one hesitates, one is troubled by an action for which there is no way to know without further inquiry, whether it is destructive or constructive. (Latour, 2002, p. 14)

This year the Institute of Digital Archaeology¹ as part of the Million Image Database Project, constructed a monumental 3D robot-made in Carrara,

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¹ The Institute is “A joint venture between Harvard University, the University of Oxford and the government of the United Arab Emirates.” See

Italy; 12 ton, 6.1 metre high, Egyptian marble reconstruction of Palmyra's (Tadmur) recently destroyed by IS 1,800 year old Arch of Triumph (also known as the Arch of Septimius Severus).² This "reconstruction" was presented at London's Trafalgar Square from April 19th to 21st (World Heritage Week).

After visits to New York (19th - 23rd September, 2016) and Dubai (late 2016), this new arch is planned to be installed at Palmyra as a memorial to the murdered archaeologist Khaled al-Assad.

While some have seen this project as an attempt to copy a lost original and as a result a prime example of the Benjaminian loss of aura and authenticity, I do not see an analysis of what goes wrong between the original and the copy as being particularly philosophically productive in this case. The destroyed arch is clearly irreplaceable. Equally, to invoke Baudrillard to describe this facsimile so clearly trading on claims of verisimilitude as a Disneyfied folly is not quite correct.

Instead I deny that this new arch constitutes an exact copy *per se*. Its smaller scale (the original is 15 meters) and purpose mark it out as something much more explicitly commercially connected, politically instrumentalised and aesthetically complicated; a souvenir. This souvenir ought not to be considered a rescued treasure from an IS iconoclast bonfire of the vanities nor a potent text to be stored in a digital *Giftschrank* (poison cabinet).

Instead, this example of "iconoclasm" and IS vandalism itself is, I will argue, best conceived within the international trade network and languages of duty and legitimacy that symbolically accompanies state building.

Palmyra is strategic not only for its nearby phosphate mines but its symbolic value. This new monument is testament to Palmyra's location on the World Heritage Site list as a site "standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, [which] married Graeco-Roman techniques with local tradi-

<http://digitalarchaeology.org.uk/>. This project is one of many. In addition to the Million Image Database Project, a French company; ICOMEN, and the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) are also archiving images of Syrian heritage sites and objects with a view to their future digital printing. The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/> also documents destruction of antiquities and sites in Syria and Iraq.

² The reconstruction is estimated to have cost in the region of £100,000.

tions and Persian influences.” (UNESCO, 1980) This atelic list is imperial in the scale of its attempt to capture the world’s key cultural and natural locations. Beyond the goals of preservation and protection it claims for “mankind” a global heritage under specific criteria of “outstanding value.” This categorising generates a global canon of “holy” sites demanding our devotion. As such listed sites are elevated to the status of global icons and such valorisation, iconodilism³ even, must be understood as fuelling the drive to loot and destroy.

Furthermore this ranking and listing activity is intrinsic to the use of such locations. No longer are such sites of solely local concern. Listing promotes the veneration of sites as outstanding global tourist and pilgrimage destinations and can radically transform the ecology and economic environment surrounding the location. As such Palmyra’s location on this list of tourist imperialism must also be seen within the context of the legacies of western looting of non-western sites. The appeal of such sites is obvious. Ruins are evocative. Nothing becomes the icon than the manner of its defacement. The ruin suggests the passage of empire and the controlling of ruins is a clear demonstration of power.

Accordingly the response of the Institute of Digital Archaeology is better understood in terms of the Western framing of what Jay Winter has called “sites of memory, sites of mourning” (2014). Winter identifies a culture of commemoration that consecrated specific sites and artefacts after the Second World War in the service of aesthetic redemption to offer a “collective remembrance.” Palmyra’s location on the World Heritage Site list is confirmation of such consecration.

2. Looting and Broadcasting Vandalism

*All ancient towers will one day crumble into the sea Defaced by armies
Intent on rendering obsolete* (Sparklehorse & Dangermouse, 2010)

The Million Image Database Project is but one attempt to respond digitally to the digital broadcasting of IS vandalism. Another response is the project <http://www.newpalmyra.org/> which seeks to collect “data from international partners”, analyze it, create a “reconstruction of Palmyra in

³ For a history of iconoclasm and iconodilism see Besançon (2000).

virtual space, and sharing the models and data in the public domain.” The new arch is an aesthetic response to IS within the global war between IS and its enemies⁴. It is not an isolated example. Rather it is a sign of a growing trend. Other aesthetic responses include: The *Palmyra Photogrammetry Project* which uses tourist photos to make 3D models of Palmyra, an associated app (arck-project.com) allows users to access a 3D rendering Palmyra Castle, Morehshin Allahyari’s ongoing series *Material Speculation: ISIS*; “a 3D modelling and 3D printing project focused on the reconstruction of [...] artifacts [...] destroyed by ISIS”, the UNHCR supported project of Syrian Refugees to recreate destroyed monuments in the Za’atari refugee camp, Jordan, and Kanishk Tharoor and Maryam Maruf’s virtual and anecdotal *Museum of Lost Objects*.⁵ The most recent example is the UNESCO sponsored exhibition; *Rising from Destruction: Ebla, Nimrud, Palmyra* currently on show at the Colosseum in Rome. This exhibition contains full scale 3D printed replicas of artefacts damaged or destroyed by IS including the “Winged human-headed bull” from Nimrud in Iraq, part of the state archives hall from the ancient Syrian kingdom of Ebla, and half of the roof of the Palmyra’s Temple of Bel.

The new arch is testament not only to the tradition of commemoration but also to Islamic State’s looting and digital broadcasting of vandalism⁶ and *equally naive hopes* that artefacts can be erased and that robots will preserve what is being destroyed. From this perspective irreplaceability is simultaneously elevated to being the mark of the valuable and undermined by drive to employ new technologies to reproduce and restore. Like it or not, IS are akin to those hunters who fund conservation. Their violence indirectly ensures that the icons they deface are often less likely to go extinct.

⁴ This global war should be seen as a development of the regional civil war in the Middle East, namely; IS is a product of a Sunni response to Shiite political control of Iraq amongst, economic instability, religious ideology amongst other things. This paper will not focus on such factors but rather be limited to the global broadcasting of vandalism.

⁵ Other examples include Aliaa Magda Elmahdy and Femen’s photo from 2014, Mimsy’s work showing Sylvanian Families terrorised by IS that was banned from the *Pasion for Freedom* exhibition at London’s Mall Galleries in 2015.

⁶ It is worth noting that IS are not alone in the destruction and looting of monuments in the region. The Syrian Army, Kurdish forces and Western forces are all guilty in the current conflict. However in each of these cases the deliberate digital broadcasting of destruction has not been a concerted strategy.

The digital documentation and broadcasting of iconoclasm eliminates the possibility of iconoclasm per se, let alone aniconism.⁷ Conversely, this account of the ambiguity of iconoclasm acknowledges that the attempts of iconophiles to restore are equally bound to damage.

Destructive vandalism and looting is but the most extreme instrumentalisation of Palmyra. With the actions of IS the most flagrant example. Palmyra demonstrates the constant political rewriting of history and historical sites. In claiming to preserve in the name of “common heritage” a token of shared “global” value these 3D approaches are exemplary of the aesthetics and politics of state sponsored vandalism and iconoclasm in the digital age. Michael Press has argued that Palmyra has been looted both physically and ideologically ever since it was “rediscovered” by the West in 1691. Not only have its artefacts filled western museums but it has been seen as central to European history and inheritance. It is in this context that UNESCO and Russian plans to restore the now recaptured ruins of Palmyra must be seen. These plans certainly threaten to (re-)construct a Disneyfied site in the name of legitimacy. The first broadcast in this project was the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra of St. Petersburg performance of pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, Sergei Prokofiev and Rodion Shchedrin at Palmyra broadcast live by RT. In the face of the drive to *restore*, writers such as Johnathan Jones (2016) argue that the rebuilding of Palmyra and other “destroyed” sites is illegitimate and only sensitive *preservation* is appropriate.

Such examples demonstrate why it is helpful to think of the actors in around Palmyra in 2016 as each exploiting through digital imagery the artefacts and sites involved to bolster the legitimacy of their projects of statecraft. Both projects (destruction and preservation) I argue are caught in mutually dependent fantasies and counter fantasies. The strategic goal of state legitimacy is, I believe, a key explanation for why IS compromise their vandalism when dividing representation and documentation. It is also a key reason for some of the opponents of IS denial of destruction that hopes to undo the looting and iconoclasm of IS. Collectors may seek to protect the heritage of the middle east but such activity is comprom-

⁷ Aniconism is the *absence* of material representation, whereas iconoclasm is the *destruction* of material representation.

ised to the degree that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate it from colonialism.

My scepticism regarding both projects should not be read as an attempt to equate the world heritage industry with IS. Rather it is a suspicion of the claims of both of uncompromising purity in iconoclasm/aniconism and restoration. That aniconism is possible, especially given the digital documentation and broadcasting of iconoclasm, is a dubious conceit. Likewise that sites and artefacts can be restored as some may imagine given the example of the Institute of Digital Archaeology's new arch is also unconvincing. All artefacts (including digital), and sites are inevitably doomed. Instead it is more accurate, in this context, to understand iconoclasm and restoration alike as transformation and re-use, if not even image creation itself and preservation as renovation.

Palmyra 2016	Action	Fantasy	Reality
<i>Islamic State</i>	"Vandalism" "Looting" Promotion	Iconoclasm Aniconism	Destruction Transformation Perpetuation
<i>The World Heritage Industry</i>	"Preservation" "Conservation" "Safeguarding"	Restoration Iconodilism	Renovation Gentrification Re-use

Both parties exist within the larger plot of the iconoclast economy. From the world heritage perspective the endangered (irreplaceable) site has a magnetic appeal while IS understandably can interpret such tourist valorisation as idolatry, idolatry of preservation. Here we can see a current *iconoclash*: one person's idol is another's icon. Contemporary iconodilism deploys the figure of the tourist as the modern day iconodule and the jihadi as iconoclast. Iconoclasts and conservationists alike require the exchange of endangered icons. In this tempered understanding there an intervoven resilience and vulnerability to sites such as Palmyra. They persist despite and because of their defacement.

Where the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, speaking at the unveiling of the new arch explained that "Antiquities like this belong to all mankind and it is imperative that we all strive to safeguard our common

heritage” (Glum, 2016) we would do well to recall Bob Dylan’s 1965 ‘Tombstone Blues’:

The sweet pretty things are in bed now of course
 The city fathers they’re trying to endorse
 The reincarnation of Paul Revere’s horse
 But the town has no need to be nervous
 [...]
 I’m in the streets
 With the tombstone blues

The new arch cannot incarnate or replace what has been destroyed. It can at best memorialise via *mimesis*.

In both cases (iconoclasm and restoration) the ruin remains functional not simply for symbolic reasons. Through tourism and looting the ruin is a valuable economic resource. To the long history of appropriation of Palmyra (from western plundering to Sunni iconoclasm) we can now add digital means to that history. Accordingly I will outline how digital media has strategically been used by vandals.

As a result of this digital consciousness I argue that, not only is vandalism increasingly subject to digital documentation, but the aesthetic nature of vandalism itself is different as a result of the digital. No longer is it a local destructive act, it has become an act performed primarily for broadcast to global markets. (In the case of IS vandalism is a way of marketing a *de facto* state.) Digital space is a domain of economics, the artworld and nation building. In this space, vandalism has been employed as a transnational brand.

In the case of IS the deliberate digital documentation and subsequent broadcasting of the destruction of cultural heritage forms an aesthetic strategy of a nascent state and not simply blind iconoclasm, but vandalism in the service of state formation.

Before I go any further I should clarify my use of the term vandalism. This is a dangerous term to use, as beyond the connotations of destruction there is much dispute about what should be judged vandalism. Where one judges an act vandalism another may see art. When Homer Simpson floods Springfield as an art project Bart Simpson asks: “Are you sure this is art, not vandalism?” Homer replies: “That’s for the courts to decide, son.”

(Jean, 1999) Likewise, Alex Comfort's *The Joy of Sex*, declares that "shaving armpits is ignorant vandalism" (1974, pp. 71-3). Just as Gloria Leonard distinguished pornography from erotica in terms of lighting, vandalism is in the category of ambiguous moral and aesthetic crimes.

Acknowledging the loaded nature of the term vandalism, I believe that it must be understood in a variety of different ways: aesthetic, historical and legal. Vandalism is not an act⁸ simply of curious experimentation and breaching restricted access. It is a productive and aesthetically valuable act that involves deauthoring, reauthoring and destruction. As such I distinguish it from iconoclasm which seeks simply to deface images. It can thus be seen, for example, that the broadcasting and perpetuations of images by IS render their actions closer to vandalism than iconoclasm.

The trade of artefacts touched by vandalism (in this case so-called "blood antiquities"), I argue, is inseparable from their digital documentation. In short: no buyers, no looters. This trade marries both the production and consumption of these images. Furthermore in the case of IS iconoclasm and looting it broadens complicity to a global audience.

Digital display does more than simply advertise the work in question, the context of documentation can add value to the work. This can be seen in a perverse way in the recent example of IS. Even prior to broadcasting, the defacement of icons valorises and empowers the object or site. Where a stated aim of IS is the obliteration of particular sites and objects of cultural heritage, the simultaneous documentation not only makes the few surviving works more precious, but also gives the "destroyed" work digital "immortality". IS should thus be seen to engage with digital space on economic and art institutional terms.

We can now see a combination of three activities; vandalism, digital documentation and commercial exchange. In the case of Islamic State's vandalism of heritage sites and artefacts this combination of activities is also present and serves to legitimate certain vandals as jihadi and groups as sovereign. IS could not have created their world without employing the digital. This space is new and it changes the terms of cultural production, acceptance and destruction, even desecration. As many of the projects

⁸ Vandalism can of course also take the form of inaction. Planned obsolescence, neglect, censorship and avoidance can all mark a vandalistic impulse.

mentioned above demonstrate, the digital documentation of these irreplaceable destroyed sites ensures some degree of ongoing reproduction.

There is an ideological logic to the idol smashing of Islamic State. From one perspective it can be seen as uncivilised cultural vandalism. From another perspective it is that oldest of aesthetic revolutions. Just as the state must be reborn so too must the art contained therein. Here one could cite the original Vandals, the dissolution of the churches during the Reformation, the French and Russian revolutionaries etc. In fact it is doubtful that any state born in revolution has been free from the tumult of aesthetic revolution manifest in vandalism. However IS also demonstrates that the ideological and theological logic is superseded by political and economic logic.

The digital broadcasting of these acts of vandalism is part of the IS declared “cyber war” on the USA. Acts of extremism make great publicity. YouTube videos are a way to prove to your sponsors that work has been undertaken. Digital sophistication is essential for the vandal in 2016. Such global digital broadcast understands that the audience is not only the local. It is the global market. The internet marks “the further decline of traditional geographic communities.” (Long & Hopkins, 2015, p. 171) We can see this in the transnational graffiti and jihad of the artworld and Islamic State. This transnational broadcasting reveals something crucial about IS. Islamic State makes more sense when you include a digital dimension and not just standard territorial criteria. Vandalism and nationhood now make more sense when one considers online activity than on the standard map. IS is a digital state.

Beyond the ideological and revolutionary logic the economic logic enabled by the global digital realm that is perhaps unique to Islamic State. From a digital perspective (I hesitate to label this ‘western’) these images are caught in a dialectic that yearns for conservation, under the name world heritage, and the hope of a future technology that will reconstruct what has been destroyed. From the perspective of Islamic State these images are ironically and cynically great idealistic monuments that serve to fund the apparatus of a nascent state. Islamic State is a state that fears the past but not enough to not sell it. The authenticity of the stone is treating and therefore attacked, but, and this is the crucial point; there remains a certain authenticity in film. Stone’s authenticity derives from memory. These

videos do not have the memory of stone but they present an undeniability that cannot be easily erased or forgotten.

Islamic State is a state, not a “so-called state”. A terrifying and radical type of state, a digital state, but a state nonetheless⁹. This claim does not mean that IS is *not* a failed state with a bleak and short future. It may lack *de jure* authority but it holds *de facto* rule over a significant territory. As such it meets the criteria set by the Montevideo convention.¹⁰ Its leader is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Like other states it is branded, in fact like other states it is a myth manifest as a transnational brand; the flag, the weaponry and of course Toyota! It is huge in geographical scale, organised and financially self-sufficient. Central to its economic model is the selling of culture via digital means. IS has been labelled “The Digital Caliphate” by Abdel Bari Atwan. Reflecting on IS digital management of savagery he states that “The internet has given Islamic State opportunities that its predecessors neither fully exploited or understood. By clever use of social media and digital film making, it has eclipsed the counterweight mainstream media...” (Atwan, 2015, p. 218) It is a state that feeds off this parallel world.

Furthermore, there is a tension between destruction and looting in the case of IS. The overwhelming majority of artefacts and sites are looted instead of destroyed. IS are not the first or only looters in the region but their looting of culture of cultural artefacts is undertaken on an organised, institutional and industrial scale¹¹. The permit system ensures that the diggers pay a 20%-80% *khums* tax. This is a windfall tax on profits from antiquities digging. Receipt books have been recovered from Abu Sayyaf’s compound recording the payment of *khums* and auctions take place in Raqqa, Syria¹².

Atwan is not alone in arguing that Islamic State’s success is grounded

⁹ It is for this reason that I use the name Islamic State and not the following; ISIL, “so-called” Islamic State, Daesh etc.

¹⁰ See the *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States*. This was a treaty signed at Montevideo, Uruguay, on December 26, 1933, that defined a “...state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.”

¹¹ For a history of the industrialisation of iconoclasm in Europe in the 20th century see Noyes (2013). IS mark a return to the “total iconoclasm” described by Noyes.

¹² See Taub (2015).

in its “digital expertise,” particularly of social media. Islamic State proudly boasts as much. The digital marketing of the state ranges from threats to commit atrocities to the recent publication of e-book tourist guides. For example, *A Brief Guide to Islamic State* by British jihadist Abu Rumaysah al Britani provides chapters entitled “food”, “weather”, “transport”, “technology”, “people”, “education” and “capitalism is dead”. Specifically on technology it explains:

The Islamic State’s deft use of media and hi-tech weaponry to further its aims also shows that Islam is not an enemy to modern technology, and in many ways it has propelled the Caliphate brand into something that is stylish and cool. [...]

Inside the Islamic State you will have access to the usual gizmos such as laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and of course the internet. Keep in mind that mobile networks are still in the making, but apps such as Skype, Kik, WhatsApp and Telegram, to name but a few, are great alternatives. [...]

If you thought London or New York was cosmopolitan then wait until you step foot in the Islamic State, because it screams diversity. (Abu Rumaysah al Britani, 2015, pp. 28-30)

The savvy use of media by IS is evident in the timing and delivery of their broadcasts of images of vandalism. A well-worn pattern is followed to maintain maximum media exposure. Captured sites are not immediately destroyed. Instead they are, cleared and prepared. This allows for coordinated looting, advertising and the growth of international outrage. Only then does iconoclasm begin.

Cultural artefacts are the second largest source of revenue for IS after oil. Compared to oil however, artefacts easier to loot (Hartnell and Wahab, 2015). Like oil, digital images of cultural artefacts have an ability to function as currency. In addition to being units of account, a medium of exchange, a store of value and a standard of deferred payment they can advertise goods for sale and disseminate a world view. World heritage is stored credit and the gold standard is the UNESCO inscribed list. As the malaise that Islamic State seeks to combat is seen as global, icons of global significance are obvious targets. We may describe the destruction of Nimrud, Khorsabad, Hatra, and the use of power drills in Nineveh Museum

in Mosul as “war crimes” but for IS they are acts “cultural cleansing” that promote and finance the state. “Looting antiquities fits well with [IS’s] belief that it has to ‘cleanse’ ‘pagan’ relics such as shrines and tombs. But it destroys them only after having removed everything of value from them; these are then considered spoils of war and a legitimate asset.” (Atwan, 2015, p. 147)¹³ The selling of these artefacts not only undermines the strict claimed ideology of Islamic State but also makes other states complicit in the dismantling and destruction of the cultural heritage of the Middle East. No doubt the cultural identity of the region is shattered in an attempt to construct a so-called “global caliphate”.

While images of destruction dominate western media, most artefacts are sold, not destroyed and those that destroyed simply increase the price for those that remain. IS seeks to destroy a certain cultural capital, yet selling that capital is a failed way to absolutely destroy it. In practice the policy of destroying the immovable and looting and smuggling the movable pieces, is not unique in the history of iconoclasm. Vandalism, no matter how ideological is *ceaselessly commercially compromised*. The selling of these artefacts not only undermines the strict claimed ideology of Islamic State but also makes other states complicit in the dismantling and destruction of the cultural heritage of the Middle East. The ideologies of iconoclasm and iconodilism each seek to legitimise a form of pure interaction with sites and artefacts. The practice, which seeks to conquer and harness the power of the image, in reality serves to demonstrate the compromised messiness of such interaction. This compromise is visible when we consider the profits from the extremist’s digital exchange. Who makes money from digital exchange? Search engines such as Google profit for example from searches on Islamic State vandalism.

Islamic State’s vandalism can perhaps be described as a considered art-world strategy. As part of this strategy Islamic State are not immune from even the exchange of merchandise (I have yet to find iconoclast themed merchandise however). It is perhaps not surprising that in this context *Hyperallergic.com*’s 2016 April’s Fool; ‘ISIS to Exhibit Floating Pavilion of

¹³ Atwan continues: “The current terrorist art and antiquities market is dictated by two factors: (1) can an item be transported to a location where a buyer exists for it, and (2) can the artwork be passed off as legitimate once it arrives.” (p. 147)

Art Destruction at Venice Biennale', was so convincing¹⁴.

Islamic State constitutes an aesthetic revolution and the challenge is to continue aesthetic engagement beyond the confines of the IS branded revolution. Unlike earlier examples of the destruction of idols the digital documentation and dissemination of Islamic State's iconoclasm ensures that, while an exact reassembly of Palmyra and other sites is impossible, there is plenty of fuel to continue.

While digital space embraces and enables economic and artworld activity, a key difference with digital space as an economic and art institutional space, as opposed to traditional types of vandalism, is that it resists the obliteration, destruction and erasure vital to vandalism. There is no such thing as rarity online.¹⁵ Islamic State's vandalism serves to valorise surviving artefacts. Digital currency at its most basic level is the jpg and the avi file. 'Pics or it didn't happen!' is the millennial slogan. The vandalism of incremental erosion (neglect, as opposed to symbolic vandalism) is more difficult to digitally capture to be a tradable commodity. IS are video artists whose work serves to strip heritage sites of their luxury status. IS iconoclasm is increasingly a mundane product. We can barely *pay* attention any more.

I earlier called Islamic State vandalism a considered artworld strategy. While this is the case in regard to digital broadcasting and commercial exchange there are some unintended consequences to this vandalism. Given that their images will mutate and grow to be icons, Islamic State vandalism could be also considered *curious conservation*. The vandalism of Islamic State is a sort of reverse gentrification. It is a removing of sites precisely because they are of tourist interest. Hacking and looting are again ambiguous terms and Islamic State vandalism is in its own way a form of radical contemporary curation. We can come to regard IS as trolling or accidental librarians and the forces that wish to preserve and restore as feeding destruction.

When we can consider iconoclasm as conservation and vice versa it is more important to consider the implications for our understanding of

¹⁴ See <http://hyperallergic.com/195279/isis-to-exhibit-floating-pavilion-of-art-destruction-at-venice-biennale/>.

¹⁵ This is not to claim that archiving the digital is an easy, permanent, uncomplicated, or fixed activity. There is a slippage that occurs over time.

vandalism.

3. Conclusion: State Vandalism and *Kintsugi* Renovation

*There will come a time gigantic
Waves will crush the junk that I have saved
When the moon explodes or floats away
I'll lose the souvenirs I made
La la la (Sparklehorse, 1998)*

In the study of vandalism it is useful to turn to Stanley Cohen's seminal 1973 typology. Cohen outlined six typologies in terms of motivation. These are:

1. Acquisitive vandalism (vandalism motivated by acquiring money or assets, looting and petty theft).
2. Ideological vandalism (vandalism in support of a cause).
3. Tactical vandalism (to advance a goal beyond money making).
4. Vindictive vandalism (revenge).
5. Play vandalism. (In the study of hacking this is called "drift".)
6. Malicious vandalism (vandalism motivated by a hatred or pleasure in destruction).
7. Peer pressure vandalism (has also been added to this list by Williams, 2004).

David Freedberg (1985) has also identified a variety of motivations for iconoclasm. His list includes; publicity, the fear of the image, the view that too much wealth is invested in the object and a desire to highlight injustice.

What I have outlined is a new type, or even sub-type of tactical vandalism: state vandalism. This encompasses many of Cohen's types and the motivations identified by Freedberg but in the case of Islamic State and other actors in 2016 it needs to be understood as directed digital communication.

While digital documentation and broadcasting may seem antithetical to the spirit of radical Islam, the digital offers the vandal the freedom to be a darling of the artworld, a jihadi, art dealer etc.. The counterintuitive

dissemination of images by IS reveals a self-defeating paradox at the heart of their strategy. In splitting the idol and the image they refuse to see the scope for future idolatry/iconoclasm in their digital creations. Furthermore, the globalised conservation industry as seen in the UNESCO World Heritage Site initiative stands somewhat implicated in fuelling iconoclasm

A reconsideration of the global conservation practice and assessing the use of “boots on the ground” response to Islamic State is beyond the scope of this paper. Equally the “electronic counter-jihad” being fought by Anonymous and Western states has hitherto proven limited. It is clear that the Stolen Works of Art Database, a “red list” with information on more than 1,300 items removed from museums and sites in Syria has not been enough and that the proposal of Philippe-Joseph Salazar to open dialogue with IS is not being countenanced. Nonetheless, given that the success of IS derives from its ability to demonstrate its deeds and actions it follows that to be defeated it must be tackled on these grounds.

As I have shown in my writings on *Pasquino*¹⁶, an ancient statue recovered in medieval Rome and still subject to vibrant, I would say vandalistic, interaction the destruction and defacing of artworks is not the end of art. Likewise, souvenirs such as the new arch ought to be considered for their rich aesthetic potential and should not be discarded as simply inauthentic.

Nonetheless it is worth remembering that all positions on the spectrum from destruction to preservation to restoration are but different types of political instrumentalisation and icon cultivation. The new arch demonstrates the complicated politics that the restoration of antiquities even as a souvenir presents where iconoclasm and restoration alike, each claim transnational and global heritage and validity via digital means and each serve to transform artworks and heritage sites.

From shattered fragments new ways of aesthetic experience and engagement are still possible. Here I am inspired by the practice of *kintsugi* (golden joinery) from Japanese aesthetics. This is where damaged artefacts are repaired using gold. The appeal of *kintsugi* is obvious. It permits a position that can overcome the paradoxes of replacing the irreplaceable and does not follow the fantasies of manmade aniconism and restoration

¹⁶ See Vaughan (2015).

that revel in uncompromising purity. Furthermore it does so in a way that values the iconoclast history of the piece in question. This honouring must now be considered part of the contemporary duty of the museum and other cultural institutions in their treatment of such souvenirs, memorials and commemorations. Where possible 3D replicas have a role to play.

This *kintsugi* challenge I venture is one way to approach the aesthetic challenge of iconoclasm in the age of the digital. By not trying to replace lost and irreplaceable artefacts of the precious records of antiquity, *kintsugi* instead records, mends and acknowledges the scars through deeds and actions. Souvenirs can help where cultural heritage has been shattered.

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Challenges of Philosophical Art

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ABSTRACT. This paper is concerned with the connection between art, in particular literature and film, and philosophy. My basic question is how to understand claims such as the one made by literary critic in reference to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil*, when he proclaims that "in this tale and in others Hawthorne tests the proposition that human identity is contingent and circumstantial, rather than an inherent essence – that is, not identity at all". These kinds of claims, which not only see art as coming together with knowledge seeking disciplines but as capable of philosophizing, raise the question of whether there is a category of philosophical art. Drawing an analogy with religious, pornographic and erotic art, I offer an array of challenges that philosophical art sets to aestheticians, the crucial of which is determining whether or how a work of art is or can be philosophical. My crucial concern is showing how the fact that an artwork is in some sense philosophical has implications for the identity of that artwork. After discussing some scepticism regarding the possibility of philosophical art, I proceed to show how this concern relates to artwork's interpretation and appreciation, as well as for our understanding of arts and philosophy as valuable cultural practices.

1. Philosophy in the Hands of an Artist

In commenting on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Minister's Black Veil*, Leland S. Person (Person 2007, p. 49) claimed:

In this tale and in others Hawthorne tests the proposition that human identity is contingent and circumstantial, rather than an inherent essence – that is, not identity at all. We like to think that there is something in us – a soul, or some other core of identity, the continuity that memory gives us – that does not change. We may change, but at some deep level we remain the same person. Indeed, it is hard

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to think of ourselves in any other way; for if we do not have such a core essence in us, how do we know ourselves at all? This is precisely the problem that Reverend Hooper faces. Not only does he become a monster to his parishioners; he becomes a monster to himself.

This commentary might seem puzzling to those who think of notions such as ‘identity’, ‘continuity of memory’, or ‘knowledge of oneself’ as philosophical concepts. It is the philosophers who come up with all sorts of views on human identity and test various propositions regarding who we are, not literary authors. Literary authors write aesthetically pleasing stories about who we are, but they do not ask questions about it, and do not try to provide answers to them. Yet, on Person’s view, this is precisely what Hawthorne is doing: by writing a story about Reverend Hooper, who one day for no apparent reason put a black veil on his face, Hawthorne explores “what happens to our relationship with others – to the identity we have for others and for ourselves – when we make such a drastic, even if superficial, change in ourselves?” (p.47-8). If we grant that some questions, such as ‘what is our core identity’, are intrinsically philosophical questions, then it indeed seems that Hawthorne is stepping in philosopher’s shoes.

However, Person’s commentary is exemplary in illustrating numerous critical readings, not only of Hawthorne but of literary works more generally. Literary critics often see works of literary fiction and poetry as engaging with philosophical issues, sometimes even to the point when they create their own philosophical system. Thus, Mary Ann Perkins says: “Coleridge developed a framework for the reconciliation of thought, faith and experience which is potentially as generative of critical thought in the area of psychology, philosophy and religion, as Schelling and Hegel” (Perkins 1994, p. 1). Proclamations like these not only see works of literature as coming together with knowledge seeking disciplines, but they attribute an epistemological role to these works, claiming they engage with, or do philosophy.

As of lately, philosophers of more or less analytic bent have taken up this kind of ‘philosophy through literature’ approach and have expanded it to cinematic art and theatre, occasionally rekindling an old debate about the ways in which (absolute) music can express content, particularly philo-

sophical one.¹ In the hands of philosophers, the crucial question concerning the mutual bonding of art and philosophy is that of determining the scope of artwork's philosophical engagement and possibilities, with two main options. On the one hand, it is almost a triviality to say that certain artworks address philosophical concerns, in the sense that they illustrate some philosophical positions, claims or arguments. To put it somewhat formally, philosophy is *in* these works, and therefore they give content to otherwise abstract philosophical ideas and claims. This makes them helpful pedagogical tools that serve as an illustration, counterexample or intuition pumps. On the other hand, it seems that some artworks do more than just illustrate: they express original philosophical contribution and therefore are, or should be considered as, philosophy in their own right. Philip Kitcher offers such a view regarding Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, when he says "Mann merits our attention *as a contributor to the philosophical discussions in which his sources were engaged*" (Kitcher 2013, p. 10, italics original). Discussing the *Alien* series, Stephen Mulhall (Mulhall 2008, p.4) voices a 'philosophy through art' position with respect to cinema's philosophical engagement, claiming

I do not look at these films as handy or popular illustrations of views and arguments properly developed by philosophers. I see them rather as themselves reflecting on and evaluating such views and arguments, as thinking seriously and systematically about them, in just the ways that philosophers do. Such films are not philosophy's raw material, nor a source of its ornamentation; they are philosophical exercises, philosophy in action – films as philosophy.²

Not entirely unrelated are claims made by philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum 1990), Alan Goldman (Goldman 2013) and Cora Diamond (Diamond 2010), who claim that literary works are better than

¹ See Philip Kitcher 2013, and Mark Evans Bond 2014 for discussions over music and philosophy.

² See also Christopher Falzon, who claims that films „have their own philosophical points to make, their own truth to reveal, their own insights into the human situation.” (Falzon 2008, 6), and Thomas E. Wartenberg, who argues that “at least certain cinematic illustrations of a philosophical theory or claim do make a contribution to the philosophical discussion of a problem or issue.” (Wartenberg 2006, p. 20, Wartenberg 2008).

philosophy at addressing some crucial ethical concerns and revealing nuances of ethical conundrums. While these authors are not committed to the claim that works they see as 'better than philosophy at doing philosophy' are themselves works of philosophy, such a claim is implicit in their argument.

The kinds of critical commentaries about some works exemplified in Person's interpretation of Hawthorne, and claims regarding literature and films' ability to do philosophy, do not seem entirely misconstrued for several reasons. First, there is an overlap in the themes that philosophers and artists are concerned with, as reflected in the thematic concepts frequently found in both, literary and philosophical works. These include concepts such as right or wrong, justice, freedom, value, purpose, knowledge, duty etc. Thomas Mann might be writing about the allure of a young boy's body but he is in fact probing the fundamental philosophical question – what does it mean to lead a valuable life? – thus joining the long line of philosophers who tried to unravel the mystery of a good life. When Robert Frost questions the limits of human knowledge in regard to the natural world, he is interested in those very themes that define the epistemological project of addressing the scepticism regarding the external world and the limits of human (and scientific) knowledge. More formally, the rationale here is that both, a poet and a philosopher, are concerned with (some of) the same problems. The overlap between art and philosophy is thematic, and given how deeply an artist probes these themes, her work might become a piece of philosophy.

Another point of contact concerns the similarities in the impact that some artworks have on the audience. I will refer to this impact as a cognitive one, to contrast it from artwork's other impacts (aesthetic, artistic or emotional), and to highlight its main experiential aspect: that of undergoing a certain intellectual, reflective experience that results, or has the potential to result, in various kinds of cognitive gains. Engaging with artworks often brings about a heightened sense of a better, more profound understanding of whatever that artwork brings to view, or to a change of perspective: position, arguments or belief that once seemed appropriate might, after the experience with an artwork, be found untenable and in need of refinement, elaboration or even abandonment. Kitcher explains the impact of *Death in Venice* along these lines: Mann's depiction of Aschen-

bach's deterioration brings forward a heightened sense of understanding the grip that some desires and passions have on humans, a grip which can cause the disruption of discipline that was crucial for one's life. Art and philosophy then seem to overlap in their capacity to bring about a certain change in how the audience comes to understand the world and its many aspects, themselves and other human beings.

Third, artists themselves often acknowledge (or critical comments about their works reveal) their interest at a certain philosophical problem, their enthusiasm for a particular philosopher or intention to tackle a concrete philosophical issue. Many artists have philosophical background, and given how philosophy permeates the public discourse and cultural background against which artists create, it is hard to imagine one would not be influenced by some philosophical concerns.³

Finally, some thinkers are philosophers and literary writers, regardless of whether they consider themselves one or the other, or both. The interesting case does not only concern people like Iris Murdoch, who wrote philosophical works and literary works (and, by her own confession, was always clearly aware of when she was writing one and when the other – an awareness that arguably does not transfer so directly to her readers), but cases such as Stanislaw Lem, a Polish science fiction writer frequently referred to as philosopher, or cases such as Albert Camus, who is still considered a father of (philosophical position known as) existentialism although he himself rejected the title.⁴

I will take these points of contact between literature and philosophy, fuelled by critical commentaries and philosophical advocacies of the overlap of the two, as reasons enough to claim that there is a distinctive category of artworks, those with substantial philosophical aspect. I will refer to a class of these works as philosophical art. Unlike most philosophers who are interested in the overlap between philosophy and literary and cinematic art in order to claim either that these art forms are in fact merging

³ See Paisley Livingston (2009) for a discussion of philosophical and other influences of Ingmar Bergman and David Davies (2009) for a discussion of Terrence Malick's philosophical background. Kitcher (2013) illuminatingly discusses philosophical sources behind Thomas Mann.

⁴ See Murdoch 1999. For a discussion of philosophical aspects of Stanislaw Lem, see Swirski ed. 2006.

with philosophy (in virtue of their ability to deliver original and innovative contributions to philosophy), or to discuss these artworks' pedagogical use in light of how they illustrate philosophical concerns, my interest is in examining some of the challenges that this category raises not only to philosophers of art generally, but to philosophy and arts as valuable cultural practices. This interest is theoretically close to the traditional debate about the connections between literature and philosophy, connections that were considered natural and unquestionable given their shared intellectual background, up till the point when Plato insisted on divorcing them. Given that philosophy and literature share the same medium, language, the connection between the two of them is deeper and harder to entangle, than the connection between philosophy and cinema, as it inevitably raises the question of classification for at least some works which can be taken as literary as well as philosophical. While movies do contain linguistic dimension, their primary medium is a visual one, a medium which is significantly different from the medium of philosophy. This makes it easier to see how cinema and philosophy come apart, but it raises the problem of accounting for the films' philosophical engagement.⁵

2. Sceptical Take on Philosophical Art

One may wonder whether my preliminary view on the ways in which philosophy comes close to some art forms is philosophically important. Given the wide range of issues that philosophy concerns itself with, and given that there is no restriction to what can be given an artistic treatment, it is to expect that in some cases at least philosophy and art will meet. In reference to literature, such an argument was made by Lamarque and Olsen (Lamarque and Olsen 1994), who claimed that the mere fact that some literary works deal with philosophical issues or employ philosoph-

⁵ To avoid constant repetition, my use of the term philosophical art(works) should be taken as including literary and cinematic works of (popular) art that contain philosophical dimension. Artworks pertaining to other forms, such as visual art, music and theatre will not be my concern here. My focus on literature and cinema is shaped by current philosophical debates. I believe that theatre can be philosophical in the same way as literary and cinematic works can. Though my discussion will be limited in focus, I trust it can be joined with discussions regarding musical and theatrical philosophical engagement.

ical concepts isn't in itself interesting for literature generally.⁶ The intuitive appeal of this claim can easily be appreciated and its rationale transferred to debates on philosophy and film – some films are (or can be interpreted as) philosophical, but that fact alone doesn't suffice to see these films as philosophy, or cinematic art as a medium capable of philosophizing. This argument is bolstered by the fact that many other disciplines 'borrow' their themes to art without thereby losing their distinctive nature. Despite Henry James' superb tackling of psychological concerns in his novels, there are no arguments to the effect that philosophy and psychology should merge or are inseparable. While the lack of such theoretical discussions shows that there is something special in the connection between literature and philosophy, it can also make us wonder whether indeed there is such a thing as philosophical art. Let us therefore start with a sceptical view and examine arguments invoked to show that there is no philosophical art, other than in the trivial sense in which some artworks do illustrate, or are about, philosophical concerns.

As a point of departure, notice that the kind of theoretical divide Plato was trying to prescribe when he urged his fellow citizens to break connection with poets was never followed by a practical division of labour. An array of examples philosophers frequently discuss in relation to artworks which deal with philosophy – Falzon analyses more than 150 films, and writers as diverse as Shakespeare, Joyce, Dostoyevsky, James, Melville, Goethe, Hawthorne, Frost, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Milton and Wallace, to randomly mention but few, were given philosophical readings – shows that the intersecting character of art and philosophy is a more dominant tendency in literature and in cinema and that the intersecting character of art and philosophy is not limited to occasional few authors or concrete works. There is hardly any philosophical problem, regardless of philosoph-

⁶ Lamarque and Olsen issued this commentary as a response to Nussbaum's claims that some literary works should be adjoined to moral philosophy, in light of their alleged capacity to engage with the issues of moral philosophy better than moral philosophy itself. While my discussion is not quite on this track (my concern is in the general overlap of philosophy and art, not in discussing how some literary works address moral issues and affect their readers' moral sensibility), nothing in principle renders their argument impotent within this wider context, as it can still be claimed that the occasional overlap of art and philosophy isn't relevant for arts or for philosophy.

ical discipline to which it belongs to, that hasn't been given expression in literature and film. This in itself justifies our taking seriously the bond between art and philosophy and examining whether indeed there is philosophical art. A more pressing reason to re-examine the bond between art and philosophy has to do with the fact that none of the sceptical arguments against taking this bond seriously seems entirely convincing. I will focus on two sceptical strategies dominant in debate regarding literature's philosophical engagements, those which I find most troubling for my claim that philosophy can be accommodated within literary and cinematic works of art.

The first sceptical strategy denies the possibility of doing philosophy through art, given that the two practices are so fundamentally different that their coming together is made impossible by their very nature. This strategy insists on the differences in style and structure of philosophy and literature, and on the supposedly different aims they are to fulfil. Iris Murdoch (Murdoch 1999) claims that philosophy, whose role is primarily to clarify things, should be clear and precise, while literature is semantically dense and ambiguous, full of hidden meanings and mystifications, aiming to entertain. Philosophy is about reasons, analysis and constant revisions of one's solutions to the problems, literature as an art form is first and foremost a storytelling activity in which one may just be interested in a way a story is given a form.

There is an immediate intuitive appeal in this strategy, particularly from the perspective of analytic philosophy, since its building block is argument. Given that works of art do not offer arguments, it is hard to see them as doing philosophy. However, such generalized view about what is, or should be, central to the method, writing style or aim of the two practices is but one possible way in which to think (normatively or prescriptively) about them, which wrongly presupposes, rather than demonstrably proves, that there is a neat line between clearly written philosophy that aims to clarify, and ambiguously dense literature that aims to satisfy. To put it somehow simply, philosophy can be aesthetically pleasing and art can be (is!) cognitively rich. Not only do philosophy and literature share their intellectual concerns, but throughout their long histories, they often shared stylistic and argumentative devices, such as reliance on first person experience, thought experiments and genres (meditations, diaries).

In addition, the insistence on arguments as the main philosophical tool is shattered by Wittgenstein-inspired views of philosophy, offered by such analytic splendours like Philip Kitcher, who invites us to recognize that philosophy can be done by showing, not just arguing.⁷ And, if Wartenberg is right about the role that images and visual illustrations have in philosophy, it is even less obvious that philosophy can only proceed if formulated in neat and rigid arguments.

A more basic worry with the first sceptical strategy concerns its scope. We initiated this discussion because we wanted to explain how it can be that philosophy and art can be so similar – in terms of the themes they explore, cognitive impact they have on the audience, even (in some cases at least) styles of argumentation – to give rise to the views according to which they overlap, perhaps even merge. However, by insisting on stylistic difference in language, the first sceptical strategy cannot be employed against artistic forms that do not use language, and philosophy. In a sense of course, cinema does employ language – linguistic expressions figure in dialogues, monologues and voice-overs, and sometimes philosophical bits are conveyed in this way, but this is not what philosophers have in mind when they claim that movies are philosophy, as they tend to discuss distinctive cinematic medium, such as visual image and editing, that are the vehicle via which philosophical thought is conveyed. Therefore, invoking stylistic features of language that is supposedly distinctive of philosophy will not suffice to keep it out of or apart from cinematic art.

The point that the sceptics are most forceful about is the idea that literature and movies do not aim at, or are not in the function of, ‘doing philosophy’. Taking them as vehicles of philosophical thought is therefore a case of misunderstanding at best, or instrumentalization at worst. However, the force of this argument can be attenuated by David Davies’ treatment of the artistic status of political, religious and pornographic art, that is, art that has a non-artistic primary intended function (Davies 2012). On Davies’ view, the fact that these works aim to elicit response other than artistic one does not take away from their artistic status, because they fulfil their primary function in virtue of how the artefact articulates those contents that bear upon the fulfilment of its non-artistic function. If Davies

⁷ See Kitcher 2013; particularly pp. 12–18.

is right here, it follows that there can be philosophical art, provided philosophical artworks fulfil their artistic function by handling philosophical concerns in a manner that elicits a proper response in the audience – that of inspiring the audience to take artistic regard towards the work. Philosophical art is philosophical because its subject is philosophical and because it elicits philosophical response (as explained above), and it is artistic because its philosophical aspect is developed via artistic means, that is, in such a way that the artwork invites artistic regard. Davies' account is premised upon the intended response in the receiver, and presupposes that the artist intends to create an artwork that has a double function (artistic, and religious, political or erotic/pornographic). Applied to the category of philosophical art, this implies that a writer or a filmmaker intends to create a literary or cinematic piece of work that is artistic in virtue of the way it addresses philosophical concerns and works with them.

Davies' account gives us what we need to set foundations for philosophical art, such that, even if we accept that art and philosophy have distinct functions and pursue different aims, these can nevertheless be reconciled in a work of art. Because a viewer needs to attend to artistic means via which the primary function (arguably, to deal with or do philosophy) is executed, it is possible for her to simultaneously attend to artwork's artistic and philosophical dimension, i.e. appreciate a work of art for its philosophical and artistic function. On this view, the aims of art and philosophy might be separate, but they can be united in philosophical art.

I will postpone the discussion of the relevance of intentions for the creation of philosophical art till later, but at this point Davies has given us a way forward. His method of uniting two functions in a single artwork is precisely how some of the most fervent advocates of philosophical art see their bonding. Kitcher, for example, focuses on works "in which philosophical explorations are organically integrated with the narrative, with the evocation and development of character, and with the literary style" (Kitcher 2013, p. 12). In cases such as these, I argue, works are artistic in virtue of how they develop philosophical concerns, which are inherently entwined with the artistic dimension of the work itself.⁸

⁸ See Livingston 2009, whose analysis of Bergman's employment of cinematic means to treat philosophical concerns is insightful with respect to artwork's philosophical and artistic aspect coming united.

The second sceptical strategy denies not only the possibility of doing philosophy through art, but it denies that philosophy can be *in* art. Stein Haugom Olsen (Olsen 1978), for example, acknowledges that literature and philosophy share some of the same concerns and operate with the same thematic concepts, used not only to interpret literary works, but human experience generally, that is, “eternal human problems” (p. 114). However, he claims, once the concepts from a non-literary framework are taken over by literature, they can no longer be given their usual meanings but “become tied to a new theoretical and practical background through literary interpretation, and through their relation to their background they take on a new significance. They become interesting as expressing literary insights through their role in interpretation.” (p.113). Because Olsen equates this background with the literary tradition, he concludes that “applying a term of this type in literary interpretation, the critic often invokes literary precedents as justification for the application, but he never invokes non-literary uses of the terms as this would not be helpful” (p.114). Given that the primary function of these terms has to do with literary aims, “this vocabulary therefore gains a sort of autonomy from the identical vocabulary which is used as a body of interpretative terms in philosophy, religion and science; an autonomy due to the fact that as interpretive terms the two identical classes are used to interpret different phenomena” (p.115).⁹

One problem with this claim is that it seems to imply that thematic concepts change their meaning once they are contextualized. If that were the case, not only would it be unclear where the interpretive concepts come from, but Olsen would have to explain the correct use of critical vocabulary, if in fact it is not grounded in the extra-literary practices to which the concepts usually belong (that is, from which the author has taken them). If Olsen were right and the concepts change meanings, it would be impossible to understand anything before learning the meaning that these concepts acquire once they are contextualized. Neither

⁹ Arguments to the same effect are also voiced in Olsen and Lamarque’s joint 1994 masterpiece, where they claim for example, that “The general theme of the freedom of the will and responsibility does not exist independently of the way in which it is developed in various cultural discourses” and “The thematic concepts are, by themselves, vacuous. They cannot be separated from the way they are ‘anatomized’ in literature and other cultural discourses” (see Lamarque and Olsen 1994, pp. 402-3).

philosophers nor literary authors possess the Humpty Dumpty capacity to create meanings simply by inserting words into a specific context. What they do share is the capacity to shed light on the implications of concepts, which is why literature can have the power to deliver the cognitive impact described above.

The notion of ‘the’ literary tradition, which, on Olsen’s account determines and justifies the use of concepts, raises further worries for his theory. Not only it may seem overly monolithic – is there really *one* such tradition? – but even granting that there is, it can’t operate in a way as isolated as Olsen envisions. Perhaps the most oft-discussed example against such a clear distinction between the two traditions (literary and philosophical) comes from romanticism, which belies the idea of any sharp division. The well established intellectual connections and patterns of influence between post-Kantian German idealism and Romantic literature exemplified in the writings of Hölderlin prove the point. Hölderlin found philosophy incapable of answering its own questions and believed that only art is up to this task. His literary opus has been interpreted as a criticism of Fichte’s postulation of the first principle of philosophy aimed against Kant’s dualism. A clear line of philosophers dealing with the relationship between the mind and the world (Kant – Reinhold – Schulze – Fichte) is thus completed by literature.¹⁰

To illustrate the claim that literary tradition does not create its own domain of knowledge divorced from other intellectual domains, consider an example from a different period. To appreciate and understand George Meredith’s poem, *Lucifer in Starlight*, readers should be familiar with some prominent biblical and religious beliefs, most notably the rebellion of angels against God and Lucifer’s role in that rebellion. There is undeniably a direct link to Milton’s treatment of the subject in *Paradise Lost*, but it is wrong to claim that one can only appreciate Meredith’s poem and its way of tackling the issue if one ‘justifies’ its treatment of the theme by linking it to Milton. Not only would it be quite hard to think of how such a justification might take place, but it would be almost impossible to understand

¹⁰ See Horstmann 2000 and Larmore 2000. The idea that literature continues the philosophical line is exemplified in Larmore’s view, according to which ‘Hölderlin’s main thesis is that, contrary to Fichte, subjectivity cannot function as the first principle of philosophy, for it cannot be understood in its own terms (Larmore 2000, p. 146).

the visions of betrayal, rebellion, arrogance and pride Lucifer embodies, if one didn't approach the poem from the wider context that in addition to literature includes biblical, theological and philosophical references.

Meredith's poem further shows the fault in Murdoch (1999) claim, similar to Olsen's, that philosophy stops being philosophy when inserted into literature. If the concepts are divorced from their meaning once they are inserted into literary context, then, by the same reasoning, religious concerns stop being religious concerns. Yet how would we be able to make sense of the poem unless we took religious concerns that are the subject in Meredith in their usual meaning?¹¹

None of what I said in reference to sceptical strategy number two (denying that some thematic concepts found in literature, (and by extension in cinematic art) retain their philosophical meanings once inserted into works of art) should be taken as supporting an argument made by John Gibson (Gibson 2017), another sceptic regarding the intersection of literature and philosophy. On his view, asking "What makes a poem philosophical", only adds fuel to the ancient feud between these two disciplines and it ignores valuable distinctive ways in which both, poetry and philosophy, treat a certain 'content'. There are no philosophical poems, he claims, because there is no philosophical content, only "a kind of common cultural property that belongs to neither the poet nor the philosopher" and the difference is "really just a matter of whether one opts to give philosophical or poetic form to this basic, common content". Gibson does not deny that certain concerns which animate philosophy also animate poets (his own example is Wallace Stevens, a poet who is a go to example for so many philosophers who argue in favour of philosophical poetry), but he does object to calling these concerns philosophical: "Why, one wonders, does it get to be called philosophical?"

Why indeed? The question that Gibson raises seems fundamental to this discussion, and it will be part of my argument below that probing philosophical art might help us explain something more fundamentally

¹¹ Murdoch refutes her own claims when she says, explaining her own importation of philosophy into her novels, 'I might put in things about philosophy because I happen to know about philosophy. If I knew about sailing ships, I would put in sailing ships' (pp. 19–20). Given that sailing ships do not stop being sailing ships, philosophical ideas do not stop being philosophical ideas once they are incorporated into a novel.

about the nature of philosophical questions. However, I am not quite at ease with Gibson's solution. For one thing, if he is right, how are we to account for the numerous examples of works of art identified as engaging with philosophical questions?¹²

Second, and more troubling, Gibson seems to be denying, implicitly at least, that there are distinctively philosophical concerns that belong to clearly established philosophical tradition, since all there is, is a shared intellectual background. He might be right – after all, we still lack a general definition of what philosophy is or what it does – but a rather influential view has it that philosophy is concerned with certain questions which are central to it (the 'big questions' view). Denying this, as Gibson seems to be doing, denies that philosophy is a substantially distinctive field of enquiry and reduces it to a methodological approach. More to the point, it remains unclear what the common intellectual background consists of, and how some other disciplines which, we can assume, are part of it (such as religion, anthropology, sociology) retain their distinctive identities within such background. The most that the argument from the common intellectual background does, it seems to me, is reinforcing the idea that literature and philosophy have a more intimate relation than either of them has with other disciplines.

How then to think of the notions of literary and philosophical tradition, and how to separate them from the wider intellectual background? Rather than keeping them apart, as Olsen and Murdoch do, my suggestion

¹² M.H. Abrams provided an inimitable account of how deep and influential the common cultural property is, in his brilliant portrayal of romantic poetry: '... the writings of these poets were part of a comprehensive intellectual tendency which manifested itself in philosophy as well as in poetry; this tendency was casually related to the drastic political and social changes of the age' (11). However, while analyzing numerous examples of how 'closely interinvolved' (192) literature and technical philosophy have been in this period, Abrams nevertheless describes poetic practice as distinct from, although deeply influenced by, philosophical. While the question of 'philosophical poems' does not pop up for him in the sense we are interested in here, Abrams, unlike Gibson, does not negate distinctively philosophical questions: "The major German poets and novelists (as well as Coleridge, and later Carlyle, in England) avidly assimilated the writings of the philosophers; many of them wrote philosophical essays; and all incorporated *current philosophical concepts and procedures* into the subject matter and structure of their principal works of imagination" (Abrams p. 192, italics mine).

is to recognize the overall encompassing intellectual tradition consisting of scientific (natural and social) and humanistic practices which gives rise to various sources of influence that shape literary as well as philosophical writings. Though disentangling these multiple sources of ideas or tracing multiple causal relationships would be impossible, there is no reason to think that within each discipline itself we cannot recognize distinctive patterns of influence. In philosophy, these patterns take the form of criticism and sometimes the form of advancing some principles, questions or themes taken to be basic – the possibility of the coherent account of the history of philosophy is based on it. The same reasoning applies to literature. At any time there is a more or less fixed conception of the literary canon within which we trace patterns of influence. But that does not justify the further step Olsen and Murdoch suggest, namely cutting off literature entirely from other domains, nor Gibson's argument regarding mixing it all up into one giant intellectual background.

3. Taking Philosophical Art Seriously

Having at least mitigated sceptical views, the time has come to address challenges that philosophical art raises. I will develop these challenges along four main points: identification, interpretation, appreciation, and cultural significance.

To ask about identification of philosophical art is to ask about criterion or criteria that identify those works which in fact are philosophical. For all that has been said so far, we still do not have a criterion or a set of criteria that would help us determine when in fact a work is philosophical, or can rightly be considered as such. Three possibilities, not necessarily disconnected or separate, are put on offer with respect to this problem: first, a work is philosophical in virtue of what is explicit in the work itself. Second, a work is philosophical in virtue of artists' intention to create a work of art which is philosophical, so that it contains, deals with or raises philosophical concerns. Third, a work is philosophical only indirectly, via the interpretation imposed upon it by a philosophically minded critic. Let's start with the first option.

An artwork can be philosophical in virtue of philosophical content that is explicitly present in it, at the level of text itself, or, in case of cinematic

art, in a form of a dialogue, monologue or a voice over. Such is the case with the characters in Lars Von Tier's *Dogville* which on numerous occasions raise and discuss issues regarding duty and responsibility, and their actions reflect their ethical commitments that are verbally expressed. It is also the case with writers like Theodore Dreiser, who often inserts philosophical reflections into his characters' reveries. It might be tempting to claim that the presence of textual clues of this kind is to be taken as criterion on what counts as philosophical art. Not only it is clearly stated that the work is about philosophical concerns, but the insertion of philosophical bits guides the audience in their imaginative reflective engagement with a work. This can be helpful in providing an incentive for the audience to focus on questions that might otherwise go unnoticed or remain unacknowledged. This kind of criteria is straightforward, and as long as we can come up with a more or less agreed-upon list of philosophical concerns, we will not have problems recognizing philosophical art. Those works which, at the textual level, do not contain or refer to thematic concepts recognized as philosophical or pertaining to philosophy, are not, on this option, philosophical.

There are however two possible problems with this solution. The mere presence of philosophical concepts does not suffice to turn something into philosophy. Referencing a particular philosophical problem without systematically and critically dealing with it does not count as doing philosophy. Detective novels or police procedurals occasionally raise issues regarding the just punishment, but they do not engage theoretically with these issues as the story is focused on catching the culprit, not on debating reasons for or against punishment, the rights of the victim or the reasons why the culprit committed the crime and should be punished – those, namely, that can be considered philosophical concerns. Second, even when philosophical issues feature in a work; it might be the case that the audience fails to identify them as philosophical, i.e. to recognize the relevant philosophical concerns that are being pursued. While this failure doesn't necessarily render a work non-philosophical, it does raise a question of the audience's role in recognizing philosophical art, the relevance of which is not always taken into consideration by those working on this topic. Mostly, they tend to ignore the role that the background knowledge and familiarity with philosophical theories have for recognizing, and respond-

ing to, what the work brings to view. For example, it could be argued that a difference between illustrating a philosophical problem and offering an original, innovative contribution is not a matter of how the work is, but of what it does for a particular audience member. A trained and experienced philosopher can anticipate Hamlet's epistemic reflections into the nature of death, while for a non philosopher, they might serve as insightful push into contemplation about how she envisions afterlife. It seems then that a work can be philosophical to a smaller or greater extent, relative to the background knowledge, beliefs and assumptions of the audience.

While this line of relativism is not satisfying if we want a clearly defined, objective criterion on what makes something a work of philosophical art, I want to further elaborate on the role of the audience by examining one more way in which a work can be philosophical in virtue of what it brings to view. We saw with Person that a work can be philosophical even if philosophical bits are not explicit at the level of content, but at the thematic level. Person's interpretation shows that a work can be philosophical in virtue of themes it pursues, of what the work is about, independently of whether or not thematic philosophical concepts are explicitly stated in the work. Given that recognizing the theme, understanding what the work is about, is a crucial element in how the audiences should engage with works of art, it can be argued that a work is philosophical because the audience recognizes its theme to be philosophical. A work's philosophical status will, on this option, depend on whether or not the audience finds its theme philosophical. Figuring out what the work is about includes responding to the work by identifying the relevant thematic concepts so as to make sense of what is described. Those works which invite the application of philosophical concepts can engage the audience in 'philosophical' thinking – these are the grounds upon which we identified the second point of contact between art and philosophy. The analogy with pornographic art might be helpful to bring this point home: some authors define pornographic art not in terms of explicit content, but in terms of the impact they have on the audience (sexual arousal). On this analogy, some artworks are philosophical because they stimulate philosophical thinking in the audience.

The second possibility for identifying philosophical art makes references to artist's intentions. The claim is that the work's content is organ-

ized and presented in a way which renders it philosophical because it is the artist who wanted to pursue a philosophical topic via her artistic creation.¹³ We touched upon this idea above, in Davies' account of artworks with non-artistic primary function. To argue that philosophical art is philosophical in virtue of their makers' intentions to deal with philosophy has a strong initial plausibility, not in the least because doing philosophy is in itself intentional activity which presupposes one's decision to engage with certain questions at a sufficiently high level of abstraction. One cannot, in other words, do philosophy by accident. Given the complexity of philosophical ideas expressed in artworks, it would be highly surprising if there was no intention on the part of the artist to create a work which presents precisely such content as to give rise to those ideas.

However, intentionalism can only get us so far. As its critics never get tired of pointing out, not only can a work have meanings their makers did not envision, but intentions can fail. Consequently, nothing in principle prevents artworks from being philosophical, even if their makers had no philosophical intentions, and vice versa. On the other hand, presupposing we can adduce sufficient evidence to claim an artist had the intentions to create philosophical work of art, the evidence can nevertheless be indeterminate with respect to concrete ideas she wanted to explore. Varieties of critical philosophical commentaries on Terrence Malick's *Thin Red Line* is a case in point. Depending on whom you listen to, in this film Malick is dealing with the darkness in the American soul, with a state of paradise lost and the possibilities of redemption, with transcendentalism, with contemplations about death and nature's indifference to it, with Heidegger's ontology and numerous other topics.¹⁴ On the one hand, this variety might simply be an instance of disagreement: Malick is, no doubt, doing philosophy, it is just not clear precisely which philosophical idea he is developing. The problem with this is that, on the whole, it doesn't tell us what the work is like or how it should be understood. As I will claim below, if we take philosophical dimension of a work to be essential to its identity, then not knowing precisely which philosophical idea is developed in a work is a serious obstacle to knowing how to properly engage with it and appreciate

¹³ Livingston (2009) interprets Ingmar Bergman's artistic creations along these lines.

¹⁴ See Davies 2009.

it, even if we still recognize it as an instance of philosophical art.

The third option is to claim that works are philosophical only under certain interpretation.¹⁵ It is the interpreters, rather than the artists, who make works philosophical by offering an interpretation which brings forward philosophical issues or philosophical meaning in a work, as Kitcher did in his reading of Mann's masterpiece. On this option, philosophy is neither in the work nor do author's intentions necessarily matter. Since different interpreters might offer different interpretations, one and the same work can be and not be philosophical, and it can inspire various, even incompatible philosophical interpretations.

The difficulties with this option are again twofold. There is still the intuition that some works just are philosophical and that whatever philosophical issues they are concerned with is what they are offering to the audience, as the object of artistic regard and appreciation. To rob them of this dimension, or to deny them this aspect (by making it relative to the interpreter) is to rob them of, or to deny them, what they truly are. On the other hand, it could be that interpreters deliberately impose philosophical interpretations, to make works more interesting, as Murdoch claims. In 'film as philosophy' debates, this has become known as the imposition problem. Wartenberg offers a regulative advice: in proposing a philosophical interpretation be careful not to impose your own ideas upon the film." (Wartenberg 2008, p. 554). However, handy as this advice seems, it hardly solves the problem, as it doesn't explain how we are to identify philosophical art, that is, how are we to know when philosophical interpretation is being imposed, and when it is being recovered from a work.

None of the three options examined gave us a way of determining when (or, in virtue of what) it is justified to say that a work is philosophical. It might be that different artworks are philosophical for different reasons – some, given their content and the subject/theme interrelation, some, because of their makers' intentions, some because of how they inspire reflection in the audience – and that there is no one criterion on what makes an artwork philosophical. However, that should not make the problem of identifying philosophical art irrelevant, as there are further issues, related to interpretation and appreciation of such works, that are relevant.

¹⁵ See Lamarque and Olsen 1994, Murdoch 1999.

On the most general level, can we claim that philosophical dimension is essentially a part of those works we identify as philosophical? Following David Novitz's way of phrasing a debate between singularism and pluralism of interpretations, we can ask if philosophical dimension belongs to the set of properties that are in the artwork independently of any interpretations of it.¹⁶ Following Peter Lamarque's account of aesthetic essentialism, we can wonder whether philosophical dimension of an artwork is its essential property, in a way that being a tragedy is an essential property of *King Lear* (Lamarque 2010). Of course, 'being philosophical' is not an artistic property in any straightforward sense in which 'being a tragedy is'. However, it is not artistically insignificant either. One important consequence of phrasing the question along the lines of aesthetic essentialism is that it makes a demand on the audience to acknowledge this philosophical dimension and to have a proper reaction to it (though it remains to be explained what a proper reaction to a philosophical work is, i.e. how much 'philosophical thinking' suffices). If in fact artworks develop their own philosophical systems, then the audience's proper reaction to it has to include an awareness and appreciation of it, which, ideally, should not be raised by critic's insight. If philosophical dimension is an essential part of the artwork, then in case the audience misses it (fails to recognize a philosophical problem), it misses something crucial in the artwork, even if they still 'get the story'. This is why the question of the 'normative power' of philosophical dimension matters, and why we might want to know which philosophical idea is in fact expressed in Mallick's *Thin Red Line*.¹⁷

Numerous works are complex and multi-layered, with philosophical dimension being but one of their aspects. However, a failure to take it into consideration is a form of underestimating a work. Cinematic achievements such as David Fincher's *Seven* or Denis Villeneuve *Sicario* offer an

¹⁶ Notice that my angle on the issue of interpretation does not raise the question of the rivalry between philosophical interpretation and other possible interpretation of a work. Nor am I interested in asking whether the 'philosophical' interpretation is the only right one. For now at least, I can put these issues aside, though we can expect that some of the conclusions I reach will have impacts on how one answers these questions.

¹⁷ It can be argued though that *Thin Red Line* simply is a kind of film that is deliberately indeterminate with respect to varieties of philosophical ideas it pursues. If that is the case, the philosophical dimension might speak in favour of ambiguity of the film, rather than stand as its primary focus.

interesting, gripping story and hold the attention of the audience via the way they play with the elements of a detective genre to raise mystery and create a puzzle, not only for the characters but for the viewers as well. However, it is the philosophical dimension – what is a right way to live, do we need to justify our life choices (*Seven*), what is a right thing to do (*Sicario*) – that turns a great action movie into an experience that pushes the audience to re-examine their fundamental beliefs about living in a proper way and knowing what our ethical obligations are. By engaging with these stories, the viewer comes to negotiate her own beliefs, commitments and the motivational patterns that she finds acceptable as a mode of living and interacting with others. On the whole, these movies give an incentive for reflective experiences that trigger the audience to rethink and re-examine their most basic ethical commitments. Not recognizing this aspect seriously mars the experience they have the potential to offer, and consequently, their artistic status.

One final challenge that philosophical art raises concerns the nature, identity, definition and value of both, philosophy and the arts. We need a distinction between philosophy and the arts, where the way we characterize these two practices does not take away their distinctive values and finds a proper explanation for the ‘literariness’ of philosophy and ‘philosophicality’ of literature and film. Regardless of its long tradition and history, philosophy has yet to explain its own identity, what does it take to philosophize, what are its methods, what is its task, what goals it aims to achieve, how it connects to the sciences, and the like. These questions perhaps should not bother us – there are philosophers who reject their relevance – but if we could answer them, we would have a better and more encompassing understanding of philosophy, and of connections and discrepancies between philosophy, sciences and the arts. We would know, in other words, what makes anything philosophical, or such that it can or should be given a philosophical consideration. Lamarque and Olsen insightfully suggest that this debate tells us more about the nature of philosophy than it does about literature. It does so, I suggest, not because it challenges philosophy as an institutional, intellectual practice, but by probing our understanding of what it is and what it can practically do for us, outside of the confines of academic discipline.

On the other hand, probing further the overlap between philosophy

and the arts might deepen our understanding of the nature of the arts, their cognitive potentialities, the uses to which they can be put, ways in which they engage the audiences and the responses they elicit in us. After all, philosophical considerations regarding arts generally and literature in particular have for so long been affected by Plato's negative views on it, the least we can do is to reconsider the 'ancient quarrel' and reasons for the split he called for. Disagreements regarding art's cognitive potentials are far from being settled. On the view proposed here, the fact that artworks can engage philosophically is one way in which they can be cognitively valuable; it pays to explore how this value is cashed out. Wartenberg's work on cinematic art, at the centre of which are visual image and illustration, inspires questions regarding the role that they play in advancing philosophical ideas. Though I said nothing about music here, debates over its expressive capacities are not resolved, and it would be beneficial to both, philosophers and musicologists, if we had more conclusive accounts of the ways in which music inspires or expresses philosophical ideas, if indeed it does so.

4. Conclusion

Regardless of what I said here about philosophical art and the problems involved in identifying these works, appreciating them and properly responding to them, it might nevertheless be legitimate to dismiss the problem all together: what, after all, is gained by insisting on this category? On the view I am proposing, the category of philosophical art does not invite deleting the boundaries between the two disciplines, nor does it speak in favour of merging them together. What it calls for is recognition of a distinctive category that emerges from the intersecting characters of these practices, both of which make a special demand on the audience, in terms of attitudes and expectations appropriate to them. To say that something is a work of art is to attribute it a special value, and to make a demand on the audience to search for and try to identify this value, to see how different pieces of a work hang together to make the work a valuable piece of art. Calling something philosophy, or philosophical, is indicative of the special kind of content that it brings to view, a content that merits a special kind of reflective attention. Philosophy, for all of its variations in

themes and methods, is ultimately concerned with the most fundamental questions that we, as rational, intelligent, reflective human beings in the constant search of a meaning, capable of abstract thinking, counterfactual predictions and of recognizing and responding to values, are capable of. We are not only the most evolved creatures in the universe, but also the only creatures capable of reflecting on our world, our selves, and all of our interactions, endeavours and predicaments. Philosophy is the sum total of these, as it represents the unstoppable cognitive engagements with the world that are so crucial for humanity. It is in philosophy that the search for truth and the search for meaning and values come united. When philosophy is inserted into works of art, it adds up to what these works have to offer. The point here isn't that insertion of philosophy in artworks in any way diminishes or enhances their artistic status, nor was I interested in exploring what philosophical art can do for our practice of philosophy and philosophical education. Rather, my interest was in what it can tell us about the way our intellectual and artistic practices meet, and my suggestion was that it can tell us quite a lot.¹⁸

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Seeing-in Is Not Seeing-Through

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I intend to focus on the transparency account of picture perception, according to which picture perception is, in many cases at least, a species of perception of transparency that displays a transparency effect even in absence of physical transparency. Basically, I want to show that this account is not correct. For not only it does not rightly capture the phenomenology of picture perception, but also, and more importantly, it does not provide sufficient conditions for that perception. Yet this criticism does not altogether intend to deny that, as to picture perception, the transparency account has some insights that must be kept in any good account of such a perception: namely, the fact that picture perception involves an element of aware illusoriness and the fact that it brings in a sort of transfiguration of the pictorial vehicle per se, the physical basis of a picture, into something that has a pictorial value.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I intend to focus on the transparency account of picture perception, according to which picture perception is, in many cases at least, a species of perception of transparency that displays a transparency effect even in absence of physical transparency. Basically, I want to show that this account is not correct. For not only it does not rightly capture the phenomenology of picture perception, but also, and more importantly, it does not provide sufficient conditions for that perception. Yet this criticism does not altogether intend to deny that, as to picture perception, the transparency account has some insights that must be kept in any good account of such a perception: namely, the fact that picture perception involves an element of aware illusoriness and the fact that it brings in a sort of transfiguration of the pictorial vehicle per se, the physical basis of a picture, into something that has a pictorial value.

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2. Picture Perception Is a Perception of Transparency

The idea that a picture is like a window open to its *subject*, i.e., what the picture presents,¹ is an old-fashioned one, tracing back at least to Leonbattista Alberti's *De pictura*. The gist of this idea is that a picture is like a transparent medium that lets one see its subject through it. Yet how can it be more than a mere metaphor as far as so-called *opaque* pictures, paintings first of all, are concerned; namely, those pictures that, following Walton 1984, are linked to their subjects by a basically intentional relation? Even if by chance the subject of an opaque picture laid behind that picture, there would be no relation between it and that picture that would enable the former to be seen through the latter. Physically speaking, the *vehicle* of that picture, i.e., its physical basis, is no transparent medium. For some people, the idea can be rendered true by those pictures that (in another sense) are called *transparent* pictures, static and dynamic photographs first of all; namely, those pictures which, according to Walton 1984 again, are linked to their subjects by a basically causal relation. Yet even such pictures do not work as transparent media. Even when the subject of a transparent picture lies behind it so as to have a direct causal responsibility in its production, in its being physically opaque that picture is not a transparent medium that allows that subject to be seen through it. Just as opaque pictures, they visually occlude what lies behind them, a fortiori their subjects.

Yet some other people believe that, both in the case of transparent and in the case of opaque pictures, picture perception may be taken to be a species of perception of transparency. In general, as the Italian psychologist Fabio Metelli has originally shown, physical transparency is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of phenomenal transparency. On the one hand, physically transparent things, e.g. air, may not be perceived transparently: objects located in outer space are not e.g. seen through air.

¹ I say "presents" rather than "depicts" in order to take into account also accidental or fortuitous images (Cutting-Massironi 1998), that is, items that have a figurative value even though they have not been construed by anyone in order to represent something. Those images indeed present something without also depicting it. Famous examples of images of this kind are faces seen in rocks, battles seen in marble veins, animals seen in clouds. Cf. Wollheim 19802, 1987. To be sure, however, Newall 2015, p. 133 does not want to take them into consideration.

On the other hand, also physically opaque things may prompt a perception of transparency.² For instance, in the paradigmatic case Metelli provides [FIGURE 1], the following triangular body is physically opaque, yet one sees (the relevant portion of) a spiral through it, as if that body were a transparent layer (or even (in this case) the other way around, that is, the spiral plays the role of the physically opaque body through which one however sees a triangular body).³

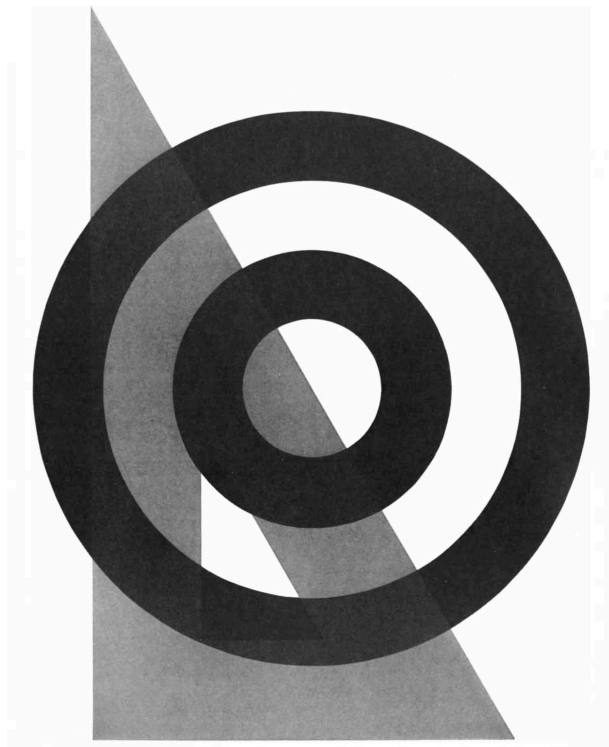


FIGURE 1. Fabio Matelli, *Triangle and Concentric Circles*,
Scientific American, vol. 230, 1974.

Now, the above people say, this transparency effect holds true of pictures as well, at least in many cases. Although they are physically opaque, they

² Cf. Metelli 1974, p. 91.

³ Cf. Metelli 1974, p. 90. For the reasons why in this case phenomenal transparency may go both ways, see Casati 2009, Sayim and Cavanagh 2011.

may be surely phenomenally captured via a perception of transparency, in which one sees their subject as lying behind them, thereby making their vehicle a sort of transparent layer (Kulvicki 2009, Newall 2011, 2015). Now granted, that perception of transparency is a kind of seeing-as perception, hence it is not veridical. In entertaining that perception, one does not see *that* its subject lies behind the picture, one merely sees the subject *as* so lying even if it does not so lie. Yet moreover, that seeing-as remains *modal*. One does not see the subject of a picture as lying behind it *amodally*, as if the picture were something that occludes the subject. Instead, one sees the subject as *through* the picture. Finally, the nonveridicality of such a perception is well known to its bearer, insofar as she is also aware of the physical opacity of the picture. Now, this aware illusoriness also accompanies perception of transparency in general. For instance, in the aforementioned Metelli paradigmatic case, it is not the case that the spiral modally seen behind the triangular body lies so behind, as the perceiver well knows. Thus, one may well say that, in many cases at least, picture perception – the perception of a picture as presenting another item, its subject – is a species of perception of transparency.

A consequence of Kulvicki's account seems to be that the seeing-as perception in question is not only nonveridical, it also has a sort of impossibility: a *nomological* impossibility. For, although it is a *modal* perception of transparency, that perception is accompanied by the *perceptual* awareness that the picture's vehicle is physically opaque.⁴ Yet in no nomologically possible world, one modally sees a subject through its physically opaque picture perceived as such.⁵

In itself, I would say, this nomological impossibility is not per se particularly disquieting. There are other cases in which one entertains an impossible seeing-as perception, for instance when we see a regular triangular

⁴ "Seeing-in is a perceptual state in which an opaque object is experienced as being in front of another opaque object even though neither object is obscured by the other" (Kulvicki 2009, p. 394).

⁵ Cf. Newall 2015, pp. 136-7. Kulvicki himself seems to acknowledge this problem when he says "one cannot see through opaque objects, so the far object in such circumstances cannot be causally responsible for one's experience of it in the proper manner" (Kulvicki 2009, p. 392).

body as a Penrose triangle.⁶ Yet Newall interestingly thinks that this undoubtedly problematic aspect of Kulvicki's account can be amended if one dispenses with the idea that this perception of transparency is *accompanied* by a perception of the pictorial vehicle's opacity. In Newall's account, this latter perception does not go along with the perception of transparency that constitutes picture perception, but it is rather a perception of that vehicle in isolation that *alternates* with that perception.⁷ Thus, when one entertains the latter perception, one is aware of the vehicle's opacity, yet this awareness is not perceptual. This result can be obtained by taking the inclusion of picture perception within perception of transparency *substantively*. For according to Newall, picture perception is qualified by the same sort of laws that according to Metelli qualify perception of transparency in general. In particular, this holds true of the so-called *law of scission*, which Metelli describes as follows: "with the perception of transparency the stimulus color splits into two different colors, which are called the scission colors. One of the scission colors goes to the transparent layer and the other to the surface of the figure below" (Metelli 1974, p. 93). Take a transparent layer and juxtapose it on another object, let me call it the *background* object. This juxtaposition determines a certain *stimulus* color: this color is what is immediately grasped in the perception of transparency. Moreover, the stimulus color is split into two further colors, the *scission* colors, one that is ascribed to the layer itself, while the other is ascribed to the background object. Consider for instance the following figure [FIGURE 2]. In seeing it, one has a perception of transparency insofar as, first, one sees a certain hue of dark gray where the circular body overlaps a crescent-shaped body, and second, that hue is split into a lighter gray of the overlapping body and in the black of the overlapped body (incidentally, since also in this case there is foreground-background reversibility, the circular body that is lighter gray may be the overlapped body and the crescent-shaped body that is black may be the overlapping body).

⁶ Cf. Pylyshyn 2003, p. 95.

⁷ Cf. Newall 2015, p. 143. In its being remindful of Gombrich 1960 position on picture perception, the fact the account appeals to this alternation justifies Hopkins 2012 labeling it "Transparency Gombricheanism".



FIGURE 2. Fabio Matelli, *Crescent and Circle*,
Scientific American, vol. 230, 1974.

Now, comments Newall, this also happens with many pictures: when we perceive them, we experience a scission in the visible properties of its vehicle that are still ascribed to that vehicle and those that are ascribed to its subject. E.g. if you have a sepia photograph, it is seen as having a blend of yellowish tones that are splitted in tonal properties that are ascribed to its subject and in yellow hues that are still ascribed to the photographic vehicle itself. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same happens with glossy photographs.⁸

⁸ Cf. Newall 2015, pp. 145-6. Another possibly more convincing case may be found in Taylor 2015, the case of an aged depiction that has wired to yellow, yet we still see a nonyellow subject in it. I will discuss such a case later. For Newall, pictures that are not so seen are, on the one hand, *trompe l'oeil* and naturalistic pictures, in which all the visible properties of the picture are ascribed to the picture's subject, and on the other hand, those pictures whose visible properties remain all ascribed to the picture's vehicle (cf. Newall 2015, pp. 143-4). To be sure, for Newall also picture perceptions that are affected by *imbrication*, the phenomenon in which features of the picture's vehicle are attributed to the picture's subject, cannot be accounted for in terms of perception of transparency (cf. Newall 2015, pp. 148, 154). Yet he claims that his account also explains how such a phenomenon, which is very close to what is normally called *inflected* seeing-in, may occur (cf. Newall 2015, pp. 151-4).

For Newall, this account of picture perception has the merit that it may show up to what extent sense picture perception is *twofold*, as Wollheim 1980, 1987, 1998 originally maintained. As is well known, for Wollheim picture perception amounts to a *sui generis* kind of perception that he labeled *seeing-in*. Now, the qualifying feature of seeing-in is precisely its being the outcome of two pictorial *folds*, what Wollheim respectively labeled the *configurational fold* (CF), in which one perceives the picture's vehicle, and the *recognitional fold* (RF), in which one perceives the picture's subject. These folds are supposed to be inseparable; neither the perception of the vehicle in the CF nor the perception of the subject in the RF is the same as their respective perception in isolation.⁹ One may moreover say that the RF depends on the CF.¹⁰ These precisifications notwithstanding, many people have found this characterization of picture perception extremely elusive. Basically, it is not clear how those folds interact, both from the point of view of their phenomenal character (are they both *perceptual* states?) and from the point of view of their content (how can an integrated mental state come out of folds whose contents seem to mobilize many features that contradict each other, starting from the vehicle's being flat and the subject's being not such?).¹¹ Now, says Newall, if (in many cases at least) picture perception amounts to a species of perception of transparency, one may account for its twofoldness in a different way. For one may say that its twofoldness is explained by its being a perception of transparency: in it, one perceives the picture's subject through perceiving the picture's vehicle, as in any perception of transparency.¹² In a nutshell, seeing-in is, at least in many cases, a form of seeing-through.

3. The Transparency Account of Picture Perception Does Not Work Phenomenologically

Though fascinating, this account of picture perception is surely problematic. For one, Hopkins 2012 has maintained that it does not work, basically because it is unable to account for the fact that, unlike perception

⁹ Cf. Wollheim 1987, p. 46.

¹⁰ Cf. Hopkins 2008, p. 150.

¹¹ For a review of these problems cf. e.g. Hopkins 2010, 2012.

¹² Cf. Newall 2015, p. 138.

of transparency, in picture perception, while the picture's vehicle may be given under many different perspectives, the picture's subject is given just under one such perspective. This is what Wollheim originally described as a phenomenon of perceptual constancy.¹³

In 2015, Newall has tried to cope with this objection, by questioning whether this sort of perceptual constancy really occurs in picture perception.¹⁴ To be sure, I wonder whether Newall provides sufficient evidence on this concern.¹⁵ Yet my aim here is not to evaluate whether Newall satisfactorily replies to Hopkins' objection. For even if this were the case, it still seems to me that the transparency account does not capture the phenomenology of picture perception correctly.

To begin with, picture perception is not the, even knowingly illusory, modal perception of something, i.e., the picture's subject, as lying behind something else, i.e., the picture's vehicle – in Hopkins' terms, the perception that (i) represents *P* (the picture's vehicle) as at distance d_1 from one's point of view, and (ii) represents *O* (the picture's subject) as at distance d_2 from one's point of view, where $d_1 \neq d_2$.¹⁶ To begin with, the picture's subject amounts to a three-dimensional scene whose elements are differently located as to their depth in space, so that the bearer of the relevant picture perception sees them as having such different locations. As Wollheim originally grasped: "I discern something standing out in front of, or (in certain cases) receding behind, something else" (1987:46). This remark of Wollheim is often misunderstood, as if he were saying that one sees *the picture's vehicle* as (normally) standing out in front of *the picture's subject*.¹⁷ Yet for him, the terms of that spatial relation are not the vehicle and the subject, but rather elements within the picture's subject as a whole three-dimensional scene, what according to him is grasped in the RF of picture perception, as the following quotation by him clearly shows. In describ-

¹³ Cf. Wollheim 1980, pp. 215–6.

¹⁴ Cf. Newall 2015, p. 135.

¹⁵ In Voltolini 2014, I have precisely tried to show that the impression of being followed by the pictorial subject's eyes Newall appeals to in order to face Hopkins' objection is instead to be accounted for precisely in terms of such a perceptual constancy.

¹⁶ Cf. Hopkins 2012, p. 656.

¹⁷ For this alternative interpretation cf. e.g. Hyman 2006, p. 133, who however admits that also the present interpretation is viable. We will however immediately see that for Wollheim himself the present interpretation is the only correct one.

ing his own perception of Edouard Manet's *Emilie Ambre*, he reprises the aforementioned sentence by so expanding it: "my perception is twofold in that I simultaneously am visually aware of the marked surface and experience something in front of, or behind, something else – *in this case, a woman in a hat standing in front of a clump of trees*" (Wollheim 2003a, p. 3, my italics). If this is the case, moreover, the spatial relation to the picture's vehicle of the elements of the scene constituting the picture's subject is so multifarious that it cannot be perceived as if the vehicle were a transparent layer. While some elements of the picture's subject are (knowingly illusorily, as we will immediately see) seen as lying behind the picture's vehicle, some other such elements are (again, knowingly illusorily) seen as located *precisely where* the picture's vehicle is, if not even *in front* of them! Indeed, the phenomenological situation at stake as to the perception of that scene does not directly involve the picture's vehicle. Instead, on the basis of the fact that we knowingly veridically see the picture's vehicle, in merely starting in our perception of that scene from the same area in which we knowingly veridically see the vehicle, we also and *eo ipso* knowingly illusorily see the picture's subject, as expanding normally behind, yet sometimes (also) in front of, that very area.

The first option – progressive recession and colocation – is given for example in the following picture presenting an Italian village [FIGURE 3].



FIGURE 3. Anonymous, *Window with Sea View*.

In this case, as to the whole scene we knowingly illusorily see in our picture perception, we (knowingly illusorily) see the open window as being a bit further behind the location where the picture's vehicle is and is knowingly veridically seen to be, the flowers as being a bit more further behind, and the houses belonging to this Italian village as being even further behind; yet the curtains are seen as being precisely where the picture's vehicle is and is knowingly veridically seen to be. The second option (admittedly rarer than the first one) – progressive regression, colocation and progressive protrusion – is given for example in this famous picture by Pere Borrell del Caso, *Escaping Criticism* [FIGURE 4].



FIGURE 4. Pere Borrell del Caso, *Escaping Criticism*, 1874, Banco de España, Madrid.

In this case, as to the whole scene we knowingly illusorily see in our picture perception, we (knowingly illusorily) see the left leg of the boy the picture presents as behind the location where the canvas is and is knowingly veridically seen to be, whereas his torso is (knowingly illusorily) seen in that very location, while his head, his left hand and his right foot are (knowingly illusorily) seen as in front of it, in order to convey the overall impression that the boy is getting out of the picture. Both cases, in particularly the second one, show that the phenomenology of picture perception is not that of a perception of transparency. For even if one admits that there is a relation between the location where the picture's vehicle is knowingly veridically seen to be and the location where the picture's subject is knowingly illusorily seen to be, this is not a relation perceived in picture perception, as the transparency account instead predicts.

To be sure, Newall is well aware of cases belonging to the second option.¹⁸ However, he holds that they provide no counterexample to his account, for they simply reverse the transparency order. For in them it is the picture's vehicle(s surface) that is seen through (the relevant part of) the picture's subject: "in these cases, rather than seeing the subject matter through the seemingly transparent picture surface, we see the surface through the seemingly transparent subject matter" (Newall 2015, p. 151). Yet, as I have tried to show, in knowingly illusorily perceiving certain spatial relations, even in such cases the picture's vehicle is out of focus. Those spatial relations instead qualify the three-dimensional scene that constitutes the picture's subject. A part of the scene constituting the picture's subject is knowingly illusorily seen before some other of its parts, both those which are ascribed a location that coincides with that in which the picture's vehicle is knowingly veridically seen to be and those which are ascribed a location behind. If we come back to *Escaping Criticism*, what is (knowingly illusorily) seen behind (amodally, by the way) the boy's left hand is a frame *that belongs to the picture's subject, qua* the sort of window from which the boy tries to get out, not the frame of the picture's vehicle (we may well take that vehicle as frameless)!

Yet differences in phenomenology between picture perception and perception of transparency do not end here, as we will now see. As a con-

¹⁸ Cf. Newall 2015, pp. 134, 150-1.

sequence of its abiding by the law of scission, perception of transparency is such that in it one immediately perceives a blend, the stimulus color, which depends on the colors that the transparent layer and the background object respectively possess. Actually, these are the very scission colors; as Metelli says, “when a pair of scission colors are mixed, they re-create the stimulus color” (1974, p. 93). Indeed, if such colors change, then the transparency effect changes as well. On the one hand, for example, the darker is the color of the background object, the darker grey is the stimulus color; the lighter is the former, the lighter gray is the latter.¹⁹ On the other hand, for example, the transparency effect is increased when the difference between the dark and light gray in the colors of the central regions belonging to the transparent layer is increased as well.²⁰

Yet picture perception hardly exhibits such a dependence. Let us accept for argument’s sake that the colors the picture’s vehicle is ascribed allegedly in virtue of the scission operation determine the colors the vehicle has before such an operation.²¹ Yet the colors the picture’s subject is ascribed allegedly in virtue of the scission operation do not determine the colors that one sees in the picture’s vehicle before that operation. This is the moral one can draw from Wollheim’s reflections on Henry Matisse’s *The Green Stripe*: “When Matisse painted a stroke of green down his wife’s face, he was not representing a woman who had a green line down her face” (Wollheim 2003b, p. 143). Indeed in that painting, Madame Matisse is not seen as a sort of alien having such a stripe on her face, but is seen as having the different colors of her face’s elements (say, the fleshy color of her front, the black colors of her conjoining eyebrows, the fleshy color again of her nose). Yet the corresponding region of its vehicle is seen overall green. One may strengthen this example by pointing to other similar and perhaps more evident cases. As Wittgenstein remarked, in visually facing a black and white photo of a boy, we do not see a black-and-white exotic individual, but rather a normal fleshy-colored human being.²²

¹⁹ Cf. Metelli 1974, pp. 95, 98.

²⁰ Cf. Metelli 1974, pp. 96, 98.

²¹ This is however not to be taken for granted. For seeing the picture’s vehicle within a picture perception may alter the colors that it is seen to have when it is seen in isolation in such a way that there is no dependence of the former colors on the latter ones.

²² Cf. Wittgenstein 1977, III § 117.

To be sure, one might disagree on that in seeing the Matisse painting, an alien who has a green line down her face is not somehow visually present, just as one may reply that in seeing a black and white picture of persons, one is not seeing them as having fleshy colors, but rather as having different hues of gray.²³ In actual fact, however, Newall would hardly endorse that disagreement: “I take it that a sepia-toned photograph, despite its colouration, will usually *not* occasion the experience of yellowish subject matter” (Newall 2015, p. 145). Quite reasonably, I would say, from his point of view. For if that were the case, on behalf of the transparency account one would be forced to say that, when a picture’s vehicle changes its colors because, say, of some physical process, we see its subject as changing its colors as well. Yet this is hardly the case. If by getting older a black and white photo of the Eifel Tower turns into a sepia one, we do not see its subject as changing its colors as well.

A third case phenomenologically problematic for the transparency account obtains when an ordinary perception of transparency somehow interacts with a picture perception. This situation occurs when a transparent layer is also a picture of a subject different from its background object, as in this case of glasses that present human silhouettes different from the portions of the table that are respectively seen through the glasses themselves [FIGURE 5].



FIGURE 5. Anonymous, *Two Glasses*,
<http://itsokayweresisters.wordpress.com>.

²³ Cf. Nanay 2016, pp. 48-9, 56-7, 63.

For Newall, this is only a case of a *threefold* rather than a twofold perception, in which one first sees (a), the picture's vehicle (a glass), then *in the vehicle* she sees (b), the picture's subject (a human silhouette), and finally, through the vehicle itself, *in that subject* she sees (c), a further background object (a certain portion of the table seen through that glass).²⁴

Yet in this situation, this double seeing-in account again fails to grasp the phenomenology of the case. Granted, it perfectly fits another case that as a matter of fact Newall himself recalls and that, *pace* Newall himself,²⁵ may legitimately be considered a case of threefold seeing-in: namely, a case of *nested* seeing-in. In such a case, one indeed sees a second-order picture's subject in a nested picture that belongs to the first-order subject seen, along with other things, in the nesting picture's overall vehicle. For instance in Edgar Degas' *Sulking*, we see a woman and a man standing in front of a picture in which one can see additional items (namely, many racing horses).

Yet in our case, the further background object (c) is (knowingly veridically) seen to lie behind the picture's transparent vehicle (a); it would be still so seen even if that vehicle were not the physical basis of a picture of something else, but just a transparent object like any other (i.e., if it were something that bears no marks having a pictorial reading). Thus on the one hand, the picture's subject (b) is seen (knowingly illusorily) as constituting a three-dimensional scene starting exactly from where (a) lies, hence as lying partly where the picture's vehicle (a) is and partly where the background object (c) is, while on the other hand, (c) is not seen in that picture's subject (b), it is merely seen through (a); in this respect, the marks that feature (b) just count as a bunch of opaque dots scattered on (a) that weaken (a)'s transparency effect, just as in a dirty window pane. In a nutshell, phenomenologically speaking, the fact that an object counts as a transparent layer for a background object and the fact that that very object counts as a picture that presents another subject point towards different directions.

Let me take stock. Although the list of problematic cases may not have been already exhausted, I think that the above three cases – differences in the perception of spatial depth-involving relations affecting the

²⁴ Cf. Newall 2015, p. 149.

²⁵ Cf. Newall 2015, p. 150.

picture's subject that do not pass through the perception of the picture's vehicle; independence of the perception of the pictorial elements from the perception of the picture's vehicle taken in isolation; independence of the perception of the background object from the perception of a picture's subject additionally seen in a transparent yet pictorial layer – abundantly show that the phenomenology of picture perception is not an instance of a perception of transparency of the sort Metelli appealed to, as Newall instead believes. In a slogan, if picture perception is (at least a form of) seeing-in as Wollheim repeatedly said, seeing-in is no seeing-through.

4. Perception of Transparency Does Not Provide Sufficient Conditions for Picture Perception

Yet there is a fourth case that shows not only that the transparency account does not capture the phenomenology of picture perception correctly, but also that perception of transparency does not provide sufficient conditions for picture perception. Let us go back to the Metelli paradigmatic case that is encharged to show that physical transparency is not a necessary condition for perception of transparency. In that case, as we saw before, we modally see a spiral as lying behind a triangular body, even if that perception is not veridical for the spiral does not so lie. Yet in this case what we really see as a whole is a *picture* that presents a scene involving physical transparency as its subject.²⁶ In that picture, in virtue of (knowingly veridically) seeing its vehicle, we grasp its subject, a certain three-dimensional scene, in which we further modally (yet knowingly illusorily) see a certain element of that scene, the spiral, as lying behind another element of the scene, the triangular body. In other terms, the transparency effect that occurs in such a case perceptually concerns just the elements in picture perception that constitute the picture's subject, but not the picture perception as a whole that also comprises one's seeing the picture's vehicle. In Wollheim's terms, the transparency effect at stake here occurs in the recognitional fold (RF) of picture perception but not in its configurational fold (CF), which along with the RF determines picture perception as a

²⁶ Casati 2009, p. 330 describes such cases as cases of *pictorial* transparency. See also Sayim and Cavanagh 2011, p. 681.

whole. As a consequence, once again, perception of transparency does not capture the phenomenology of picture perception as a whole. For one's entertaining a perception of transparency in the Metelli paradigmatic case is included in an overall picture perception that comprises not only the transparency effect, but also one's seeing the vehicle itself of the picture that prompts such an effect. To better see this point, just consider how it would make a phenomenological difference to be firstly deluded by the Metelli paradigmatic case as if it worked as a *trompe l'oeil*, and to secondly realize that it is a picture. We would still grasp its transparency effect, but we would also see the vehicle that originally escaped our perceptual awareness. Firstly, we would have a *delusion* of physical transparency, as when we seem to see as transparent an object that is not such. Yet secondly, once we realized that we were facing a picture, we would have perception of transparency without physical transparency precisely because that perception would be embedded in a picture perception. Thus as a further result, all this shows that perception of transparency does not suffice for picture perception, for it is at most an element that figures within it.

Of course, one might wonder whether, over and above the cases Metelli pointed out, there are other cases of perceptual transparency without physical transparency that are not perception of pictures as a whole. For instance, Newall holds that shadows are also perceived as transparent.²⁷ In actual fact, it is very controversial whether shadows elicit a perception of transparency.²⁸ Even if this were the case, however, we must recall that, as we know from Plato onwards, in most cases at least shadows are again a case of pictures (transparent pictures, in Walton's account).²⁹ Or one may have a mere perception of transparency in cases of texture transparency, as in the following example by Cavanagh and Takeo Watanabe [FIGURE 6] that Newall himself reports, when dotted lines in one direction are over-

²⁷ Cf. Newall 2015, p. 137. Newall refers for this thesis to Cavanagh 2005. The thesis surely traces back to Arnheim 1974, pp. 309-10.

²⁸ For a very convincing denial of the thesis, cf. Casati 2009.

²⁹ It is however hard to allow a pictorial form of transparency for shadows. For what is seen in a shadow is a three-dimensional scene whose main element *protrudes* from its background, as is shown by the fact that once one draws the boundary of a shadow that elicits this emergence, the shadow is no longer seen as such (cf. Casati 2009). And we have seen that pictures whose subject is characterized by such a protrusion hardly elicit a perception of transparency.

lapped by dotted lines in another direction.³⁰

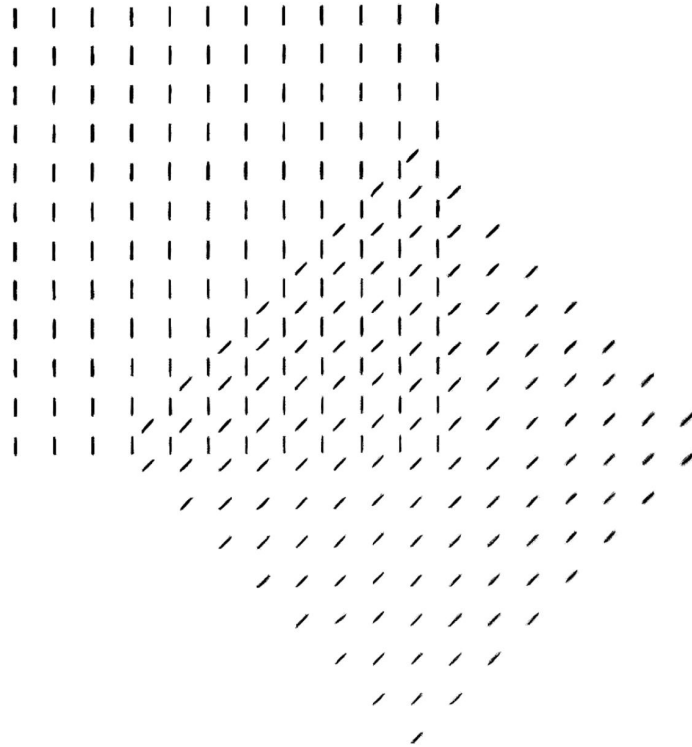


FIGURE 6. Takeo Watanabe and Patrick Cavanagh,
Two Square Textures, *Perception*, vol. 25, 1996.

Yet once again, this is a case of an overall perception of an admittedly abstract picture that yet displays seeing-in. The transparency effect indeed occurs in the RF of that perception as featuring a spatial depth-involving relation among the elements constituting that picture's subject.³¹ All in all, therefore, as far as I can see, there is no case of a mere perception of transparency to which picture perception may be equated that is not again embedded in a picture perception.

³⁰ Cf. Newall 2015, p. 140. Newall's reference is to Watanabe and Cavanagh 1996.

³¹ In 1987, p. 62, Wollheim allows for seeing-in experiences of abstract pictures. Newall himself 2015, p. 137 agrees with him on this point. See also Gaiger 2008, pp. 61-2.

5. A Provisional Moral

So far, I hope to have shown that interpreting picture perception as a species of perception of transparency does not work. Does this show that we have to altogether reject the transparency account of picture perception? Not quite. In the course of this scrutiny, we have seen that there are at least two elements in this account that any good account of picture perception must take into consideration.

First, there definitely is a nonveridicality element in picture perception. The transparency account holds that this nonveridicality amounts to the fact that we modally see the picture's subject as lying behind the picture's vehicle, but this has turned out not to be correct. Instead, what seems to be correct is that we see the picture's subject as lying in a space that begins where also the vehicle is located while however stretching in both directions – normally just in a receding direction, but sometimes also in a protruding direction. As we however knowingly veridically also see the vehicle to be located in a certain area of that space, not only that way of seeing the subject as so located is nonveridical, but we also know that this is the case. If we frame the perception of the picture's subject in Wollheimian terms, we can say that the RF of picture perception consists in the knowingly illusory perception of the picture's vehicle as the picture's subject,³² as if the latter were located in the same space as the former, by merely partly (seemingly) sharing the same locations in that space.

Second, in virtue of the law of scission, one may describe the transparency effect as the *transfiguration* of the stimulus color into the scission colors of the transparent layer and of the background object respectively, since the former color is a blend of the latter ones. Now, we have seen that, *pace* Newall, no such effect occurs in picture perception. Yet what sounds correct of the transparency account is that, once grasped in a picture perception, the picture's vehicle does undergo a transfiguration insofar as it is no longer perceived as it is perceived when it is grasped in isolation, as a mere physical object among others having no pictorial value. Indeed, in picture perception the picture's vehicle must be perceived in such a way that allows the picture's subject to perceptually *emerge* precisely in terms

³² As Levinson 1998, p. 229 originally suggested. I have exploited and expanded this suggestion in my Voltolini 2015, chap. 6.

of the above knowingly illusory perception. As a result, in such a perception also the picture's subject undergoes a transfiguration: once grasped in a pictorial perception, the picture's subject is no longer perceived as it is when it is perceived face-to-face.

This last reflection brings me to the following, final, remarks. First of all, Wollheim himself presumably had this sort of transfiguration in mind when he said, as we have seen before, that the CF and the RF of the distinctive seeing-in experience picture perception amounts to are inseparable. Moreover, that transfiguration shows that both Gombrich and Wollheim were right when they respectively said that vehicle perception and picture perception are alternate and that vehicle perception and subject perception are inseparable. For, as Newall himself agrees on, in defending that alternation, Gombrich had in mind the perception of the vehicle in isolation; whereas, in stressing that inseparability, Wollheim had in mind the perception of a *transfigured* vehicle. The former perception is definitely incompatible with picture perception: either one perceives the vehicle in isolation or one has a picture perception. Yet the latter perception is just a component of picture perception along with the perception of the picture's subject. Thus, in this respect at least, Gombricheanism and Wollheimianism as to picture perception can be taken to be compatible.³³ This was somehow acknowledged by Wollheim himself when he said "seeing *y* [the picture's subject] in *x* may rest upon seeing *x* as *y* [a pictorial representation], but not for the same values of the variable *y*" (Wollheim 1980, p. 226).³⁴

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³⁴ This paper has been presented at the workshop *The Perception of Transparency and the Transparency of Perception*, Department of Languages, University of Turin, March 12-13 2016, Turin, and at the *ESA 2016 Conference*, Facultad de Filosofía, University of Barcelona, June 8-10 2016, Barcelona. I thank all the participants for their useful questions. I also thank both Roberto Casati and Michael Newall himself for their precious comments to a previous version of this paper.

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“Ruin Porn” and the Change in Function of Ruined Architecture: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I describe the ruins of Detroit, Michigan and the aesthetic activities (sometimes called “ruin porn”) they have inspired. I point out that Detroit’s ruins, and the surge of interest accompanying them, fit within the longstanding tradition of interest in ruins in general, and I present two perspectives—one supportive, one critical—on this development in the city’s landscape. Then I attempt to resolve these conflicting perspectives by exploring how ruins like these can acquire new value, and, subsequently, what we should do about the structures themselves.

I argue that our understanding of ruins like Detroit’s can be productively influenced by knowledge about the functions of these sites and the way those functions can shift. I enlist the work of philosophers, especially Allen Carlson and Glenn Parsons, in making these claims. Ultimately, I maintain that when the function of a site changes, possibilities for aesthetic gratification and exploration creep in along with the ruination (and perhaps this has always been true). Users of ruins may themselves occasion a change in a ruin’s function. Aesthetic activity prompted by this change of circumstances may not be as ethically problematic as the “ruin porn” term implies. But the new function a structure acquires as a result of its ruination must be measured against other associations the structure retains, and our interest in such ruins, and the photos we take of them, are “pornographic” if they underscore pleasure in the causes of devastation. However, if a structure does acquire new status as a culturally or aesthetically significant ruin, this change effectively generates a new value, and may justify a new life, for the damaged building.

Detroit, Michigan has become notorious in recent decades for its ruins. The city has faced a number of political, social, and financial difficulties over the past century and declared bankruptcy in 2013. Among its problems: over 70,000 ruined or derelict structures requiring either renovation or demolition. These have included houses, schools, onetime busi-

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nesses, and two of the now most-famous ruins in the world, former auto-manufacturing site the Packard Plant (at around 35 acres, one of the largest ruined sites in North America) and defunct train station Michigan Central [FIGURE 1]. Over the years, these buildings have attracted artists and photographers, and are now featured in books such as Camilo José Vergara’s *American Ruins*, Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre’s *The Ruins of Detroit*, Andrew Moore’s *Detroit Disassembled*, and Julia Reyes Taubman’s *Detroit: 138 Square Miles*.



FIGURE 1. Tanya Whitehouse, *Michigan Central, Detroit, Michigan*.

These sites and their images reflect and generate different interests, including aesthetic interest, but many observers, including residents of Detroit, find these interests appalling or irritating, calling some of the video and photographic evidence of decay “ruin porn.”

What are these ruins, and which interpretation of this built environment is best, at least at this point in time? What life do these buildings

currently have? Are images of the ruined sites pornographic? What function, if any, does a ruined building have? Should these ruined buildings be repurposed, if they can be?

I explore questions like these in this paper. I focus on Detroit's ruins in particular because they are among our most well-known contemporary urban ruins in North America, and because they prompt conflicting ethical and aesthetic responses I hope to reconcile. Much of what I say can apply to other, similarly ruined sites. In Part I, I recount some of the probably timeless human reactions to ruined structures and briefly note that responses to ruined sections of Detroit's landscape fit within this tradition. Then I explain the critical reaction to this interest and the genesis of the "ruin porn" charge. I point out there is a broadly "aesthetic" conception of the ruins, and a broadly "ethical" conception, and the two conflict with one another. In Part II, I advance a possible solution to this conflict. First, I explain aspects of the selected-effects theory of function developed in Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson's *Functional Beauty*. I evaluate some details of their discussion of the built environment, including their account of ruins. Parsons and Carlson argue that buildings can take on new functions over time, due to the way they are used. I point out ruins do this as well, taking on new functions, often aesthetic functions, as people visit them, make use of them in new and creative ways, and create art based on them. Ruination can lead to aesthetic engagement so considerable that it constitutes a new function or phase in the life of a ruined structure. I claim that if this new "ruin function" is of sufficient aesthetic interest, it can confer a new value on the sites that have it, and I offer a pro tanto principle (following Berys Gaut's) to defend this idea. This, too, is a process that is probably as old as aesthetic interest in ruins; it is why, in my view, we now value the formerly functioning Roman Colosseum in its ruined state. However, I point out our interest in either ruins or creative work based on them is arguably problematic if it is motivated solely by pleasure in the causes of destruction itself. Finally, I note that the new value ruins may gain can justify their preservation or re-use, though I do not suggest what form this preservation or re-use might take.

I begin with a look at what Rose Macaulay called "this strange human reaction to decay" (1966, p. xv).

I.

As is well-known, interest in ruins is not new, though there is disagreement about when it may have started.¹ People have enjoyed the prospect of crumbling buildings and have made them the subject of their art for at least several hundred years. As early as 1491, according to Paul Zucker, someone anonymously completed a drawing of the Forum of Nerva (1968, p. 25). The twentieth century bears the dubious distinction of creating "more ruins than ever before," according to Tim Edensor (2005, p. 17).² But much of the environment that we celebrate, and include in our cultural heritage, is ruined; as Robert Ginsberg notes, a tidied-up version of Angkor Wat appears on the Cambodian flag (2004, p. 120).

There are numerous ways of understanding this fascination. I will indicate just a few common ways of understanding ruined sites, including

¹ Neither is interest in visiting the scenes of devastation, or what is now called "dark" or "disaster" tourism. "Ruin porn" is not the only term for the ethically contested practice of photographing certain places that have sustained damage or experienced tragedy or conflict. Others include "disaster porn" and "war porn." To take one example: the many photographs (taken for many different reasons) of Berlin's ruination in the aftermath of World War II.

² See also Elyse A. Gonzales:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, nations around the world have been plagued by terrorist acts, economic chaos, ecological distress, and political instability, among other problems... Literal ruins seem to have sprung up overnight in the United States and Europe, as repeatedly reported in the *New York Times*, with whole neighborhoods and housing developments left abandoned. (In Ireland these vacated sites are commonly known by the evocative name of "ghost estates.") They have either been foreclosed upon or homeowners have simply walked away from them, unable to make mortgage payments. New, never-sold (or even completed) residences, for which the financial backing fell through or the buyers never appeared, are yet another reason for these ghostly communities (2013, pp. 18-19).

the ways that ruins can inspire thought and creative activity, as well as how they can be used, once ruined. Ruins may be appreciated for their formal or aesthetic attributes as well as for the activities they make possible. First, though, I will say what I mean by "ruins." For the purposes of this paper, I use the term very broadly, to refer to structures that have been abandoned and have sustained some degree of damage or neglect, and are no longer being used for their intended purposes.³



FIGURE 2. Tanya Whitehouse, *Mill City Museum*,
Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Ruins mark the passage of time or empire; they are remnants of the past or *memento mori*. They evoke decay, impermanence, and memory, humanity's achievements as well as its hubris, and what is now gone. Yet they also signal endurance and point toward the future, for they can outlast their communities and the people who originally constructed and used them. Ruined structures can survive indefinitely and, in their ruination, they can

³ Obviously there is much more to say about what makes a structure a ruin and how the various ruin types differ from one another (for example, Tim Edensor [2005] and Dora Apel [2015] provide reasons to think contemporary industrial ruins differ significantly from the ruins of the ancient world), though I do not explore these issues here.

suggest regeneration or new future uses. (That future may appear hopeful or horrifying, and ruins can reflect this, too.) They can memorialize the sites of important incidents or call attention to the cause of their own ruination, as St. Boniface Cathedral in Winnipeg, Manitoba and the Mill City Museum in Minneapolis, Minnesota make us consider the fires that were responsible, not so long ago, for the current shapes of their shells [FIGURE 2]. Ruins prompt imaginative efforts, including the effort to imagine what a structure looked like when whole. They can be intriguing, frightening, distressing, or energizing; either sublime, beautiful, or picturesque by turn; they can be paradoxical, attractive and repellent at the same time, a juxtaposition reflected in titles of works that discuss them: *Irresistible Decay* (borrowed from Walter Benjamin [1998, p. 178]), *Ruin Lust, Beautiful Terrible Ruins*. Notably, they can make us think of the connection between nature and the built environment, and the ways the two coexist, or the way one may encroach on the other. Without human activity, ruination arguably does not exist. Russell A. Berman claims "Nature and time generate ruins only where human activity is involved... Ruin is a result of culture, not of nature" (2010, pp. 105-106). And as Robert Ginsberg says, ruination can open up space for the appreciation of purely formal qualities:

The death of function in the ruin spells the life of form. Forms, when freed, spring forth in attention. Windows soar as shapes in former walls. They no longer take panes to demarcate the interior from the exterior. Indifferent to purpose, the window pursues its archness, accentuated by absence of glazing and frame. The sky fulfills its shape... The ruin is a purifier of form (2004, p. 15).

Zucker notes this as well, writing "Functional values which the ruin might have possessed originally are of even less value in its aesthetic interpretation" (1968, p. 2).

Dora Apel points out attention to ruins may be influenced by our anxieties about decline, claiming this anxiety "feeds an enormous appetite for ruin imagery" (2015, p. 9). Some ruins acquire their power just because they were not supposed to be, and the very accident of their existence gives them interest. Oddly, ruins can also call to mind a comparison that can be drawn between buildings and human beings, for the characteristics of one can loosely be said to apply to the other. Our built structures house and

influence human beings, and are shaped by them in turn. Ruins can occasion self-identification, as in this example from W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*: "I felt that the decrepit state of these once magnificent buildings, with their broken gutters, walls blackened by rainwater, crumbling plaster revealing the coarse masonry beneath it, windows boarded up or clad with corrugated iron, precisely reflected my own state of mind" (quoted in Dillon, 2014, p. 27). They have been both subject and inspiration for scholarly activity as well as art spanning various media. And they famously caused people to deliberately construct their own sham ruins, such as the follies of the eighteenth century.

Second, ruins can generate new uses of the built environment. "When purpose has fled," Ginsberg writes, "anarchy marches in" (2004, p. 33). Ruins give us a chance to engage with our environments in ways we ordinarily do not. Our daily experience of the built environment can be highly constrained by conventions related to the purposes of the structures around us, so when the chance arises to use them in especially non-functional ways, we may find this an interesting respite from mundane activities. A formerly occupied, busy, purposeful place can be compelling in its abandonment. A ruined or abandoned site is no longer the scene of any prescribed activity and may invite in those otherwise forbidden to enter. Some people wish to visit places they are not supposed to go, to do things they do not usually do. (This is reflected in the subheading of the "Abandoned Berlin" website: "If it's verboten it's got to be fun." And consider what we might do if given the run of a completely deserted airport and its runways, or an abandoned interstate no longer cluttered with cars.) New possibilities for a structure's use can be exciting and intriguing. Abandoned or ruined sites invite exploration and adventure (as well as mischief); they have been the backdrop for concerts, raves, photography, art-making, and serve as secret meeting-places. Of being in a ruin, Denis Diderot writes, "I'm freer, more alone, more myself, closer to myself. It's there that I call out to my friend... it's there that we'd enjoy ourselves without anxiety, without witnesses, without intruders, without those jealous of us. It's there that I probe my own heart; it's there that I interrogate hers, that I take alarm and reassure myself" (quoted in Hell

& Schönle, 2010, p. 8).⁴ Ruins are frequently mentioned in discussions of urban exploration or "urbex" movements. (The connection is apparent in the Japanese term "*haikyo*," which denotes both ruins and urban exploration.) Ruins also invite travel. Thousands of people trek to Rome and Athens, to the Gila Cliff Dwellings and Mesa Verde. Such sites are no longer what they were. They are not functional as we usually think of that attribute of the built environment. The possibilities for a site idling in the absence of active use are captured in Robert Ginsberg's remark: "The ruin is an invitation to an adventure in aesthetics" (2004, p. xx).

Thus, when a ruin's function has been suspended, our ways of using the structure may change in ways that can be categorized as creative (or illegal). I will explore the philosophical implications of this shift, below.

Ruins invite their own questions and standards for evaluation, too. Are ruins more valuable as ruins, or aesthetic objects, if they occur naturally, or are artificial ruins just as valuable? Can ruins be created in an instant, or must a certain amount of time transpire before they are really ruined? Are the reasons for ruination relevant to our appreciation? How much, if anything, do we have to know about the genesis or uses of the ruined structures to appraise them? How much, if any, of their functions do they maintain? Aside from their aesthetic properties, in what ways do contemporary industrial ruins differ from classical ruins, if they do? Should we clean ruins—removing the plants that sprout through them—or stabilize them, so they can endure?⁵ Some of them are in a transitional state; they could be repaired or re-used, or they could head further into the gloaming. Should we repurpose them, or preserve them as ruins? Or should they crumble without our interference? And once they crumble past a certain point, are they even ruins anymore?

Finally, ruins are also unique among our human creations in that damage or abandonment of the built environment does not necessarily destroy opportunities for aesthetic experience. Instead, it can create them. Shattered sculptures from many epochs are an established part of our heritage (and can be understood as ruins themselves), but it is the shattered

⁴ Diderot also says a ruin "delivers us up to our inclinations."

⁵ Macaulay recounts the range of unhappy reactions to the scouring the Colosseum received, including concern that the removal of plants further damaged the ruin as well as artists' inspirations (1966, pp. 201-203).

or abandoned fragments of the built environment that have reliably resulted in aesthetic engagement. Structures can become more interesting or appealing in their ruination, and this is not usually the case for other types of art or aesthetic objects. Both Macaulay and Ginsberg cite Charles Dickens's reaction to the Colosseum: "Never, in its bloodiest prime, can the sight of the gigantic Colosseum, full and running over with the lustiest life, have moved one heart as it must move all who look upon it now, a ruin. God be thanked: a ruin" (Macaulay, 1966, p. 200; Ginsberg, 2004, p. 117). Elizabeth Scarbrough says of the Hudson River's Bannerman Castle:

Many visitors believe the castle is more beautiful in its ruined form than it was when it was completed. This is evidenced by the amount and type of tourism the castle now serves. Several companies run "artistic" tours of Pollepel Island (where the castle is located), providing opportunities to take photographs at dusk and dawn to maximize the effect. Bannerman Castle has appeared in nearly every book about American ruins and has inspired countless professional photographers, painters, advertisers (who have used the structure in high fashion shoots), and movies (for example, Michael Bay's *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*).

Bannerman Castle shows us that something can be seen as more valuable, or at least more aesthetically valuable, in its ruined form. This implies that, at least sometimes, what we are valuing is not the original architectural structure but rather something that emerges once that structure is lost. This is partially evidenced by the fact that the ruined structure has spurred much more artistic production than the architectural structure (2014, p. 447).

Yet this is puzzling, for ruins are usually created by devastating or undesirable circumstances—fires, natural disasters, acts of war, anarchic self-expression or vandalism, or simple neglect and lack of resources. How is it that often disastrous damage to our surroundings prompts us to reconfigure these sites in often essentially positive aesthetic ways? There is no easy answer to this question, but the fact remains that many of our reactions to ruins can be described as aesthetic as well as positive, even though the incident that created the ruin might be neither. In many of these responses to ruins, one can discern an interest in the environment as such,

and this use or outlook can be focused on the present or future as much as the past.

Attention to the ruins of Detroit is certainly in keeping with many of these common responses to ruins. This is apparent in some of the works that figure in discussions of "ruin porn" of the city. For example, Vergara's work calls attention to the passage of time. Detroit's buildings can prompt reflection about the passing of empires (if one wishes to go that far—Vergara does), Fordism, industrial decline, and the uncertainty on the horizon for cities like Detroit—"your town tomorrow," as its one-time mayor Coleman Young reminds us in his autobiography, *Hard Stuff*.⁶ For some viewers, the ruins embody our ideas of a dystopian future. Some of the photos in *The Ruins of Detroit* and *Detroit Disassembled* can also invoke shock and consternation at the extent of the damage to a once-prosperous major North American city. They call to mind the meaning of the word "ruin" itself—falling—and the reasons the city fell into decline.

Moore's photographs invoke regeneration and the connection between ruins and nature. He cites the peculiarly apt motto of the often-burning city, *Speramus Meliora; Resurget Cineribus* ("We hope for better things; it will arise from the ashes"). He sees "Janus-faced nature" at work in the "disassembly" of the built environment, describing the literal embodiment of this in one of his photographs, in which trees sprout from a pile of abandoned books: "Amid a dense matting of decayed and burned books, a grove of birch trees grows from richly rotting words" (2010, p. 119). He also notes the tourism resulting from the ruins: "it's not surprising that the same people who originally settled Detroit have now returned to gaze in awe upon it. As Americans have gone to Europe for generations to visit its castles and coliseums, it is now the Europeans who come to Detroit to tour our ruins" (*ibid.*). Mark Binelli, a native of the city, notes he has encountered visitors from France and Germany at the Packard Plant, including a German college student who told him "I came to see the end of the world!" (2012, p. 281)⁷

⁶ Apel uses this phrase as the heading to the conclusion of her book. In the conclusion, she writes: "Detroit has become only the most extreme example of what is happening in the nation's declining cities" (2015, p. 154).

⁷ A couple of pages later, Binelli alludes to the unfortunate provenance of the German term "ruinenwert," which, he says, comes to us courtesy of Albert Speer, planner of future

Not just European visitors (though Binelli notes many are interested in Detroit), but people from various different countries.⁸ Tourism to the ruins may have increased following the city's bankruptcy filing.⁹ Locals such as Jesse Welter offer tours of the sites, and Binelli muses, "If the Packard, Michigan Central, and a few other iconic structures were stabilized enough for safety purposes, official guided tours would immediately become one of the most popular tourist activities in the city" (2012, p. 280).

And people have certainly used Detroit's ruins in a manner that reflects the suspension of their functions. In buildings once intended for something else, people have married, set up fashion shoots and art installations, and filmed music videos and documentaries. As the Packard Plant and Michigan Central slid further into ruination toward the close of the last century, they were photographed innumerable times; they were tagged with the graffiti that so often appears around often unoccupied sites; and the Packard Plant was the site of a number of near-dark raves in the 1990s. In August of 2015, a photographer brought a tiger to the Packard, to widespread amusement as well as annoyance, and later that year, an authorized tour of the plant sold out in minutes, demonstrating what tour guide Kari Smith called "intense interest" in the site (Reindl, 2015). Julia Reyes Taubman notes, "When I first saw the Packard plant, I couldn't understand why everyone wasn't talking about it every minute of every day" (Paumgarten, 2011). (Though the Packard Plant has just as often been the site of illegal activity: crime, fire, tourists to the ruins robbed of their cameras, and scrappers making off with sections of the property.)

Some artists have made the move to Detroit specifically because of the attractions of its unusual ruined buildings. Banksy and Matthew Barney have done work in the city, and others make art that either takes advantage of the ruination or alludes to it in some way.

ruins and executor of various Nazi architectural projects.

⁸ Binelli says this interest seems especially keen among those "from Germany, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands." "Every Detroiter I know who has ever photographed an abandoned building and possesses any kind of Web presence has been contacted by strangers from Copenhagen, Rotterdam, Paris, or Berlin, asking about the best way to sneak into the old train station or offering to pay for a local tour" (2012, p. 274).

⁹ See Alana Semuels (2013), 'Detroit's abandoned buildings draw tourists instead of developers', *The Los Angeles Times*, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-detroit-ruin-tours-20131226-story.html>

The ruins have also raised questions about what should be done with them, and in Detroit, these suggestions have varied widely. Many of the blighted buildings are being razed, but it is unclear what the future holds for some structures, such as Michigan Central. Some argue for their destruction; others hope at last some of the buildings can be revitalized; and a few observers, including Vergara and Taubman, have said some of the ruins should stay the way they are, or crumble without our interference. Vergara (1995) suggested the downtown skyscrapers become a ruins park—an American Acropolis (an idea met with outrage from some Detroiters). Taubman, who took 35,000 photos of the city, said in *Vogue* of her own work: "If the book is 'about' anything it's about these buildings as monuments. No one should tear these buildings down, but no one should rehabilitate them, either," and tells Elmore Leonard and Nick Paumgarten of her plans to write "Rust in Peace" in copies of her book distributed at an art opening (Paumgarten, 2011; Loos, 2011; Apel, 2015, p. 92).

But a number of Detroit's residents scoff at these developments. Some of them see the structures as symbols of Detroit's problems. Macaulay notes that residents of Rome hardly marveled at the ruined husks of buildings surrounding them, claiming they "hated the very word ruin" (1966, p. 166). Some residents of Detroit view their structures in the same way and are dismissive of efforts to recontextualize or view these places as anything other than what they are—blighted, burned, or neglected real estate. The ruins exist for a number of unfortunate reasons, in a city that has struggled with racism, poverty, inadequate public services, and has, in one way or another, often been tough on its structures. Dora Apel writes:

In 2007 nearly one hundred homes were foreclosed upon every day, with an estimated two thousand people moving out of the city each month. Crowds grew unruly when they could not get into overcrowded Cobo Hall job fairs, and ten thousand people lined up on the first day when one of the city's casinos advertised for new workers. For decades, more buildings have been demolished than built in Detroit, a practice of "unbuilding" that has become the city's primary form of architectural activity. The average price of homes dropped from \$97,900 in 2003 to \$12,400 in 2009. The banks are also responsible for "zombie" properties, affecting thousands of people in Detroit and some three hundred thousand nationwide. These are

created when banks start foreclosure proceedings but then decide not to finish the foreclosure process, walking away from vacant homes whose owners they have forced out... In 2014 the Detroit Blight Removal Task Force found that 84,641 homes and buildings across Detroit, 30 percent of the total stock, are dilapidated or heading that way, with 114,000 vacant lots and 559 big empty industrial buildings (2015, p. 40).¹⁰

Detroit also has one of the highest fire rates in the United States, and has been known as much for arson and Devil's Night as its ruins. Detroit Fire Department arson investigator Lieutenant Joe Crandall said of the arson, "Nothing burns like Detroit" (Kurth, 2015). Binelli reports that "Highland Park and Detroit get so many fires, of such spectacular variety, that firefighters from around the country—Boston, Compton, Washington, D.C.—make pilgrimages here" (2012, p. 191). Though Devil's Night has been reconceived as Angel's Night, with community patrols meant to curb the conflagrations, the city's overall number of fires is still astonishingly high. The "unbuilding," and the fires, have led to massive gaps in neighborhood blocks.

Finally, the structures pose various hazards, including fire hazards, to their visitors. In Brian Kaufman's documentary *Packard: The Last Shift*, Dan McNamara of the Detroit Fire Fighters Association says of the site: "You know, I know that people throughout the world think that this is really incredible, and it's art, and we can appreciate that, but people also have to understand that it's an immediate and imminent threat to public safety" (Kaufman, 2014).

To some who closely consider what has been happening for decades in Detroit, the photos of its beleaguered buildings are so much "ruin porn."

Just as interest in Detroit's ruins reflects, in my view, a longstanding interest in ruins in general, so the photographs of Detroit's landscape reflect a longstanding tendency to photograph them. "Almost as soon as there was photography," Dillon writes, "there were photographs of ruins" (2014, p. 28).¹¹ But the name given to at least some of the photographs

¹⁰ Apel describes this task force: "established by the Obama administration following the city's bankruptcy, [it] is the most elaborate survey of the city, performed neighborhood by neighborhood" (2015, p. 40).

¹¹ See also Charles Merewether's discussion of photography in "Traces of Loss" in *Ir-*

of Detroit reflects the idea that taking pictures of these places is, in some way, wrong.

The term "ruin porn" may have been used first by James Griffioen in an interview with *Vice*. Griffioen, a resident of Detroit who has photographed the structures himself, brought it up while describing his frustrations with visiting journalists and photographers:

"At first, you're really flattered by it, like, 'Whoa, these professional guys are interested in what I have to say and show them.' But you get worn down trying to show them all the different sides of the city, then watching them go back and write the same story as everyone else. The photographers are the worst. Basically the only thing they're interested in shooting is ruin porn" (Morton, 2009).¹²

In "Detroitism," John Patrick Leary identifies central characteristics of ruin porn: "the exuberant connoisseurship of dereliction; the unembarrassed rejoicing at the 'excitement' of it all, hastily balanced by the liberal posturing of sympathy for a 'man-made Katrina'; and most importantly, the absence of people" (2011) in the works that focus on the city's ruined landscape. He describes an encounter a friend had with a customer in his bookstore:

"Do you have any books with pictures of abandoned buildings?" demanded a customer of a bookseller friend of mine at Leopold's Books in Detroit. The man marched to the cash register and abruptly blurted out his question, looking, perhaps, for one of the recent pair of books on Detroit's industrial ruins and its abandoned homes [the works by Moore and Marchand and Meffre]... Ruin photography, in particular, has been criticized for its "pornographic" sensationalism, and my bookseller friend won't sell much of it for that reason (*ibid.*).

Binelli assesses judgments about whose work exemplifies the genre, writing

resistible Decay (1997, pp. 25-40). Merewether writes "Photography's ability to document ruin seemed to function as a compensation for the experience of losing the past" (p. 26).

¹² In the article, author Thomas Morton says of Michigan Central: "For a derelict structure, it's kind of a happening spot. Each time I passed by I saw another group of kids with camera bags scoping out the gate."

In Detroit, you can't talk aesthetics without talking ruin porn, a term that had recently begun circulating in the city... Ruin porn was generally assessed the same way as the other kind, with you-know-it-when-you-see-it subjectivity. Everyone seemed to agree that Camilo Vergara's work was not ruin pornography, though he'd arguably been the Hefner of the genre. Likewise, the local artist Lowell Boileau, who, around the same time Vergara proposed his American Acropolis, began posting his own photographs on a website called the Fabulous Ruins of Detroit, also received a pass, perhaps because he approached his subject from a native's perspective, and with unabashed nostalgia. Photojournalists, on the other hand, were almost universally considered creeps pandering to a sticky-fingered Internet slideshow demographic (2012, pp. 272-273).

So some of the photography is acceptable, some is not; some observers argue works like Moore's and Marchand and Meffre's are ruin porn; others disagree. Though there are probably numerous ways of explicating the term, "ruin porn" can be understood as connoting pleasure in a context where pleasure should not be taken. Below, I will isolate the case in which pleasure in the ruins seems objectionable (though I will not hazard any judgments about whose work qualifies as "pornographic" in this sense, if anyone's does).

To sum up, in my view, parts of Detroit qualify as genuinely ruined environments, and interest in the city's ruins, as well as photography documenting them, can be said to fit within the tradition of interest in ruins and ruin photography in general. There are also two broad categories of response to Detroit's ruins. One sees value or interest, often aesthetic interest, in the ruins and the various activities they inspire, including photography called "ruin porn." The other does not, characterizing this interest as perverse and claiming it ignores both the troubling reasons for the ruination (and the problems the ruins can create) as well as other aspects of life in Detroit.¹³ An example of the first view can be found in these remarks of Francis Grunow of the Detroit Vacant Property Campaign, who told Binelli:

¹³ Within both groups, one can also find people who claim insiders are best able to assess these matters, and those who claim outsiders can provide a legitimate perspective on what has happened.

"I don't see the ruins as a negative. I've never been to Rome or Athens. But the only thing I know about Rome is the Forum and the Colosseum and the only thing I know about Athens is the Acropolis. Could some of the buildings in Detroit become sculptural—say, lit at night? But it's a tough argument here" (2012, p. 281).

On the other hand, Binelli also quotes University of Michigan professor Angela Dillard, whose comments reflect the second point of view:

"When people come to town, I won't do the ruins tour anymore. I'm an advocate for tearing that stuff down. That old Packard building? That could come down in an afternoon. I think they ought to mail the train station to some Scandinavian country, if they love it so much" (*ibid.*).

The first view can be characterized as an often generally aesthetic endorsement of Detroit's ruins and at least some of the photographic work they have generated. The second is an ethical view, finding moral fault and misplaced perspective in this interest.¹⁴

And perhaps both outlooks are right. One may feel inclined to adopt the first view on one occasion, and the second on another. Both account for the ways we are inclined to understand these structures.¹⁵ Both also affect our views about what to do with ruined buildings that might invite re-use or reconstruction. But both views also underscore that in the last few decades, in architectural terms, Detroit's landscape has been one of the most interesting—both terrible and attractive—in the United States.

II.

But the interesting, as Karsten Harries reminds us, is often short-lived (1997, p. 8), and ruins like these pose the question of what we should do

¹⁴ It is possible that the first view is more often concerned with the ruins themselves; the second, the *cause* of the ruination.

¹⁵ Knowledge can play a role in these perspectives. One may admire pictures of decay if they are presented with no additional identifying or contextual information, as photographs of ruins sometimes are, but the more one thinks or learns about the reasons for this ruination in Detroit, the more sobering (and perhaps less aesthetically gratifying) the photographs become.

with them. It is worthwhile to consider comments made by Detroit residents Beatrice Lollar and Sharon Gipson in *Packard: The Last Shift*. Lollar says she is "just disgusted" by daily site of the ruined plant. And Gipson, surveying part of the structure, says "right now, the building as it is, it represents the future, and it's nothing" and then adds, "so we need somebody to turn our nothing into something" (Kaufman, 2014).

Should the Packard, and other sites like it, be turned into something? If ruins like Detroit's have no value, it is not clear that we should save them or protect them in any way. But if they are valuable, perhaps they should be preserved or repurposed as something else. Is there any reason to suppose at least some of the ruins of Detroit, and other structures like them, are better understood as aesthetically or culturally interesting sites, rather than meaningless and depressing blight? And if so, should the ruins be preserved or stabilized—at the very least, not deliberately destroyed?

In this section, I provide an account of the aesthetic or cultural value some ruins acquire over time, as a result of the new uses made of them, and the bearing that value may have on their futures. I provide support for my view by drawing on claims made by Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson in *Functional Beauty*.¹⁶ I use aspects of their discussion of the built environment to demonstrate that ruins retain at least some capacity for function, though their functions can change, and the new functions they may acquire over time can be important in our assessment of their value. While various factors may influence our decisions about what to do with ruined structures—the architectural significance of the buildings in question; the costs associated with either destroying or maintaining such structures; and environmental and practical concerns—I will not directly explore these issues. However, they are clearly important and may intersect with the aesthetic or cultural value I will outline.

Architecture is unique among the major creative endeavors in that it is functional; Immanuel Kant and many others have made this point. As Parsons and Carlson note, "the built environment is first and foremost a functional one" (2008, p. 137).

Yet the notion of architectural function has been criticized as philo-

¹⁶ I focus on major claims they make about the built environment, including ruins, but do not discuss their selected-effects theory in detail.

sophically obscure or unhelpful.¹⁷ It is also unstable, since shifts in a building's function or associations can occur, though it may be easier for some buildings to change than others.¹⁸ As Parsons and Carlson point out, "there seems to be a bewildering array of candidates for 'the function' of any given building" (2008, p. 143). Roger Scruton says,

the idea of "the function" of a building is far from clear, nor is it clear how any particular "function" is to be translated into architectural "form." All we can say—failing some more adequate aesthetic theory—is that buildings have uses, and should not be understood as though they did not (1979, p. 40).

However, Parsons and Carlson think we can still productively make use of the concept, and present what they call "a richer notion of function, one that is grounded in people's real lived experience of buildings" (2008, p. 145). Functions cannot be stipulated or fixed in advance by architects, but instead result, they say, from "the mass use of similar structures over time" (2008, p. 146). (Earlier in their book, they cite an illustrative example of Beth Preston's [1998], pointing out that pipe cleaners were manufactured to clean pipes, but now their primary function is their use in children's "crafts.") Their definition of proper function emphasizes this use over time:

X has a *proper function* F if and only if Xs currently exist because, in the recent past, ancestors of X were successful in meeting some need or want in the marketplace because they performed F, leading to manufacture and distribution, or preservation, of X (2008, p. 148).

¹⁷ For example, we confront problems about whose intentions constitute the function of a building—its architect, or its users? Those who use it initially, or those who may use it many generations later? Just who is the architect or builder (e.g., for some of the Gothic cathedrals, there wasn't just one)? There are also numerous ways to understand a structure with a relatively stable function. One building can exhibit markedly different characteristics from phase to phase, depending on how it is used and cared for. (One could say the same for towns or cities themselves, for that matter.)

¹⁸ It may be difficult to truly change some U.S. gas stations, for example. See James Lileks (2015), 'Old gas stations live on in new guises: Old gas stations frequently find new uses, but you can always tell what they once were', *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, <http://www.startribune.com/old-gas-stations-live-on-in-new-guises/299337711/\#1>.

They take as an example one discussed by Edward Winters, the Plaza Major of Madrid, which has served various purposes over the centuries. Edward Winters writes

What is its function? On Tuesdays it is a market, on Saints' days it is a fairground, on Sundays townspeople gather to parade in their finery. It was, at one time, the venue for bullfights. During the Inquisition it was used for show trials and ritual executions. It now houses offices and a range of cheap to expensive hotel accommodation. That is, the life of its design—the range of activities made available by it—has outstripped any restrictive conception of the function for which it was designed (2013, p. 634).

Parsons and Carlson maintain that its success in fulfilling the function of "community gathering-area" accounts for the Plaza Major's continuing use for this purpose, though that was not why the square was created.

Parsons and Carlson also dispute the view, expressed by Zucker and Donald Crawford, among others, that ruins have no function. Zucker observes "Functional values, of course, do not count with ruins which by their very nature cannot have any practical use" (1961, p. 128), and Crawford, as Parsons and Carlson note, claims "often the partial disintegration brings with it the severance of the functioning of the original. A Roman forum is no longer a forum; a Cistercian abbey is no longer an abbey" (1983, p. 53).

Against Crawford, they argue

surely a ruined forum *is* still a forum, albeit a ruined one, and not merely a heap of stones. This is shown in the fact that we would appreciate a ruined Roman forum and a heap of stones that fortuitously resembled it exactly in very different ways... Crawford's first sentence does express a sound point, which is that a ruin is a structure that is no longer *able to function*, but, when we are dealing with proper functions, this is logically distinct from the claim that the ruin no longer *has a function* (2008, p. 163, n. 40).

They also point out that buildings can look "unfit" for the functions they do have and can thereby exhibit negative aesthetic qualities. They acknowledge that ruins in particular can look unfit, but we admire them aesthetically anyway. Why is this? They write

It is probably safe to say that today ruins are no longer as enthusiastically aesthetically appreciated as they once were, and perhaps are admired more as historical curiosities. Nonetheless, it must also be said that they are not generally viewed as aesthetically poor, or ugly, due to their looking unfit for their functions... ruins, by definition, would seem to look unfit for their function. Missing roofs, punctured or crumbling walls, toppled supports: all bespeak a failure to perform basic architectural functions, such as housing inhabitants from the elements. If they look unfit, why do ruins seem to display no evidence of this negative aesthetic quality? (2008, p. 162)

They attribute our tendency to overlook this problem to what they call the expressiveness of ruins, aligning expressiveness with our notions of romanticism, the sublime, and the passage of time. So, "in looking unfit, ruins *do* possess a negative aesthetic quality, although this quality is not readily apparent because it coexists with an aesthetically positive quality of expressiveness" (2008, p. 164). If our experiences of ruins lacked this experience of expressiveness, we would just find the structures unfit, they claim, defending this idea with a thought experiment about just-ruined structures that do not have the expressiveness they think we typically associate with ruins. If an earthquake caused the ruination of modern-day buildings that happened to look just like ancient Greek ones, we would not, Parsons and Carlson say, have the same reaction to these as we do to what they call "genuine" ruins, even if they looked just like actual Greek ruins: we would be fully aware of their negative aesthetic attributes.

This is not an entirely convincing account of expressiveness, for the expressiveness of ruins arguably involves more than just our notions of the romantic or sublime, and expressiveness itself does not necessarily depend on the passage of time.¹⁹ It is also likely that our interest in ruined structures' aesthetic attributes may not be adequately explained by expressiveness. And ruins, at least in some form, are more than a historical curiosity for us. The increase in publications, the proliferation of online images, and recent museum exhibitions dedicated to "ruin lust" suggest we may be in the midst of a resurgence in this interest, a resurgence that may be influenced at least in part by the increasing number of ruined structures

¹⁹ Neither, in my view, does the creation of a ruin.

in our landscapes.

More importantly, Parsons and Carlson's notion of proper function could be expanded or refined. For one thing, it has been criticized by Robert Stecker for its stress on the idea that selected buildings have ancestors (2011, p. 440); as Stecker notes, in some cases, buildings exhibit Parsons and Carlson's conception of proper function though they have no such lineage. Also, while the way people use sites over time is crucial, and may be most important to our understanding of a building, some account of the circumstances surrounding a building's creation is, too. Ultimately, we must expand our understanding of buildings' functions and the way they can overlap or supersede one another. Buildings can be said to have various *proper* functions of the kind Parsons and Carlson describe, but they also have what I will call below *original* functions. These refer to the reasons for, or circumstances surrounding, their creation.²⁰ Finally, while some buildings may be preserved because of their fitness for their new uses, some of them are no doubt preserved and used for various purposes for no good reason at all.

But though I think their accounts of expressiveness and function require modification, I agree with Parsons and Carlson that ruins are structures that have not lost their functions, though they may not be able to function, and that we appreciate them aesthetically at the same time we are aware of this functional lapse. Ruins should be understood as structures that retain traces of their past uses, albeit in often shadowy form, but may not currently exhibit other proper functions. Their functions have often ceased or been suspended; they are purposeful, but they do not fulfill any obvious purpose. This very fact can make these places exciting—as noted in Part I above—and can cause new or unconventional uses of these spaces. Michigan Central fits this description. It is a ruined train station, not just a jumble of matter, but it is no longer fulfilling its function as a transportation center. And I do think ruins obviously prompt ambivalent reactions, and at times our appreciation for ruins can override attention to their actual structural drawbacks.

²⁰ Of course this further distinction may not comport with Parsons and Carlson's theory of selected effects, and, in some cases, perhaps the proper functions with which Parsons and Carlson are concerned are the ones that will be most dominant or important for most long-lasting structures.

Also, while attention should be paid to original functions, Parsons and Carlson's emphasis on the use and understanding of buildings over time is critically important. Architecture is not only unique among our great creative endeavors because buildings, unlike some of the other arts, have specific utilitarian purposes, and our analyses of them requires understanding this. It is also unique because its proper analysis may involve a commitment to seeing structures over the long term, and weighing the significance (at any given time) of the associations or functions they may have. Functions do change over time, just as Parsons and Carlson have described. (But I am skeptical that they ever change entirely, or that a powerful original or proper function is ever completely eradicated. Buildings' meanings and uses are as layered as those of the towns in which we find them, and some structures have original functions with great staying power.) We have to weigh all of its various functions against each other to truly appraise a building; for example, we must decide how much of Hagia Sophia's identity is constituted by its time as a church, its time as a mosque, and its time as a museum, and which episodes in the life of this building most define it. Should Michigan Central become something else in the future, it will still bear traces of its original function as a train station. Any new proper functions it acquires after that will depend on the mass use of the structure over time, as Parsons and Carlson have described.

Now, the problem posed by some of the ruins of Detroit (and many other buildings, ruined and non-ruined) is the problem that arises when a building has an unethical original or proper function, strong unethical associations of some kind, or its ruination is associated with horror or tragedy. This is recognized by proponents of the second, ethical point of view described in Part I, above. One could also view the structures as simply worthless, no different than trash. Those who see Detroit's ruined structures as evidence of the city's industrial unmooring or ugly blight they have to endure every day might justifiably think they should just be eliminated, and, of course, that is what city officials have been doing, and plan to continue doing, to many of them.

Numerous examples from the history of the built environment can be adduced to support this point of view. Andrew Ballantyne notes of the gas chambers at Auschwitz that they "had organizational rationality and compositional skill to recommend them, but to dwell on their aesthetic

achievements in the presence of their utterly abhorrent reason for being is to fail as a human being" (2011, p. 47). Jeanette Bicknell points to Abu Ghraib: "Even if Abu Ghraib were an architectural jewel, one would probably understand the position of those who wanted to pull it down, however much one might disagree with them. The need to remember the victims and their suffering has to be weighed against the desirability of maintaining a structure where great evil has been perpetrated" (2014, p. 440). The unease that appreciation of ruined buildings incites can come in degrees, too; as Michael S. Roth writes, "It is one thing to aestheticize the gradual decay of monumental buildings, another to aestheticize the effects of disaster" (1997, p. 7).

We usually cannot avoid negatively judging those structures that have ghastly functions or associations, no matter how compelling or interesting their other attributes may be. We can be struck by these impressions when we reflect on just how many parts of our built environment have murky histories, or when we consider repurposing such spaces for new uses. For example, we may find it exciting to convert factories and breweries to loft housing. But we are squeamish about converting just any site. How many of us would be interested in moving into garment factories that have been on fire and caused loss of life? Wouldn't we hesitate, no matter how fine the building's architectural features might be? It could be argued that the only person who can genuinely aesthetically enjoy such places is one who does not know what they are or what they represent. And those who do know what they are often feel the impulse, perhaps ethically justifiable in some cases, to smash them. While buildings can be used for different purposes, some of their functions or associations never entirely disappear, and when these are truly ethically suspect, perhaps our new uses or preservation of these sites should be, too.

I contend that we can resolve these issues in a way that supports the appreciation and perhaps preservation of some ruined sites. The key to our judgments about these matters is provided by the function (or, as it seems, the lack of function) and value such structures can take on *after* they are ruined.

Parsons and Carlson have said the mass use of structures over time can bestow a new proper function upon a site, and this new function may be very different from the site's other proper functions or its original func-

tions. I would argue that this has happened in some ruined areas of Detroit. A significant number of people have reacted to the ruination of parts of the environment with creative activity, including photography, painting, filmmaking, and art installations; exploration; historical or cultural interest; and the development of ideas. As they have visited and appreciated ruins like Detroit's, and created works centered around them (including some of the works called "ruin porn"), they have, in effect, generated a new understanding, a new meaning, of these spaces. Just as plazas take on new uses for which they were not created, ruins can take on new uses for which they were not created. This has probably been the case for as long as human beings have been interested in ruins. If a structure is ruined, but enough people engage with the ruin for the kinds of aesthetic, cultural, and historical reasons outlined in Part I above, a new, proper function for the space may emerge—a ruin "function."

This "function" is conferred by no one person in particular. It can be all the more powerful because unintended, arising from use and a gap in other proper functions. It accords with a remark Scruton makes about architecture itself: "It is a natural extension of common human activities, obeying no forced constraints" (1979, p. 17). Its existence is a matter for debate, and although in some cases it may emerge swiftly, in others it will take at least some time. But it often signals a creatively inclined focus on the environment as such; the creative activities and behaviors surrounding certain sites would not occur if these places retained their conventional proper functions. It is "grounded in people's real lived experience of buildings," as Parsons and Carlson say. And just as aesthetic activities are caused by the shift or lapse in a building's function, they in turn can also cause continuing changes or refinements in function. As noted above, buildings both shape and are shaped by their users, and the built environment can have a profound impact (positive or negative) on the people within it. If this new ruin "function" emerges, and if it is sufficiently powerful to outweigh the site's other functions or associations, then the ruin function confers new value on a space, a value that makes the structure worth preserving or repurposing.

Borrowing Parsons and Carlson's terminology, we can say:

X has a *proper function of ruination* F if and only if X is a ruined site

that is successful in meeting its users' significant creative needs or wants, and this success should lead to preservation of X.

But this proper function can be offset or influenced by the other functions a ruin has. It must be measured against other relevant considerations we bring to bear when assessing ruined sites. Not all ruined structures take on such powerful new associations.²¹ Some of them are not significant or compelling enough in their ruination. Some of them may be simply horrible,

²¹ Relatively ordinary structures often do not, unless there is something especially interesting about the form or process of their ruination. The entry "Ruine" in the eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie* underscores the notion, still with us, that not just any place deserves the title of ruin, and provides examples of the sorts of places that merit the name. The entry, which is primarily concerned with the appearance of ruins in the visual arts, reads:

Ruin is a term in painting for the depiction of almost entirely ruined buildings: "beautiful ruins." The name "ruin" is applied to a picture representing such ruins. "Ruin" pertains only to palaces, elaborate tombs, or public monuments. One should not talk of "ruin" in connection with a rustic or bourgeois dwelling; one should then say, "ruined buildings" (*Encyclopédie*, vol. XIV (1765), article *Ruine*; quoted in Macunias, 2004, p. 81).

It is instructive to consider the examples provided of *real* "ruins": "palaces, elaborate tombs, or public monuments," not "rustic" or "bourgeois" places. We continue to assign, through our use, the proper function of "ruination" to buildings of a certain size or grandeur, exhibiting (at least at one point) a public, general, or industrial function (see FIGURES 3 AND 4 for examples). For one thing, these sites may lend themselves better to



FIGURES 3 AND 4. Tanya Whitehouse, *Abandoned ammunition-factory structures, UMore Park, Rosemount, Minnesota.*

either because they have negative proper or original functions, or because, as ruined sites, they have been used in primarily negative ways—as places in which people commit or conceal crimes, for example. Other sites may be compelling as ruins, but their ruination may not defeat other, unfavorable associations or functions that weigh just as heavily in our estimations of them.

How, then, can we decide which ruins are valuable as ruins, and which are not? In addition to noting the new status a ruin can acquire, we can formulate a *pro tanto* principle (along the lines of the *pro tanto* principle Berys Gaut developed to defend ethicism) for use in assessing ruined structures and the new functions that emerge for them over time.²²

This principle can be expressed as follows:

A ruined structure may acquire value *insofar as* it manifests a new, aesthetically or culturally significant, proper function of ruination. (This proper function often reflects interest in the ruined environment as such.) Manifesting this new proper function *counts toward* the value of the ruined site, and failing to manifest this new proper function may *count against* its value, or have no impact on its value.

At least some of Detroit's ruins have acquired this status. Michigan Central and the Packard Plant seem to have done so.

aesthetic gratification. For example, Michigan Central's formerly shattered windows would not have looked nearly so menacing if not gaping from within its hulking frame. Most of our greatest ruins are not run-of-the-mill houses, and when houses do count as significant ruins, they often do so *en masse*, as villages or towns. Individual houses often lack the scale to go to ruin in a way that matters to us. Moreover, it is probably as difficult for houses to change their proper function as gas stations. Their function as domicile, and their connection with intimacy and private space, can make the associations homes acquire all the more difficult to overcome, and this is true even if they are successively inhabited by people who significantly modify the structures over time. While obviously many places can be haunted, and have served as sinister backdrops in films and other forms of art, it is perhaps no accident that we readily think of the haunted house, not the haunted auto plant.

²² Gaut's claim is: "The ethicist principle is a *pro tanto* one: it holds that a work is aesthetically meritorious (or defective) *insofar as* it manifests ethically admirable (or reprehensible) attitudes. (The claim could also be put like this: manifesting ethically admirable attitudes *counts toward* the aesthetic merit of a work, and manifesting ethically reprehensible attitudes *counts against* its aesthetic merit.)" (1998, p. 182)

Though this account of function and value will not apply to all ruins, it can explain our tendency to use and appreciate certain ruined structures in new ways. Moreover, this accurately describes our revised and continuing appreciation of some of the most famous ruined sites in the world, including the ruins of Rome, and other places we travel so far to see that are not functioning as they once did. (It is an open question whether this process will happen in some cases.²³) It also explains why our uses of certain spaces *can* soften their negative associations—why we do not always think of the Inquisition when we think of the Plaza Major, for example, or gladiatorial contests when ruminating over the Colosseum of Rome.

We can see this by assessing some remarks Ballantyne makes about the Colosseum. Ballantyne observes that the life of a building can pass, using the Colosseum as an example. He writes:

The occasions when we can securely make aesthetic judgments about buildings in the absence of "life" are when the building's life has long vanished. Therefore, for example, the ancient Colosseum in Rome seems impressive without feeling morally dangerous, because the barbaric activities that it supported have long vanished... the building itself will not in any foreseeable future be a support for gladiatorial bloodshed. It is now a place from where horse-drawn carriage rides begin and where ice creams are sold. The ethos of the modern life that surrounds it is driven by benign leisure pursuits, an idea of cultural prestige, and the desire to maximize tourist revenue, not by bloodlust (2011, p. 47).

In keeping with my remarks above, I would amend the first statement to suggest that when a building's life vanishes, opportunities for aesthetic and other kinds of experience, and other functions, emerge. Sometimes these are so significant they effectively generate a new understanding of a site. I am not convinced we only make secure aesthetic judgments about a building when its life is gone, and in any case, even if time and architecture move forward, our judgments of a structure (both ethical and aesthetic) cannot

²³ For example, can we reconceive of the extant pieces of the Berlin Wall as aesthetically interesting ruins? Why, now, are some people lamenting the Wall's disappearance (or even calling for its reconstruction), when, not so long ago, its dismantling was joyously celebrated all over the world?

always supplant those made during a building's use. (The carriage rides, the ice cream; what would the crowds of the Colosseum's heyday make of these developments? Even if we are ambivalent about the auto industry for various reasons, wouldn't a judgment made of the Packard Plant during the height of Packard production compete mightily with our often contradictory current impressions of the place—confusing, inspiring, incredible, anarchic all at once?)

Instead, the Colosseum qualifies as an example of a ruin that acquired enormous historical, cultural, and aesthetic importance, of a new kind, in the centuries after its active use. (Perceptions of its value and how to treat it varied within those centuries, too; it was mined for its materials just as the Packard has been in recent years.) And even if we may wince when we think of what transpired within its beautiful walls, it hardly seems like a good idea to destroy it now. The weight of the intervening centuries and myriad judgments and aesthetic inspirations have shifted the former functions of this site.²⁴

Likewise, though Michigan Central and the Packard Plant may never approach the significance of the Roman ruins, they have acquired new meanings after their active uses as train station and auto plant. They are more than what they were; their time as ruins are important chapters in their histories. Just as we may think it a tragedy to destroy the many ruins that have become an inestimably important part of our cultural heritage, it may be regrettable to destroy them now. Our aesthetic, historical, or cultural interests often provide the strongest reasons we have for retaining ruined structures with sometimes ethically troubling functions or histories. The Colosseum, and some of the ruins of Detroit, among other buildings, are cases in point.

But it is noteworthy that this new ruin function is acquired *after* the event that led to the ruination, not because of it. It emerges from *use* or perception that develops in the wake of ruination. It is not something that can be established by the process of devastation itself, or enjoyment of the devastation, in my view. If either creative work or interest in a ruin revels in the reasons for ruination, or in any negative proper functions of a space, then it is arguably ethically problematic. For example, if, like some

²⁴ Though in my view they have not entirely erased them.

of the Romans, what we really enjoy about the Colosseum is thoughts of the spectacles it housed (or, if possible, photographs of those spectacles), we, like them, could be criticized for our bloodlust, not our ruin lust.

These considerations can help us decide how to assess what is called "ruin porn." If photographic work likewise demonstrates pleasure in destruction or self-destruction itself, or if it celebrates the ethically questionable proper functions some sites possess or the reasons the ruins developed in Detroit, then it may be perverse. (I leave aside the question of which works seem to do this, if any.)

In summary, and amending Ballantyne's observations a second time, I claim that the occasions when we can recognize that a new ruin-function has emerged are when the building's cause of devastation has passed, the ruin remains, and its visitors make new, creative, and positive use of the space—in effect, creating a new ruin function. In keeping with Parsons and Carlson's account of proper function, this new function arises from use over time and can result in new value. It seems worthwhile to preserve the buildings that acquire this value, rather than destroy them or let them crumble. Yet the value caused by reaction to ruination is compromised if it reflects pleasurable preoccupation with the cause of devastation, or a site's troubling proper functions, rather than interest in the ruined environment as such. And ruin porn merits its name when it, too, focuses "lewdly" on these factors, not on their often interesting aftermath—the ruin itself. We must measure the strength of the value ruination creates in each case and against various other considerations. In this way, we can try to thoughtfully bridge the distance between the two perspectives, described above, on Detroit's ruins.

What, then, should become of structures that do acquire this value?

It seems worthwhile to follow Sharon Gipson's suggestion and turn valuable ruins into something. I will not suggest what they could become, though a number of interesting possibilities present themselves and have been discussed at length—some explored in projects included in the exhibition "The Architectural Imagination," which features Detroit, at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale.²⁵ Such ruins could be stabilized, and

²⁵ In remarks that emphasize the kind of human interaction that causes the change in function I describe above, Cynthia Davidson, co-curator of "The Architectural Imagination" exhibition and editor of the journal *Log*, remarked, "I really believe that when

perhaps manicured like some sites in Scotland and Rome. They could be converted into new businesses, parks, or housing, or fenced and classified as historical sites (like the Archibald Mill in Dundas, Minnesota [FIGURE 5]). Its episode of ruination could become an essential part of what makes Detroit creatively unique (perhaps this has already happened). In recent years, Fernando Palazuelo bought the Packard Plant and has started to renovate the site, and Manuel Moroun, owner of Michigan Central, has installed new windows in the giant structure. These seem like favorable, rather than regrettable, developments.



FIGURE 5. Tanya Whitehouse, *Archibald Mill, Dundas, Minnesota*.

At any rate, the ruins should probably not be left as they are, for the sake of those residents who do find them disquieting or, as Lowell said, disgusting. We cannot celebrate blight for blight's sake, or genuinely enjoy the reasons for these ruins in Detroit. Nor is there any good reason to create any more of them, or to let the ruination continue unchecked. Decisions about what

architecture captures the public imagination, that's when change occurs. It's not the architecture itself that causes the change, but how people react to it; *they* cause the change" (2016).

to do with the ruins should ideally reflect respect for their neighbors. But I hope I have offered some reasons to think at least some of them are worth maintaining, in one form or another. For the ruin is not only an invitation to an adventure in aesthetics. It is also an invitation to consider the way forward, and the way in which our ideas will both reflect and influence our architectural surroundings.

I have claimed that our reactions to ruins may convey often positive aesthetic attention to the environment. It is curious that the structures within perhaps our most functional aesthetic category, architecture, can become objects for aesthetic engagement and appreciation once they do not fulfill their purposes—sometimes *because* they do not fulfill their purposes. Aesthetic interest does not generally intensify over an object that has been ruined or rendered purposeless, but in the case of the built environment, it can. This is unusual; it presents one of the few cases in human life in which neglect or destruction launches significant aesthetic or cultural activity that can temper the negative functions or associations such environments can also have. It is also something to protect or preserve, and to view as a catalyst for change, when necessary. Out of the wreckage or the purgatory of the built environment, something life-affirming can emerge—something better can come from the ashes, indeed.

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Michael Haneke's 'Caché (Hidden)' and Wolfgang Iser's 'Blank'

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ABSTRACT. This paper considers Austrian director Michael Haneke's 2004 film *Caché (Hidden)* within the remit of Wolfgang Iser's notion of the 'constitutive blank'. Haneke's film exploits the well-known film device of the ellipsis, but goes much further in that the use of the blank is structural. Not only does that which is 'hidden' taint human relations throughout the film, but *Caché*, in its radical indeterminacy, illuminates Iser's contention that it is through blanks that negations gain their productive force, such that negativity is transformed into an enabling structure. A secondary theme will be to consider Haneke's particular use of the blank in Cavellian terms, as a 'staged' withdrawal of *acknowledgment*. Here, Cavell's mechanism of empathic projection is 'staged': a laying bare made apparent through Haneke's foregrounding of the conditions of the film's existence (its conditions of access). We are again and again forced to question the 'staging' of scenes in relation to a fixed camera position, where an uncertainty persists as to whether this apparatus is, or is not, internal to the film's diegesis.

I.

In this short paper, I will attempt three things: (i) I consider Austrian director Michael Haneke's 2004 film *Caché (Hidden)* through the remit of Wolfgang Iser's notion of the 'blank', claiming the film to be a cinematic exemplar of Iser's literary theory of aesthetics response; (ii) I characterise Haneke's particular use of the blank in Cavellian terms, as a 'staged' withdrawal of *acknowledgment* (a withdrawal of acknowledgment that operates at both a personal *and* broader political level); (iii) I claim that Haneke's particular 'staging' of the withdrawal of acknowledgment is structural, in that it reveals the underlying mechanism at play - that is, the empathic

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projective mechanism central to Cavell's notion of acknowledgement. The film self-consciously employs a series of reflexive devices whereby the viewer's position is itself problematised, such that we are uncomfortably forced to confront our culpability with regard to the events that unfold - a culpability tainted by a collective failure to acknowledge an historic event that lies at the heart of the film.

2.

To set a context for the discussion (and to remind those who have seen the film of the sequence of events), let me summarise Haneke's plot.

The film opens with a sustained establishing shot of the outside of a Parisian house, a static image over which the opening credits run. After some time, we hear a man and woman's voices, seemingly disconnected from the imagery we are seeing. These turn out to be the voices of the house owners, a comfortable bourgeois couple Georges and Anne (played by Daniel Auteuil and Juliette Binoche). The opening shot briefly switches to Georges and Anne leaving the house, Georges looking towards the viewpoint from where the scene we have been watching was taken from. Then the film suddenly fast-forwards, and it is revealed that we have in fact been watching a surveillance video tape, anonymously left at the house. The footage is thus internal to the film's diegesis.

Subsequent scenes introduce the couples' twelve year old son, Pierrot, and reveal something of Georges's working life as a television host of a literary show. In a second reflexive gesture, that also hints at the constructed status of the film we are watching, the participants of the televised discussion Georges is hosting are told to stay seated while the credits roll. Still at work, Georges is then phoned by Anne, who tells him that they have received another tape, filmed from the same viewpoint but at night. More alarmingly, the video cassette is wrapped in a child-like drawing of a boy's face, blood streaming from the mouth. As the couple play the video, we see a fleeting image of a boy bleeding from his mouth, a flashback of Georges's made evident when we hear Anne asking: 'What's wrong, Georges?' Concerned, the couple now contact the police, who refuse to act as the tapes are adjudged to contain no specific threat. On leaving the police station, our initial empathy with Georges is first tested as he aggressively confronts

a young black cyclist who nearly crashes into him.

After being picked up from school, Pierrot reveals to Georges that he has also received a postcard of the same child-like drawing, and this prompts another brief flashback to a coughing boy, bleeding from the mouth. It is already clear that, as the film's title makes suggests, something significant is being 'hidden' here. Later, at a dinner party with friends, the door bell is rung; Georges goes downstairs to open the door, but no-one is there. He shouts angrily into the now empty street. Another tape, however, lies on the floor. This cassette is also wrapped in a crude drawing, this time of a rooster with its neck cut. When Georges returns to the dinner party he conceals the incident. But after nervously asking why he had been so long, Anne reveals to the guests that they have been receiving these threatening parcels. Georges, angry at Anne's disclosure, responds by playing the tape to the gathered guests, which shows a rainy car journey that culminates at what Georges reveals to be his childhood home, a large country mansion.

The next scene shows Georges visiting his frail and elderly mother, where we first learn something of the significance of the drawings. After sleeping over, he tells her that during the night he dreamed about Majid, an orphaned son of Algerian farmhands. We learn that Majid was adopted by Georges's parents, but then obliged to return to the orphanage. George's mother is reluctant to discuss what she clearly regards as an unhappy memory. A scene of Anne talking to Georges on the phone from a bar is then cut abruptly to a violent sequence of dream images: a rooster having its head cut off; Majid's blood splattered face; a long shot revealing Majid with an axe; Georges's frightened face; the image of the headless rooster running around; finally, Majid approaching Georges with an axe. This cuts to a black screen, then to Georges, in bed, turning on the light, breathing heavily.

An ensuing scene filmed through a windscreen of a moving car culminates at the door of a bleak housing block, then reveals its status as another tape when it rewinds, again questioning what is, and is not, internal to the film's diegesis. In a heated argument with Anne after watching this latest tape, Georges reveals that he thinks he knows who has been sending the cassettes, but refuses to let her know whom this is. In a key exchange that explicitly engages issues of the ability to see things, or not, from the

other's point of view, Anne states: 'I have to trust you? Why not the other way around for once? How about you trust me? Who refused to give trust here? Imagine the shoe's on the other foot. Imagine, I say ...' To which Georges patronisingly replies 'if you could hear yourself'.

Georges then retraces the car journey, which leads him to the run-down apartment of the adult Majid (played by Maurice Benichou). At first Georges fails to recognise him, but allowed to enter the squalid flat he aggressively confronts Majid, asking: 'What do you want from me? Do you want money?' 'What then?'. Majid looks genuinely confused, simply asking Georges how he found him. Visibly upset when shown the drawing of the boy with a bleeding mouth, Majid goes on to deny any knowledge of the tapes as Georges continues to act as the aggressor.

The following day, we once more are watching a scene which transpires to be yet another tape, sent to Anne and (it later emerges) to Georges's boss. This is from a static camera in Majid's apartment, and shows Georges leaving, and then a distraught Majid, sat slumped on a chair, crying (a scene, Anne tells Georges, that goes on for an hour). Georges, who clearly has divulged nothing more to his wife, once again denies responsibility, or any kind of acknowledgment of Majid's position. Confronted by Anne, he finally tells the story of Majid, and how he was orphaned in the massacre of 200 Algerian protesters in Paris on October 17, 1961. When his parents failed to return from this protest, they were presumed to be among those drowned by being herded into the River Seine. Georges tells Anne that as a jealous six year old, his position within the family was threatened by this outsider who his parents planned to adopt, because 'they felt responsible in some way'. Unlike Georges, Majid even 'had his own room'. Reluctantly, after Anne's questioning as to what took place, and disbelief when he states 'I can't remember', Georges confides that Majid was sick, and was taken away to a hospital or 'somewhere', and that he was glad that he was gone. 'What should I call it? A tragedy? Maybe it was a tragedy? I don't know. I don't feel responsible for it. Why should I?'

A further development brings matters to a head. It appears that Pierrot, the disaffected son, has disappeared. Anne and Georges go to the police, and George accompanies the Police to Majid's apartment, where a young man opens the door who turns out to be Majid's son (played by Walid Akfir). Both Majid and his son are arrested, carted off in the back of

a police van with George riding in the front. Pierrot, however, reappears at the family house, having stayed over at a friend's house without the friend's mother's knowledge. When confronted by Anne alone, Pierrot adds another level of complexity when he accuses her of having an affair with a close family friend (which she denies). It seems there are, perhaps, other family secrets undisclosed.

Georges then receives an afternoon phone call at work from Majid, requesting him to come to his apartment. On arrival, Majid explains that he wanted Georges to be present, and then - in arguably one of the most shocking scene's in cinema - proceeds to slash his own throat with a knife he takes from his pocket, the blood spurting out onto the wall. Georges just stands there, not responding. Later (it is dark), we see him exiting from a cinema. He arrives home and can hear Anne talking with friends. He creeps upstairs to the bedroom, and phones Anne. When she enters the darkened room, Georges briefly tells her what happened, and asks her to get rid of the friends. When she returns, she is clearly shocked that he appears to have done nothing to help, and didn't even initially go to the police. When Anne again asks what Georges did to Majid, after further prevarication he finally confesses that he told his mother that Majid coughed up blood, and when they didn't believe him that he had tricked Majid by telling him that Georges's father wanted him to kill the rooster, that Majid was covered in blood, and Georges told his parents that Majid did it to scare him. 'Slitting his own throat for that - a hell of a twisted joke, don't you think?'

The next day we see Majid's son approach Georges at his office. When he threatens to make a scene, they speak. 'Is that a threat? I have nothing to hide?' 'Ah, no?' 'Young man, your father's death must have hurt, but I refuse to be incriminated by you. The Police corroborated my statement. It was suicide. So please, get out of my face. I'd advise you to desist from terrorising us with stupid tapes'. 'They were nothing to do with me'. 'Before he died, your father insisted it wasn't him'. 'Believe what you want, I'm not lying'. Georges goes on to once again deny responsibility. 'Do you know what? You're sick. You're as sick as your father. I don't know what dumb obsession he fed you but I can tell you this ... you'll never give me a bad conscience about your father's sad or wrecked life. I'm not to blame. Do you get that?' At which point, Majid's son reveals his reason for com-

ing: 'I wondered how it feels, a man's life on your conscience. That's all. Now I know'.

On arriving home, and taking some pills, Georges goes to sleep, and either dreaming or in flashback, in the film's penultimate scene we see two attendants taking the screaming Majid off to the orphanage. The much discussed final scene, set on the steps to Pierrot's school, utilises a static camera (just like the opening shot), distanced from the action. Almost unnoticed amongst the children and parents' comings and goings (I didn't see it on first viewing), we see Majid's son talking to Pierrot. Is this open-ended scene from the future? Or, even, perhaps from the past?

3.

Of course, the film's title already indicates something as unstated, withheld, undisclosed; and this is, indeed, a film unusually punctuated by gaps. Haneke's use of the blank, however, needs to be distinguished from the better known filmic narrative device of the ellipsis: a plot omission, often signalled by a cut or fade. With the ellipsis, we are left to imagine the omitted scene we do not see, often in such a way that this creates uncertainty. However, in conventional cinema this indeterminacy is typically brought to a resolution during the course of the film as the diegesis reasserts itself. *Caché* does the exact opposite.

Haneke's wider body of work certainly exploits the ellipsis. In particular, violent scenes consistently happen, as it were, off stage. But his use of the blank is structural - and not just structural to the narrative. Not only does that which is 'hidden' taint human relations throughout the film, but *Caché*, in its radical indeterminacy (to the very last shot), confirms Iser's contention that it is through blanks that 'negations take on their productive force' (Iser 1978, p. 217). I will attempt to unpick this claim; firstly, by sketching out Iser's position; and secondly, by considering how Haneke's film might be thought of in terms of such negativity, transformed into an enabling structure.

Iser first develops the notion of the blank as part of his phenomenological concept of the implied reader: 'a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him' (Iser 1978, p. 34). Iser's concern is the reciprocity between text and reader, the structure

and its recipient, such that the reading process is a dynamic *interaction* between text and reader (Iser 1978, p. 107). Within this dynamic, Iser conceives the blank as a deliberate suspension of connectivity between text and reader. It is a suspension of connectivity that demands the reader's act of ideation: a radical indeterminacy that functions to connect the communication between text and reader to the communication internal to the text. In Iser's later work *Prospecting* (1989), representation, now conceived as an act of performing, is freed from any association with mimesis, whereby it brings forth 'in the mode of staging something that in itself is not given' (Iser 1989, p. 248). The modernist literary text is thus, for Iser, not only constituted by negation, but can never be identical with 'the real'. Its 'mode of staging' brings forward a virtualisation of communicative relations that draws upon the real, but allows for an extended temporal consideration. In radicalising this intrinsically problematic intermediate realm, Iser reclaims negativity as a source of aesthetic experience. Importantly for our consideration of Haneke's film, Iser here adopts a Husserlian characterising of negation as not only a superimposition, but requiring a *motivation* for such a negation - where new meaning sits above the negated one, in conflict with it. As the prominent Iser scholar Wolfgang Fluck succinctly puts it:

[O]ur acts of imagining do not automatically possess an aesthetic quality. For Iser, such an aesthetic quality is created only when the imagined objects are deformed, negated, or delegitimated in their validity, because such negation also challenges us to imagine that which is negated. It does this in a double sense, for in order to make the negation meaningful we have to mentally construct not only the object or situation itself which appears in negation but also that which it negates. (Fluck 2000, p. 184)

The latter point is crucial, in that representation opens up a liminal space which oscillates between the real and imaginary, as we are forced to confront both that which is said and that which is not said (the situation the text seeks to negate).

4.

How does this oscillation play out in the film? We have seen that *Caché* has, at its very core, two closely related ‘unspeakable’ acts, one private (the betrayal of Majid), and one public. Georges’s fictional failure to address his own guilt, through a refusal of acknowledgment of the ‘other’, is mirrored by a real historic event that indirectly leads back to the death camps. While only briefly alluded to, once, by Georges, this event casts its shadow over the entire film. In the film, Georges’s own betrayal, as a six years old, is intricately tied in to the horrific massacre of some 200 Algerian protesters by the Auxiliary Police Force under the command of notorious former Vichy collaborator Maurice Papon (later convicted for his role in the deportation of Jews to the Nazi murder camps). So, here negativity is tethered to a particular historic event, though the wider ramifications of this are played out (as with many of Haneke’s films) within the fictional domestic confines of a particular Bourgeois household. Georges’s own lack of acknowledgment, and continual refusal to accept any responsibility, directly mirrors that of the French State, which even by 1998 had still only officially admitted 48 deaths. Majid’s visceral act forces us to confront the bodily materiality of this historic and distant event. This is all the more shocking in a Haneke film, where extreme violence (as noted) usually happens off camera. Moreover, this in itself is reinforced by the film’s enacting of a real death. In an intriguing chapter on the death of animals in Haneke’s films, Michael Lawrence states that:

[T]he death of the rooster presents a spectacle of real death in the place of any simulation or reconstruction of the events of October 1961. Eisenstein, we recall, used scenes of animal slaughter to confront the spectator with ‘real death’ during his (composite) simulation or reconstruction of real historic events. (Lawrence 2010, p. 74)

Clearly, both of the film’s staged deaths - one fictional, one staged yet real - refer to this other act of extreme violence where the living are herded (like animals) into the river to drown. Georges failure to empathically project means he stops seeing Majid as human, to the extent that he fails to even notify anyone after Majid’s suicide. What does he do instead? He goes to

the cinema, to escape reality: a reality that Haneke's own work pointedly admits in its oscillation between the real and the imaginary.

5.

I believe Haneke's use of the blank constitutes a fascinating example of what Stanley Cavell refers to as a 'staged' withdrawal of *acknowledgment*, which Cavell develops in relation to Shakespearian theatre (Cavell 2002). I am not the first to link Haneke to Cavell, and Catherine Wheatley's book on Haneke (2009) also draws heavily on Cavell. She claims that:

Cavell's theory of cinema's appeal can therefore help us to understand the significance of the shift in emphasis from the film-maker to the film spectator. For Cavell and Haneke alike, no longer is the question how the filmic apparatus positions the spectator, or even (as in the writings of Laura Mulvey, for example) how it creates pleasure for the spectator, but how the spectator *chooses to involve themselves* with the cinematic object. (Wheatley 2009, p. 35)

While this undoubtedly true, it is worth stressing that our positioning relative to the apparatus is also consistently brought into play.

For Cavell, 'empathic projection' is inexorably linked to overcoming human finitude: a painful, yet necessary separateness, characterised by a certain opacity to one another. This sense of finitude lies at the heart of Cavell's 'ordinary language' take on the 'skeptical problematic', and particularly that aspect of skepticism associated not with the external world as such, but with our relation to 'others'. Cavell notes

that my taking you for, seeing you as, human depends upon nothing more than my capacity for something like empathic projection, and that if this is true then I must settle on the validity of my projection from within my present condition, from within, so to speak, my confinement from you. For there would be no way for me to step outside my projections. (Cavell [1979] 1999, p. 123)

As an active form of identification with the other, empathic projection attempts to bridge this intrinsic separation. External to the object of knowledge, and locked into a circle of my own experience, I am obliged

to imaginatively project onto the other. This, in turn, implies a duality of perspective distinct to the skepticism of other minds, in that we are necessarily both an outsider (to someone else) *and* an insider (to ourself). This is the intractable problem of knowing and being known. Following Wittgenstein's example, Cavell applies this to the issue of pain:

What I feel, when I feel pain, is pain. So I am putting a restriction on what the Outsider can know. He can know something about another's pain that I cannot know, but not something about mine. He is not really an Outsider to me. If he exists, he is in me. (Cavell [1979] 1999, p. 418)

Cavell argues that the skeptical problematic lies at the heart of certain works of art. While he famously applies this to Hollywood comedies, it is to his writing on theatre that the analogy with Haneke holds. More specifically, Cavell claims that the skeptical problematic is fundamental to the development of Shakespearian tragedy. For Cavell, Shakespeare makes available to us the recognition of a necessary human condition of separateness, intrinsic to our relation to others, such that the limits of our knowledge of others, and their motives, underpins the very notion of tragedy. If, for Cavell, '[t]he conditions of theatre literalize the conditions we exact for existence outside - hiddenness, silence, isolation - hence make that existence plain' (Cavell 2003: 104), then this is also true for Haneke's film, where Georges is forced to live out the consequences of a long buried and hidden shame. Consistent with Cavell's claims as to a re-envisioning of politics through the ordinary, the everyday, the domestic, Georges's guilt infects relations within the very family he holds dearest. But Georges's seeming inability to empathically project not only constructs a tension between what remains hidden or unspoken between the characters within the fictional world of the film, but Haneke creates a tension by just what is revealed, *or not*, to the audience. While we are excluded from their presence as characters in a film, we are also made complicit through a series of extraordinary reflexive devices.

6.

I conclude, therefore, by arguing that Haneke's 'staging' of the withdrawal of acknowledgment in *Hidden* is structural, in that it intends to reveal (and complicate) the underlying mechanism at play - that is, the empathic projective mechanism that I have noted is key to Cavell's notion of acknowledgement.¹ As noted earlier, Haneke self-consciously employs a series of reflexive devices whereby the viewer's position is systematically problematised. In her article 'Serious Film: Cavell, Automatism and Michael Haneke's *Caché*' (Trahair 2013), Lisa Trahair has argued that 'in Cavell's ontology, traditional film accommodates the thinking of the world, of the imagination, understanding and even reason, but it is not reflexive' (Trahair 2013, n.p.). Indeed, Cavell states that cinema must acknowledge 'its own limits: in this case, its outsideness to its world, and my absence from it' (Cavell 1979, pp. 146-147). Yet while Haneke operates within a conventional cinematic medium, he problematises the embodied and dispositional orientation of beholders towards the work. *Funny Games* (1997), for instance, breaks the fourth wall with a direct address to the viewer which challenges the viewer's tolerance for watching the pain of others. In *Caché*, the mechanism of empathic projection is itself 'staged': a laying bare made apparent through Haneke's foregrounding of the conditions of the film's existence (its conditions of access). This includes those aspects of the configurational properties of film that conventional movies would have us forget, such as the camera position and the very materiality of the media. Haneke's indeterminacy deliberately sets out to problematise the spectator position, both ontologically (drawing attention to the mechanisms of film) and by evoking our own complicity in the events as they unfold.

The two are linked, in that we are again and again forced to question the 'staging' of scenes in relation to a fixed camera position. We have to ask ourselves, is this staging that of the surveillance tapes integral to the plot (the camera integrated into the logic of the film's diegesis), or of the film we are watching? This starts from the very first scene of the Laurent's house, which it emerges is prerecorded surveillance footage watched by

¹ For a similar argument in relation to the work of Douglas Gordon, see Michael Fried (2011) and my own article on Fried's theory of beholding video art (Wilder 2012).

Georges and Anne on their living room monitor. And it finishes with the very similar 'staging' of the final scene, where a final ambiguous narrative twist is offered that causes us to question many of our previous assumptions.

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Fictional Names, Rigidity, and the Inverse-Sinatra Principle

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ABSTRACT. According to the inverse-Sinatra principle, the following holds for a broad class of proper names, which includes names that refer to a concrete object in the actual world as well as fictional names: if the name can't make it here, it won't make it anywhere. That is, if the name doesn't manage to refer to a concrete, spatiotemporal object here, in the actual world, it doesn't refer to a concrete, spatiotemporal object with respect to other possible worlds either. In this paper I aim to show that the inverse-Sinatra principle can be readily construed as a missing puzzle piece in a comprehensive Kripkean account of proper names. First, it's plausible to view it as the other side of the rigidity thesis (which, on one formulation, states that if a name refers to an object here, in the actual world, then it refers to that object everywhere, in all possible worlds). Second, the principle provides an appealing way to extend to fictional names Kripke's picture about causal-historical chains of use determining the concrete object to which a name refers. Third, several fiction-related remarks by Kripke point toward the need to locate the inverse-Sinatra principle as a missing puzzle piece.

1. Introducing the Inverse-Sinatra Principle

For those familiar with Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* lectures, the notion of rigidity needs no introduction. But what is the inverse-Sinatra principle? Frank Sinatra sang about New York: "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere". According to the inverse-Sinatra principle, the following holds for a broad class of proper names, which includes names that refer (or referred) to a concrete object in the actual world (like 'Michelle Obama') as well as fictional names (like 'Anna Karenina'): if the name can't make it here, it won't make it anywhere.

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I first formulated the inverse-Sinatra principle ten years ago (Zvolenszky 2007), and have since returned to exploring its role in theories about fictional characters and fictional names in several papers, two of them in recent *European Society of Aesthetics Proceedings* (Zvolenszky 2014, 2015a; see also Zvolenszky 2015b).¹ Compared to these earlier proposals, in the present paper, I pursue a different line for locating the inverse-Sinatra principle in an account of proper names that encompasses fictional names.² Specifically, I aim to show how the inverse-Sinatra principle can be readily construed as a missing puzzle piece in a comprehensive Kripkean account of proper names.

My starting point is Kripke's (1972/1980) two core claims about the reference of proper names (Section 2). My overarching aim is to explore (in Sections 3–5) one plausible way for extending these core claims so we cover *fictional names*: proper names for objects conjured up by authors in producing works of fiction. Clearly, fictional names don't refer to actual concrete objects.³

Kripke didn't spell out in full the connection between his claims about names that refer to concrete objects and names that don't. I aim to fill this lacuna by formulating the inverse-Sinatra principle for proper names. Before spelling out this principle more precisely, let us first home in on a narrower class of names, to be called *names**, which includes (a) all fictional names of people, places, objects, and (b) all nonfictional names that purport to refer to actual, concrete objects; crucially, *names** exclude proper names for timeless existents (like numbers), names introduced for merely possible objects, and names introduced via descriptive stipulations, without any ostension or pointing.⁴ Thus, plausibly, the overwhelming major

¹ For the latest versions of my views on the metaphysics and semantics of fictional discourse, see Zvolenszky (2013, 2016a, 2016b); for more historical detail, see Zvolenszky (2015b).

² The present paper is based in part on Section 2 of a much longer paper (Zvolenszky 2016b).

³ For the purposes of this paper, I'm not taking a stand on whether names of actual concrete objects, like 'Moscow' in Tolstoy's novels, does or doesn't refer to the actual concrete object: the city of Moscow. Regardless of what stance we take on that issue, 'Moscow' is not a fictional name in the sense I defined it.

⁴ Fictional characters are but one kind of fictional object: objects (people, places, buildings, etc.) conjured up by authors in producing works of fiction. For the purposes

ity of proper names are names*. According to the *inverse-Sinatra principle*, names* are such that the following holds for them: *if it can't make it here, it won't make it anywhere*.⁵ This means (among other things) that if the name*

of the present paper, I'm restricting fictional objects to fictional-world analogs of *concrete, spatiotemporal* objects. My label 'fictional name' is short for 'name of a fictional object'.

⁵ In the inverse-Sinatra principle (keeping 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 meta-physical possibility. Thanks to Nathan Wildman for discussion on this.

The category of names* doesn't include the following: (i) names of timelessly existing abstract objects (for example numbers), and (ii) names successfully introduced for merely possible objects, (iii) names introduced by descriptive stipulations. An example for (ii): 'Woody' introduced for a lectern kit that could have been assembled based on a comprehensive set of assembly instructions, but is never in fact assembled. Elsewhere (2015b, p. 482, fn. 27) I elaborate the point that there is a very good reason why for a Kripkean about proper name reference, 'Woody', and also names of abstract timeless existents like numbers, are not subject to the inverse-Sinatra principle: introducing such names successfully requires that their referent be *sufficiently specified* during the introduction, so that there is no room left to identify several distinct possible objects as fitting the specification associated with the name. This connects with Kripke's reasoning to support what he calls the metaphysical thesis about fictional names like 'Holmes' in the "Addenda" (1972/1980, pp. 156–158). There, Kripke argues that no such sufficient-specificity requirement for successful name introduction is in place for introducing a fictional name like 'Holmes'; and Holmes is insufficiently specified in the short stories to be identified with just one possible concrete person (because several distinct possible people are equally good candidates to be Holmes and there is no ground for deciding among them which is Holmes). By contrast, type-(ii) names like 'Woody' *are* introduced with sufficient specificity to refer to just one possible concrete object. This is probably why Kaplan claims that "ever-unactualized possibilities are extraordinarily difficult to dub" (Kaplan 1973, p. 505), while leaving it open that unactualized possibilities are *possible* to dub (as Woody was).

Crucially, for a Kripkean about proper name reference, this "no room for distinct possible objects as referent-candidates" feature applies to names* as well, but the *means* by which the feature is secured for names* and for type-(i)–(ii) names is markedly different. To names*, the inverse-Sinatra principle applies, and securing this feature requires (as we will see) some kind of causal-historical connection to the object named. By contrast, for type-(i)–(ii) names, securing the feature calls for sufficient specificity.

As for (iii), names successfully introduced via descriptive stipulations ("the inventor of the zipper, whoever he was, I'll call 'Julius'"; "the first boy born in the 22nd century shall be called 'Newman'"; and even: whatever planet satisfies such-and-such a description shall be called 'Neptune'). My somewhat tentative stance is that such names pattern with type-(i)–(ii) names with respect to sufficient specificity being required for the name to refer. While I'm less committed to excluding such names from names* than type-(i)–(ii) names, this move simplifies considerably subsequent discussion of the two Kripkean

doesn't manage to refer to a concrete, spatiotemporal object here, in the actual world, it doesn't refer to a concrete, spatiotemporal object with respect to other possible worlds either. This principle will afford a way of extending the two Kripkean core claims to fictional names.

2. Two Kripkean Core Claims

Saul Kripke in his *Naming and Necessity* lectures (1972/1980) discusses in detail his views about the reference of proper names in the actual world and in nonactual possible worlds, invoking in the process considerations about rigidity and causal-historical chains. His focus is on proper names that refer (or referred) to concrete objects, and the two pages that he devotes to names like 'Sherlock Holmes' (pp. 157–158) along with his fleeting mention of names like 'Santa Claus' and names of numbers, p. 93, p. 116, fn. 58), and his subsequent 1973/2011, 1973/2013) leave unclear how exactly Kripkean views on proper name reference are supposed to extend to the likes of 'Holmes'. This paper sets out to provide one answer to this question. The constraints and connections uncovered do not hinge on (i) whether we accept or reject that Holmes exists/has being in some sense, and (ii) whether we accept or reject that (on at least some uses), the name 'Holmes' has a referent.

It is helpful to sum up the crux of a Kripkean position (based on the second lecture of *Naming and Necessity* 1972/1980) about what does and doesn't determine the reference of proper names like 'Tolstoy' and 'Michelle Obama' (which refer to concrete objects) in the form of *two core claims*:

- *Qualitative fit is neither necessary nor sufficient for being the referent of a name**. Suppose individual speakers who competently use a name *N* associate various descriptions with *N*. Kripke's claim: to be the referent of *N*, it is neither necessary nor sufficient that the referent be the unique object fitting the associated descriptions (or fitting the weighted majority of the descriptions). Call this the SIMPLE QUALITATIVE-FIT CLAIM.

claims, I will therefore go ahead with excluding type-(iii) names from names*.

- For names*, a causal-historical connection is necessary for the name* to refer. Competent *N* users refer to an object *o* by using *N* only if there is a causal-historical chain of uses of *N* in their linguistic community leading back to *o*, and to the introduction of *N* as a name for *o*. Call this the SIMPLE CAUSAL-HISTORICAL-CONNECTION REQUIREMENT.⁶

These two claims do not mention a pair of key constraints that are usually implicitly assumed: that the objects at issue (candidates for being referents of proper names) are *concrete* (that is, spatiotemporally located) and *actual*. In the next section, we will make the former constraint explicit. Also, we will lift the latter constraint based in part on Kripke's well-known thesis about proper names being rigid designators. I will show, however, that extending the core claims to fictional names requires in addition the claim that names* obey the inverse-Sinatra principle.

3. Towards the Generalized Qualitative-Fit Claim: The Role of the Rigidity Thesis

Let's work backwards and first state the two generalized Kripkean core claims, and then consider how rigid designation and the inverse-Sinatra principle are both needed to motivate moving from the simple core claims

⁶ I'm not including here the corresponding sufficiency claim: that a causal-historical chain of uses leading back to an object being given the name is *sufficient* for it to be the name's bearer. Considerations about 'Santa Claus', and 'Napoleon' introduced as a name for a pet (and later, on, also examples like 'Madagascar') indicate that much more elaboration and complexity lies ahead before we get a *sufficient* condition for being the referent of a name. And the fact that Kripke (1972/1980, p. 93, pp. 96–97) was pointing out such examples makes it clear that he was aware of the additional complexity required while he was delivering the lectures, so Evans' (1973) charge that Kripke's sufficiency claim is unwarranted is itself unwarranted.

One major alternative to my construal of a Kripkean view about causal-historical chains holds that no causal-historical link to the *object named* is required; only a causal-historical link of name-uses leading back to the name's introduction, at which point the name can be introduced by someone who bears no causal connection to the object—either because the object is named by a descriptive stipulation, or because the object is non-concrete (a number, say). See, for example, Burgess (2012), pp. 32–33 for such a view.

Plausibly, the qualitative-fit claim is about names, and not just names*; but for my purposes, the narrower claim formulated here is sufficient.

(about actual concrete objects as referents of proper names) to their generalized versions (about actual as well as possible concrete objects as referents of proper names):⁷

- In the case of concrete objects (actual as well as possible), qualitative fit is neither necessary nor sufficient for being the referent of a name*. Call this the GENERALIZED QUALITATIVE-FIT CLAIM.
- A causal-historical+ connection to a concrete object is necessary for a name* to refer to that concrete object (actual or possible). Call this the GENERALIZED CAUSAL-HISTORICAL-CONNECTION REQUIREMENT.

(What ‘causal-historical+’ means will be explained in Section 5. The label is short for ‘pw-extended causal-historical connection’.)

In my *ESA Proceedings* paper last year, I merely remarked that “... it is well to generalize, in the light of the inverse-Sinatra principle, the qualitative fit claim and the [causal-]historical connection requirement to characterize the core tenets of a Kripkean stance (Zvolenszky 2015b, p. 582). But what is the exact connection between the principle and the generalized core claims? Answering this question turns out to take the bulk of a paper: the remainder of this paper.

Let’s consider the first core claim first. For names that refer to actual concrete objects (like ‘Michelle Obama’ and ‘Saul Kripke’), we need no more than Kripke’s thesis about proper names being rigid designators, to derive, from the simple qualitative-fit claim, the corresponding generalized one. According to one formulation of the thesis:

- Ordinary proper names are rigid designators. And an expression *R* being a *rigid designator* is defined as follows: if *R* refers to a concrete object *o* in the actual world, then *R* refers to *o* in every world in which *o* exists; and in worlds in which *o* doesn’t exist, *R* doesn’t refer to

⁷ By ‘possible concrete object’ I mean a possible object that in the given possible world is or is represented as spatiotemporal. I intend this use to remain neutral about the choice of metaphysics for possible worlds and their inhabitants. For example, I’m not assuming or rejecting here a counterpart-theoretic approach to cross-world identity of objects.

anything other than *o*.⁸ Call this the *rigid designation thesis about proper names*; RIGIDITY THESIS, for short.

Here is how the simple qualitative-fit claim plus the rigidity thesis yield the generalized qualitative-fit claim for names that designate actual, concrete objects. Clearly, the simple core claims are about reference in the actual world, no more. But if we take into account that the *only object* a rigid designator may refer to with respect to nonactual worlds is the object that is its actual referent, then qualitative fit in nonactual possible worlds cannot be sufficient for reference, because that would contradict the rigidity thesis (after all, a rigid designator doesn't refer to a different object, even if it's a dead ringer for the actual object). Also, if we take into account that a rigid designator refers to its actual referent with respect to *every world in which the referent exists*, then qualitative fit in nonactual possible worlds cannot be necessary for reference, because that, again, would contradict the rigidity thesis (after all, an object is a rigid designator's counterfactual referent regardless of potential qualitative mismatch between the actual and the counterfactual object). We have thus established the generalized qualitative-fit claim for names that refer to concrete objects in the actual world.

4. Towards the Generalized Qualitative-Fit Claim: The Role of the Inverse-Sinatra Principle

Notice that the claim that proper names are rigid designators (as I formulated the thesis) leaves open whether *a proper name without an actual concrete referent*—for example, a fictional name like 'Anna Karenina'—does

⁸ For insightful discussion about alternative formulations of rigid designation and why the difference among them matters, see Zouhar (2012). Notice that the rigidity thesis can be extended to cover non-concrete objects also. This seems in line with Kripke's intentions (see Kripke 1972/1980, pp. 115–116, fn. 58; see also Kaplan 1989, pp. 607–608, fn. 101). But the focus throughout *Naming and Necessity* was on the paradigm of reference to *concrete* objects. In any case, extending the rigidity thesis to cover reference to non-concrete objects would not obviate the need for positing, in addition, the inverse-Sinatra principle—about this, see the last paragraph of footnote 12; see also Section 3 of Zvolenszky (2015b).

or doesn't refer to a concrete object with respect to some nonactual possible world or other! After all, the rigidity thesis begins with a conditional antecedent that is false for fictional names like 'Anna Karenina'. For all that the rigidity thesis has established, fictional names could be referring, with respect to nonactual possible worlds, to whatever concrete object in those worlds fits the descriptions associated with the names. If this were the case, then, with respect to those worlds, the generalized qualitative-fit claim's insufficiency-half would fail for fictional names. *Yet Kripke is evidently subscribing to this half of the generalized qualitative-fit claim with respect to fictional names like 'Sherlock Holmes'*, emphatically denying, for example, that a concrete (actual or possible) person's being qualitatively just like Holmes (as described in the short stories) is *sufficient* for that person to be the referent of 'Holmes', given Doyle's intention to conjure up a fictional character rather than describe a concrete person (Kripke 1972/1980, pp. 157–158; see also Kripke 1973/2011, p. 59; 1973/2013, p. 40–42).⁹ The question is what Kripke might be basing his denial on.

For fictional names, and more broadly, for names*,¹⁰ the missing link to yield the generalized qualitative-fit claim's insufficiency-half from its simple version is this: names* are subject to the inverse-Sinatra principle, according to which no object to refer to here (in the actual world) means

⁹ The oft-quoted passage from Kripke (1972/1980, pp. 157–158):

The mere discovery that there was indeed a detective with exploits like those of Sherlock Holmes would not show that Conan Doyle was writing *about* this man; it is theoretically possible, though in practice fantastically unlikely, that Doyle was writing pure fiction with only a coincidental resemblance to the actual man. ... Similarly, I hold the metaphysical view that, granted that there is no Sherlock Holmes, one cannot say of any possible person, that he *would* have been Sherlock Holmes, had he existed. Several distinct possible people, and even actual ones such as Darwin or Jack the Ripper, might have performed the exploits of Holmes, but there is none of whom we can say that he would have been Holmes had he performed these exploits. For if so, which one? (emphasis in the original)

¹⁰ Crucially, names* excludes proper names like 'Woody' introduced for the possible lectern that never gets assembled (see Footnote 5).

no object to refer to in other possible worlds either (qualitative fit notwithstanding). A special case of this, spelled out below, is that no *concrete* object to refer to here means no *concrete* object to refer to in other possible worlds either.

For any name* *N*, if *N* is without a concrete object referent in the actual world, then *N* is without a concrete object referent with respect to all possible worlds. Let's call this the INVERSE-SINATRA PRINCIPLE FOR NAMES*. (For any name*: "if it can't make it here, it won't make it anywhere".)¹¹

Based on this principle, we arrive at qualitative fit being insufficient for fictional names to refer to concrete nonactual objects, given that the principle requires that names lacking an actual concrete referent don't refer to concrete objects with respect to *any* possible world.¹²

¹¹ In the preceding formulation, we spelled out the principle for *concrete* objects, but we could formulate it in more general terms, to apply to *non-concrete* objects also, getting a generalized inverse-Sinatra principle.

¹² In this way, the rigidity thesis and the inverse-Sinatra principle are two facets of an overarching theory about the reference of proper names across possible worlds: the first is about names that refer to an actual concrete object, and the second is about names that do not. The first encompasses all proper names (though it isn't obvious that it covers names introduced by descriptive stipulation). The second applies to names* only, and doesn't apply to names of merely possible objects (see footnote 4 above about 'Woody'). The first yields the generalized core Kripkean claims for names that refer to concrete objects (in the actual world), the second is needed to arrive at the pair of generalized core claims for names* that don't refer to any actual concrete object. We see then that both the rigidity thesis and the inverse-Sinatra principle are needed in a comprehensive account of names.

In sum, the rigidity thesis and the inverse-Sinatra principle play a role within complementary routes—for distinct sets of proper names—leading from the core Kripkean claims to their generalized versions.

I leave open the possibility that an alternative formulation of the rigidity thesis may obviate the need for positing separately the inverse-Sinatra principle. To this end, something along these lines seems like a promising starting point: an expression *R* being a *rigid designator* is defined as follows: *whatever object (if any) R refers to in the actual world, R refers to that same object (if any) with respect to every possible world, and...* Even if such a definition can be formulated, in the context of fictional names, the succinctness, generality and focus of the inverse-Sinatra principle makes for a more vivid and revealing summary of a Kripkean approach to fictional names than a purely rigidity-based way of fitting together various Kripkean claims.

Having only considered the insufficiency-half of the generalized qualitative-fit claim, we have already established four things. First, on a Kripkean approach to proper name reference, there is a central dimension shared by fictional names and names that refer to concrete objects: both are subject to the insufficiency-half of the generalized qualitative-fit claim. Second, for fictional names, this shared dimension is touched upon in Kripke's brief discussion about 'Holmes'. Third, in the background of that discussion about fictional names, we can locate a special role for the inverse-Sinatra principle. Fourth, that role complements and parallels one played by the rigidity thesis in the far lengthier discussion we find in *Naming and Necessity* about names that refer to actual concrete objects (like 'Michelle Obama', 'Tolstoy').

5. Towards the Generalized Causal-Historical-Connection Requirement

Let us turn to the case of the second core Kripkean claim: moving from the simple causal-historical connection requirement to its generalized version. Consider the case of names like 'Michelle Obama', which refer to actual concrete objects. Suppose we are sympathetic to a Kripkean model of proper name reference requiring a causal-historical connection; *now, it seems, we can use those names to talk about objects as they might or must have been; that is, we can talk about one and the same object with respect to worlds other than the actual one, by saying things like 'Michelle Obama might have majored in philosophy in college'*. Then an attractive overarching model of proper name reference suggests itself: that in a derivative sense, the causal-historical connection is in place between the actual name and its referent with respect to worlds other than the actual world also. We can call this a *pw-extended causal-historical connection* between a name and its referent with respect to a nonactual possible world. This is what I provisionally labeled '*causal-historical+ connection*' in the formulation of the second core Kripkean claim.

Of course, there is no *causal* link between 'Michelle Obama', a name used in the actual world for an actual woman, and a counterfactual Michelle Obama whose college major is different than the actual woman's; but I'm suggesting that there is this pw-extended causal-historical connection be-

tween them still. Crucially, the italicized sentence is intimately tied to the rigidity thesis: the latter follows from the former.¹³ That ‘Michelle Obama’ is a rigid designator follows from the fact that we understand modal sentences like ‘Michelle Obama might have majored in philosophy’ as claiming about the referent of ‘Michelle Obama’, that there is a non-actual world with respect to which *that same referent* majors in philosophy. Now, if we understand the causal-historical connection featured in the second generalized core claim as being of the pw-extended variety, then we see that for names with actual concrete referents—via considerations closely tied to the rigidity thesis—we can move from the simple causal-historical-connection requirement to the generalized one.

But this won’t yet tell us anything about *fictional names* and the generalized causal-historical-connection requirement. One further Kripkean consideration that is discernible from Kripke’s fleeting remarks about ‘Holmes’ is that, given Doyle’s intention to write fiction rather than describe reality, there is at best *coincidental resemblance* between concrete objects (actual and nonactual) and Holmes, as described in the short stories. That is to say, *there is no causal-historical connection* (of the required, reference-determining sort)¹⁴ between any of those objects and Doyle’s uses of the name ‘Holmes’, a connection that would justify regarding any of those various concrete objects (actual and nonactual) as Holmes. That is to say, *a Kripkean would reject the possibility of a pw-extended causal-historical connection between ‘Holmes’ and a nonactual concrete object*. What could motivate such a rejection? My answer is that *the only way* for a name* to bear a pw-extended causal-historical connection to a nonactual concrete object is if the name* piggybacks on a causal-historical connection between a use of the name* and an actual concrete object identical to the nonactual one. And this background commitment is intimately tied to the inverse-Sinatra principle: the latter follows from the former. If an actual-world causal-historical connection between a use of the name and an actual concrete object is required for reference with respect to nonactual worlds, then in the absence of such a connection

¹³ I spell out an argument for this in detail in Zvolenszky (2007).

¹⁴ About this, see, for example, Friend (2003), and especially her recent unpublished lecture “Reference in Fiction”, delivered on October 20, 2016 at the conference *Philosophy of Language (I): Semantics of Fictional Discourse* (Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia).

(as with fictional names), the name doesn't refer to any nonactual concrete object. That is, if the name doesn't "make it" here, in the actual world, then it won't "make it" anywhere, in nonactual worlds either.

The upshot: despite the fact that we introduced this looser notion of a causal-historical connection, it still remains the case that fictional names don't refer to nonactual concrete objects because they falter on the generalized causal-historical-connection requirement (just as Kripke wanted). Crucially, this result required considerations closely tied to the inverse-Sinatra principle; and the result would not have been readily gotten based on rigidity-related considerations alone.

6. Conclusion

In sum, I have shown that moving from the two simple Kripkean core claims to their generalized versions is a result a Kripkean about proper name reference should find plausible. Further, when it comes to names of actual concrete objects, considerations allowing the move are closely tied to the rigidity thesis. And when it comes to fictional names, considerations allowing the move are closely tied to the inverse-Sinatra principle.¹⁵

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