Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics

Volume 13, 2021

Edited by Vítor Moura and Connell Vaughan

Published by

European Society for Aesthetics

Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics
Founded in 2009 by Fabian Dorsch
Internet: http://proceedings.eurosa.org
Email: proceedings@eurosa.org
ISSN: 1664 – 5278

Publisher
The European Society for Aesthetics

esa European Society for Aesthetics

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European Society for Aesthetics

Extended Aesthetics: Art and Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT. In this paper[2], I will argue that developments in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) applied to aesthetics have relevant implications for philosophical aesthetics, in particular concerning the discussions about the nature of creativity and authorship. The automatic generation of aesthetic artifacts, as well as the development of software increasingly supporting the work of artists and designers, call into question the uniqueness of individual creativity and artistic imagination in an unprecedented way. Moreover, in a scenario in which formal properties of artifacts seem to be easily replicable by machines, the debate on the relationship between aesthetics and the nature of art seems also revitalized. Overall, diverging positions on this issue oscillate between the view of the machine as an Other competing with human capabilities, and, on the contrary, an interpretation of technology as an extension of human potentialities through the externalization of mental processes. AI and machine learning would be in this sense a direct practical manifestation of an *extended aesthetic mind*, in which traditional cognitive limits of the biological mind can be overcome also in areas related to aesthetic creation.

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, computation, data analysis, and artificial intelligence have gradually entered the aesthetic realm. We see this first in what we could call consumer aesthetics, where algorithms are increasingly able to predict what we like and recommend in accordance with our taste, like in music streaming services such as Spotify, or video platforms

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[2] Parts of this contribution anticipate an in-depth investigation of the relationship between computation and aesthetics with the provisional title *Artificial Aesthetics* (forthcoming), by Lev Manovich and Emanuele Arielli.

like YouTube and Netflix, that keep track of user behaviour, preferences and automatically recommend content we may like (Arielli, 2018). Netflix also uses its data to determine what kind of content to produce in order to maximize the success chance of its movies. Automatic photo improvement is a standard feature in all photo editing in mobile and desktop apps, and also computational analysis of image preferences by users and by professionals has been used to train Networks to evaluate, predict and, eventually, generate images according to their aesthetic value. A further issue is how those systems are pervasively used in the selection and diffusion of images we are exposed to, especially in the digital world, and how this can have a feedback effect on our development of taste, sensitivity, and preferences. An important aspect of these developments is the fact that machine learning systems, neural networks, and what is commonly called Artificial Intelligence (AI) seem to show a self-learning ability and almost autonomous behaviour, reproducing or even surpassing humans in many areas of human competence.

The encounter between AI and aesthetics is crucial because aesthetics is considered a quintessentially human domain and its intractability and complexity have long appeared as not susceptible to algorithmic reduction. Aesthetic phenomena involve a complex relationship between all human faculties, from low-level perceptual mechanisms to higher-level affective, cognitive, and cultural processes. Specifically, art is seen as the pinnacle of human creativity and therefore as one of the last domains in which to test human-machine differences. This is not the place for trying to predict how far AI could develop in the domain of art and aesthetics. Rather, this contribution aims to argue how the contact between those technologies with aesthetics highlights in a new way some traditional issues in our understanding of artistic and aesthetic phenomena.

2. A Map of the Relationships between AI and Aesthetics

First, it is useful to map out the landscape in which machine learning, AI, and aesthetics are connected. In fact, computational technologies could be used both in *describing* artworks, images, and texts (as so-called digital humanities do) and also for *generating* them. An example of this latter case is the deep-learning algorithm that was trained in 2016 to learn Rembrandt's style by analyzing his 346 known paintings and then was asked to generate a brand-new

portrait. The result looked uncannily like a real Rembrandt painting.[3] Another notable example is the painting *Edmond de Belamy* a generative adversarial network image constructed in 2018 by the French arts-collective Obvious. Printed on canvas, the work gained widespread notoriety after Christie's sold it in an auction for almost half a million dollars. Computational approaches can focus on *objects* (such as images, music, texts, artworks, and so on) but also on *subjects*, namely in the analysis of human preferences, people's aesthetic choices, and behaviour.

By crossing the two pairs - description vs generation and object vs subject - we obtain four different domains of application of AI to aesthetics:

	Pattern recognition (analysis and description)	**Pattern generation** (production and prediction)
Objects	**"Studying objects"**	**"Generating objects"**
Subjects	**"Studying subjects"**	**"Generating subjects"**

1.) "Studying objects" means describing them, through the analysis and extraction of objects' formal features, as in the case of the deep-learning algorithm analyzing Rembrandt's paintings and learning his style.

2.) "Generating objects": the system, having been trained with the dataset of Rembrandt's painting, is then used to produce new Rembrandt-looking images.

3.) "Studying people" concerns analyzing people's choices, preferences, and tastes, building their psychological profile of aesthetic experience. An example is the domain of consumer aesthetics, where users of streaming services like Netflix and Spotify have data collected and analyzed by algorithms to determine their habits – resulting in recommendations that

[3] https://www.nextrembrandt.com/

appeal to their tastes.

4.) "Generating Subjects". Recommendation systems in online platforms use models that predict what a user would appreciate. However, by modelling a person's aesthetic judgment, not just his aesthetic behaviour can be predicted, but it is also possible to generate his behaviour and judgment. Modelling listeners' preferences and aesthetic responses allow in principle to simulate how people would behave and react in front of specific objects. If a composer (or the AI itself) creates a new musical variant in J.S. Bach's musical style, an artificial system trained according to people's aesthetic model can formulate its own evaluations and judge if this variant will be appreciated by the people, without surveying real subjects anymore. In this regard, we could imagine a growing use in the future of "artificial judgment" systems that autonomously evaluate if a design artifact, a fashion item or a song have higher or lower aesthetic value. An artificial judge does not simply tell us "what we may also like" (as in traditional recommendation systems), but it would tell us "how much people would appreciate" a specific aesthetic artifact we submit to the system, how people would judge it, or even predict what they would tell us about it.

A typical example of artificial judgment are automated systems for predicting image aesthetic score that make use both of objective metrics (like the quality of the image, sharpness, optimal contrast and colors, etc.) and subjective evaluations. To create such a system, large numbers of people rate lots of images, and this data is used to train a neural network, which can then automatically rate new images.[4] Automatic photo improvement is a standard feature in all photo-editing programs, and also computational analysis of image preferences by users and by professionals has been used to train networks to evaluate, predict and, eventually, generate images according to their aesthetic value. By analyzing people's aesthetic choices, and by extracting the formal features they seem to prefer, we can even speculate how these algorithms could be able to identify aesthetic properties (on the side of objects) and individual preferences (on the side of subjects) of which people are

[4] See https://www.diyphotography.net/rise-machines-googles-ai-will-decide-photos-aesthetically-pleasing/ and https://towardsdatascience.com/deep-image-quality-assessment-30ad71641fac.

not even aware of, but that are manifested in their appreciative behaviour.

3. Between Production and Reproduction

AI is widely used to generate new synthetic artifacts including artworks, music, design items, and texts. Besides the already mentioned generation of a painting in Rembrandt's style, in the same year, researchers at the Sony Computer Science Laboratories in Paris developed a neural network, called DeepBach, that produces choral cantatas in the style of J.S. Bach.[5] Since then, other music-generating algorithms have been developed. In 2019, Deutsche Telekom put together a team of international experts in music and AI to complete Beethoven's unfinished 10th symphony, celebrating the 250th anniversary of his birth. The completed symphony, "Beethoven X - The AI Project", premiered on October 9, 2021, in Bonn. Also, in 2019, an AI used the computing power of a new smartphone model to finish Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" (n. 8, 1822), although this was accomplished with the help of a composer who cherry-picked the best-generated melodies.[6] A prevailing opinion holds that developments like those mentioned above simply mimic existing styles and are not creative at all. They are a sophisticated kind of reproduction, "computational mannerism" so to speak, not of production, and could be considered just more advanced innovations in the long tradition of generative computer art. In those examples, computers analyze pre-existing works and generate variants conforming to their patterns, while trying to introduce some level of variation. These algorithms do not generate styles of music or painting that are completely new: however, it could be just a matter of time until even the experts are deceived and an AI produces artworks that are judged as aesthetically superior to their human variants.

Artificial generation of artworks like those just mentioned could be considered cases of technical reproduction in Walter Benjamin's sense, in which not a particular artifact, but a whole style is reproduced. According to Benjamin, the aura of artworks' unicity had been diminished by photographic reproduction: today, the unicity of an art style or an artist's

[5] https://arxiv.org/abs/1612.01010
[6] https://www.classicfm.com/composers/schubert/unfinished-symphony-completed-by-ai/

oeuvre has been further reduced by the infinite possibilities to generate similar variations.[7] One should bear in mind that the examples mentioned above involve sets of artworks with a good amount of repetition and similarity: low variability enables neural networks to easily extract general features and generate new examples. In other words, it seems particularly straightforward to produce traditional or classical artworks, as they tend to display a clear, recognizable style and follow the specific patterns of an artist, school, or tradition. Machine learning systems are ideally suited to analyze numerous occurrences of an object type with small variations and extract the relevant features. On the contrary, it would be very difficult to reproduce something like the Duchamp-style body of work, since the AI would have to start with the very heterogeneous dataset of this artist's oeuvre, encompassing Fountain, Bottle Rack, the Large Glass, the late *Étant donnés*, and so on.

Typically, conservative views on art consider technical mastery as a criterion for "real art", and many people still do not consider to be art something that does not require higher technical ability. Technical ability, however, means procedural knowledge, and AIs are designed to deal with precisely this kind of knowledge. Clearly, recognizable styles are well-defined problems that can be reduced to computational tasks, while the generation of variants that don't follow compositional rules (like Duchamp's works) results in ill-defined tasks that have no easy procedural solution. "My kid could have done that!", the popular cliché directed at contemporary art, seems now, in an ironic reversal, to turn against the great and stylistically complex - but computationally tractable - art of cultural tradition: even an AI could do that. It is the Duchamp that remains outside AI's creative abilities, at least for now.

This point highlights the nature of our modern understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and art. Reproducing formal features may be relevant for any domain where aesthetics in its sensorial and perceptual form plays a significant role – like in landscaping, design, decoration, or clothing – but art deals primarily with meaning, symbolic and cultural value, and conceptual depth, like Duchamp's intuition against "retinal art" was primarily about. A computer composing Bach sonatas impresses us, but people would probably be less impressed by the generation of the repetitive melodic

[7] This also allows overcoming copyright issues by means of algorithmically generated content: we cannot use a Beatle song without asking for permission and paying a fee, but we could freely make use of an automatically generated Beatle-like song. Online services offering the generation of "musical replicas" are already available.

patterns of Steve Reich's *Piano Phase*. Or a "Frank Stella"-AI generating black paintings would not make any headlines, and neither would do a "Fontana"-robot equipped with an industrial mechanical arm that cuts canvases. Arthur Danto, theorizing about the ultimate detachment of art from aesthetics, did not deny that artworks have some kind of appearance, but he stressed that art differs from non-art in being about some idea or meaning conveyed by an "atmosphere of artistic theory" and a proper institutional context. AI and machine learning applications in art generation, by being completely off base about this point, exacerbate the contemporary rift between a formalist aesthetic view of artifact production and an "aesthetics of meanings" that need deep cultural references and not simply the mimicry of formal and stylistic patterns.

4. Aesthetic Turing Tests

When a machine paints a Rembrandt or composes a Bach sonata, many are tempted to say that this is neither original nor art. This raises questions about the nature of art that are already being asked in philosophical aesthetics: what is the nature of creativity? Which kind of recombination of ideas, unusual analogies, and conceptual connection are considered the mark of originality? If an artifact or an image is the product of devices, algorithms, and technological extensions that generate and reinterpret an artist's or designer's intention, to whom should we attribute authoriality? If the chain of production is mediated by increasingly complex intervention from third-party software (as in post-production image filters or retouching algorithms), how can we determine *where* and by *whom* creative innovation has taken place?

A testing ground in judging the advancement of artificially generated artworks concerns the comparison with human artifacts. In 2020, for example, an undergraduate student at Princeton University used a so-called Generative Adversarial Network (GAN) to produce traditional Chinese landscape paintings that were capable of fooling humans in a visual Turing test.[8]

A Turing test is primarily concerned with the possibility to reproduce human-like artifacts or content that a human judge cannot tell apart from human ones. The relevance

[8] https://arxiv.org/pdf/2011.05552.pdf, "Among the 242 participants, paintings from our model where mistaken as human-produced over half the time."

of the Test has been widely debated in past debates in AI and, similarly, one can question whether it offers a relevant criterion in aesthetics. Producing something that looks similar to the human hand is, as such, not particularly surprising: for example, there are already digital filters or applications being able to turn a photographic image into an oil painting or a pencil drawing. Music can be produced by simple combinatorial pattern generation (see Pachet, Roy, 1999). Moreover, being human-like is not a specific aesthetic value: What about innovative, beautiful, compelling design, or artforms that appear *non-human*?

If we want to judge the aesthetic value of an artifact, we may focus on qualities like "being pleasant", or even "beautiful", "meaningful", "striking", "overwhelming", "funny", but also "shocking", "uncanny", "moving", and so on. Aesthetic judgment is a complex and multi-faceted variable; it is context and domain-dependent and based on individual taste: evaluating tapestry patterns is different from reacting to artwork or poetry. In contrast to well-defined problems like chess, where programming advancement can be rigorously evaluated in terms of playing strength, in aesthetics, there is no single and well-defined utility function that an algorithm could maximize.

Therefore, we are led to revise the aim of a Turing test beyond the simple "imitation game" they are originally based on, and define its purposes differently. For example, we could say that a machine passes such a test if:

I) achieves *superior* human performance (that is, produced something that is ranked higher in beauty, pleasantness, "amazingness" etc.), without regard to similarity to human behaviour. Or, alternatively

II) it manifests the ability to be *creative*, that is, to generate novelty. Or

III) it shows *autonomous* behaviour, in which the machine seems able to produce something unexpected, distant from the programmers' initial parameters and inputs.

A notorious example of superior performance (I) in AI outside aesthetics are programs beating humans in games like chess or go. But even in art, the ability to produce something that is judged to be superior to humans is not new: as early as 1966, an algorithm was programmed to generate Mondrian-like paintings that were judged by the public to be aesthetically more pleasing than the real Mondrian canvases (Noll 1966).

A *creativity* (II) Turing test (actually a so-called *Ada Lovelace*-test, according to some remarks that the mathematician Lovelace already made in the 19th century) would test something generated by the machine by a human public of judges. However, we are not yet inclined to attribute true creativity to machines, no matter how surprising their artifacts are, since we consider them essentially deterministic devices. Someone would even consider purposefulness or consciousness a presupposition for attributing creativity, something machines don't seem to possess (yet). An interesting exception is the case of *AlphaGo*, a program developed by Google DeepMind. The program beat Go world champion Lee Sedol in March 2016. Sedol claimed that the program was able to make incredibly creative moves and that it revealed how certain moves or game strategies that humans' thought were creative, were actually not. In particular, during the second game of the challenge, AlphaGo made a move (n. 37th) that many commentators described as unusually creative, by catching the player off-guard and then allowing the computer to win.[9]

Similar to the issue of creativity is the idea of *autonomy* (III), that is, how much a machine seems to be independent in its behaviour from the programming and the input settings, and how much its products are unexpected and unpredictable to the human observer. On one side, there is no clear-cut criterion for autonomy: is a mono-cellular organism autonomous? What about an insect? In attributing autonomy, the line we draw is not based on pre-determined criteria, but is based on a great deal of subjectivity: there are cultural and subjective reasons behind the fact that we attribute autonomy (or "will") to a fruit fly (or even a bacteria), but not to machines like AlphaGo, no matter how complex these are.

More generally, these examples show how in this domain any technological progress remains dependent on what the human being can evaluate and understand. This is a crucial point, because our ability to understand what a machine generates and to determine how innovative and extraordinary its products are, remains the ultimate filter (leaving the dystopic scenario aside in which only machines will evaluate what other machines do). Our capacity to make sense and interpret what the machine is offering us is limited and

[9] According to one professional player: "All but the very best Go players craft their style by imitating top players. AlphaGo seems to have totally original moves it creates itself", https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-korea-alphago-20160312-story.html

inherently "human": a machine generating inhuman or *alien* aesthetics, transcending our understanding, would go unnoticed or simply deemed by us as meaningless.

5. Externalized and Extended Aesthetics

Autonomy, free will, and unconstrained creativity reveal how independence from human intervention is considered a crucial benchmark in the evolution of artificial systems. From this perspective, decisional autonomy is one aspect of the technical evolution of devices: from a thermostat "deciding" when to stop heating according to a target temperature to a self-driving car regulating its speed according to traffic conditions. However, if we solely focus on the question of autonomy against or independently from a human decision, we would miss the main perspective from which we have always observed technological development: namely expansion, integration, and enhancement of human action and experience. Under this premise, machine learning and AI should be considered a further step in our *tool-making* ability in expanding humans' skills through devices. Therefore, their impact should be measured not in their theoretical degree of autonomy from human choice, but in their influence and contribution to human potentialities. Technical devices account for the possibility to externalize cognitive and manual tasks and to extend human capability beyond its natural limits. We are used to the notion of the external (and extended) mind in philosophy and cognitive science when we refer to writing and memory devices. Technological development allows for externalization and automation of memory and reasoning, but we could also speculate that aesthetic production happens more and more "outside", employing tools that take up part of the creative work. The so-called "extended mind" paradigm could be here coupled with an understanding of technology not as a separate entity from human nature, but as a process of integration and augmentation between mind and technology (Simondon, 1958).

In the specific case of art, tools like paper, canvas, pencils, chisels, music instruments, and photo and video cameras, all made it possible to produce artworks that otherwise would have been not possible to craft. AI used to produce artworks would represent in this sense a further evolution. Artist Mario Klingemann, a leading exponent of AI-art, concisely said: "If you heard someone playing the piano, would you ask: 'Is the piano the artist?' No. So, same thing here. Just because it is a complicated mechanism, it

doesn't change the roles […] The typewriter enables someone to write a book. For me, the keyboard enables me to write code, […] there are neural networks involved that maybe you could say that they are my brushes that I learn to use."[10] Klingemann does concede the possibility to consider the machine like a child one puts "out in the world alone", trusting that he will keep on doing what the artist/parent hoped he would do., Unlike a piano, there is indeed a moment in which the artist may decide to take his hands "off the keyboard" and let the machine follow its course without human intervention.

Externalization and automation also involve our imaginative potentialities. Imagination is the capacity of internal generation of non-existent things, through novel combinations and transformation of elements, and is a crucial faculty for creativity. Technologies like those mentioned above contribute to visualizing images that we were before able to see only with the "mind's eye" of our imagination. Now, we can see a photo transformed into a painting in the style of Van Gogh, or into a new Monet landscape, or read a new text generated in the style of Shakespeare[11], and so on.

"Artificial imagination" would in this sense be a specific extension of our creative potential. We have biologically limited visual acuity, but microscopes and telescopes allowed us to amplify the realm of the visible. Similarly, our cognitive calculation skills and memory have upper limits, but calculators and computers expanded those skills.[12] Along this line of argumentation, one could speculate that also aesthetic skills (imagination, perceptual sensibility, capacity of formal innovation) have human limits. We could even suppose the existence of natural "peak creativity" levels determining "bounded" aesthetic skills in humans. Would then an artificial extended aesthetics allow augmenting our aesthetics skills, both in deepening our sensibility and our creative process? We could envisage a future in which composers or writers stuck in their creative process could make use of systems giving them suggestions, evaluating alternative ways to go on with their work, and testing if their idea could meet the positive response from the public. Advanced computational systems would then be a further evolution of devices that are already used in creative disciplines, such as graphic programs, computer-aided design technology, music

[10] https://www.sothebys.com/ens/articles/artificial-intelligence-and-the-art-of-mario-klingemann, interview conducted for the installation *Memories of Passerby I*, 2019.
[11] https://spectrum.ieee.org/this-ai-poet-mastered-rhythm-rhyme-and-natural-language-to-write-like-shakespeare.
[12] This is the classical view of human "bounded rationality" defined by Herbert Simon and of technology as a means of overcoming the natural limitations of our brains.

software, and so on. Our engagement with technology, by expanding and modifying the way we create, would eventually influence how cultural evolution is shaped.

We must also keep in mind that these extensions affect not only the creative process (see above: "Generating objects"), but also the way we describe and analyze cultural and aesthetic products ("Studying objects"). Technologies based on the analysis of big data, supported by the evolution of deep learning algorithms and AI, potentially make it possible to extract new patterns in complex cultural phenomena by analyzing huge amounts of information and detecting previously unthinkable connections. For example, researchers from MIT's and Microsoft created in 2020 an algorithm able to discover unnoticed similarities and hidden formal connections between works of art on display at the New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum.[13]

Here we can conclude by making an analogy to Walter Benjamin's notion of the "optical unconscious", according to which visual reproductive technologies allowed us to see things differently, magnifying them in greater details, slowing them down, or presenting them in new configurations through montage and so on. Similarly, AI and machine learning make undetected connections visible, like a microscope or a telescope allowing the perception of things that were not possible to see with the naked eye. In a word, they allow bringing *data unconscious* to light. *Unconscious* is however an ambiguous notion and could be both interpreted as bringing buried and hidden structures to the surface and as an ex-nihilo construction of patterns and Gestalts that almost creatively make use of data, like star constellations. These would constitute two sides of the same coin: seeing connections and building new connections, where the tools that are used for the analysis of huge cultural data are the same employed for the generation of artificial artworks. *Extended* aesthetics, therefore, involves processes that are relevant for both sides of reception and creation, and focusing on technological advancements in this domain appears crucial for contemporary debates in (philosophical) aesthetics as well.

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The Aesthetic Paradox of Artistic Improvisation (and its Solution)

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ABSTRACT. I explore aspects of the relationship between artistic improvisation and aesthetic normativity by addressing an *aesthetic paradox* that sometimes arises in particular in the case of so-called free improvisations, i.e., kinds of artistic improvisation that are not based on themes, plots, or choreographies: namely, that an improvised performance that is appreciated as a successful one is not perceived *as* an improvisation.

1. The Aesthetic Paradox of Improvisation

Although one may know, or suppose, that a particular performance of music, theatre or dance is, may have been, improvised, sometimes it is hard or even impossible to grasp its improvisational quality. The performance may succeed so well that it seems to have been studiously prepared in advance according to a predetermined plan. As a consequence, the audience may question the improvisational nature of the performance. In this case, the artistic success of improvisation appears as the failure of the performance *as improvised*. What is (paradoxically) unforeseen here is the fact that the unforeseen does not show itself.

Of course, artistic success is a trade-off between different aspects of an artwork or performance. But typically, when we witness a performance of "free" or radical improvisation in dance, music, theatre, or performative poetry – that is: improvisations not based on chord structures, scripts, choreography, or some other type of instruction or rule explicitly established prior to the performance – we expect to see a performance that is not without moments of uncertainty, situations of imbalance and tension, and perhaps even inappropriate aspects or

elements. Perceiving that everything is going the right way confuses our expectations and makes us doubt that the performance is an improvisation at all. We may indeed think that something is actually not going the right way because the artists are deceiving us.

Yet the performance is indeed improvised and improvisers are not following any explicit action plan. When it really works, we may not perceive its improvised character, even though, as has happened to me several times, it could be the first time that the musicians have played together. As I shall argue, perceiving the improvisation as so successful that it seems impossible that it could have been improvised – hence, perceiving it as a failed improvisation – is usually not the fault of the performers or the performance. It is *our* fault because we lack the capacity to follow the performance properly; we fail, as it were, to become part of it.

2. Improvisation

A short definitional outline of improvisation is in order before we proceed. A very basic, and admittedly partial, general definition is this: Improvisation is the act of doing something "on the spot", without preparation, precision, proper means, or the following of planned instructions.

Hence, improvisation as such "presents us with something that comes into being only at the time of its presentation" (Benson, 2003, p. 25): in other words, improvisation involves the coincidence between invention and realization. The action plan is set up in the process. Improvisation articulates the norms of its own action, "on the spur of the moment". Consequently, the context, the circumstances, and the contingency of the action re-enter into the performative action as constitutive elements.

3. Evaluating Improvised Art

In this regard, the aesthetic evaluation of artistic improvisation is a thorny issue. How is artistic improvisation to be evaluated? When can artistic improvisation be assessed as successful?

3.1. Standard Criteria

As already argued by Alperson (1984, p. 22), some aesthetic criteria apply to artistic improvisation even though the performance is an improvisation. The dynamism and the dramatic expressive power of a dialogue between actors, the formal coherence and intelligible development of improvised music or poem, the grace of the movements of a dancer, and many other qualities such as originality, intensity, virtuosity, etc. can be reasons for aesthetically appreciating an artistic phenomenon regardless of its improvisational character. As Davies (2021, p. 145) writes, "[o]ne reason for thinking that some improvisations are artworks is that they are appreciable in the same ways as other things that are unquestionably artworks".

3.2. Evaluating the Making

However, judging improvisation in this way is not enough. Indeed, we want to say that improvisation has its own specific aesthetic legitimacy: that of a practice that exhibits the making in the product. We do not only evaluate improvisation as a product but as a product of a particular kind of production.

Yet, of course, considering improvisation as a practice that exhibits the making in the product does not solve our problem. Not all artworks that phenomenally display their producer's making are improvisational works: for instance, careful technical and formal preparation, which is far from being improvised, may be displayed by a movie. The display of the producer's making is therefore a necessary but not sufficient condition for the aesthetic justification of improvisation. The aesthetic justification of improvisation – which provides the reason why improvisation can have a specific aesthetic value – requires that the making is not only displayed by what is perceived but is also directly perceived as shaping the performance's artistic content. As studies about improvisational practices in different arts suggest (see for instance Bertinetto and Ruta, 2021), the aesthetic perception of improvisational performances is marked by a distributed attention between the artistic phenomenon at issue and the making that produces it. In other words, the making is not only important as regards a particular performance that is responsible for some artistic content: the making as such is *aesthetically* important.

This is consistent with Tarasti's (2002) semiotic view of improvisation as an indication of the contingency of the performance situation within the performance itself, that is, as a signal of artistic production through the product which is part of the artistic content of the performance that is aesthetically appreciated. So, the artistic production process becomes part of the aesthetic content of the work or performance. As Davies (2021, p. 151) argues,

> […] improvisational actions, no less than their products, can be objects of aesthetic contemplation. […] [O]ur aesthetic interest in an improvised performance is an interest both in the construction, qua improvised product, and in the action of constructing it, qua improvised performance.

As regards improvised music, the focus of appreciation is not only the perceived music but also the way sounds are produced and organized, thereby producing music. In improvisational theatre, the focus of appreciation is the narrated fictional story *and* the way gestures, actions, and words are produced and organized, thereby staging a story. Indeed, two stories are told at the same time: the fictional story told by the staged drama and the story of the actors staging the drama. Viewers are induced to distribute their perception between the actors' acting and the fiction of the characters whose actions are staged. Analogously in other artistic practices, distributed perception allows us to directly grasp the making as aesthetically relevant in the produced artistic outcomes. Although distributed in this way, the perception is focused on the emergence of the artistic content from the artists' practice (the perceptual attention has a target and is distributed among its properties: cf. Nanay, 2016).

In other words, the audience focuses not only on the articulated artistic material and content and on the aesthetic qualities depending on it; the audience attends also

> to features of the performance whereby these qualities are realized, hearing it as exploratory in nature and as produced in real time so that features that might be heard as flaws in a polished performance of a classical work will be heard as contributing to the overall content and point of the work. It is not merely that […] we must attend both to structural values of the improvised product and to aesthetic features of the improvisational action such as "sensitivity, lyricism, and general virtuosity." Rather, we must attend to the performance as one whose artistic content is intended to be articulated in the very process of generating the improvisational product through the improvisational action. (Davies, 2021, p. 154)

The articulation of the artistic material is part of the focus of the audience's attention. We are witnessing the development of the aesthetic sense of the artistic material. The development of the aesthetic sense of what happens is evident above all when events and situations occur that could jeopardize the performance's success but are instead accepted in the performance as affordances to creativity (Bertinetto, 2016).

4. Improvisation as Action vs Improvisation as Process

The idea that in improvisation the maker's activity is offered up to aesthetic appreciation has recently been challenged. Pierre Saint-Germier and Clement Canonne (2021) question the idea that the focus of artistic appreciation is not only the final product but also the performance as the improvisers' action. They argue that the target of the audience's appreciation is the very product of an improvised performance as a *process*, the aesthetic qualities of which cannot be reduced to syntactical relations among artistic materials such as sounds and expressive gestures but should be located in the unfolding performance. Indeed,

> the fact that the sonically realized aesthetic qualities of [a musical improvisation] depend at least causally, and perhaps constitutively, in corresponding qualities in the [musician's] actions, does not imply that those aesthetic properties primarily attach to the underlying activity, rather than to the actual stream of sounds he produces. (Saint-Germier, Canonne, 2021, p. 119)

Accordingly, although the aesthetic focus of improvisation is its dynamic quality, it's being a process, i.e. the music as a flow unfolding continuously through time, listeners are not meant to pay attention to the maker's activity. Of course, the target of appreciation is not a structured object but a process. Still, the causal link between the maker and the product is not part of what is appreciated and is not relevant for the evaluation criteria. While being properties of a process and not of an object, the aesthetic properties of the improvised music are not properties of the actions producing them.[14]

This idea is interesting. Indeed, it seems to do justice to the intuition that art has to do with appearances, and that the way the artwork is produced is to be understood as a technical means to an aesthetic end, rather than as an aesthetic end in itself. If the artistic goal of the

[14] According to Saint-Germier and Canonne, this applies also to improvisation in arts other than music.

improvisational practice is the unexpected, it is not so much the production activity that must be unexpected, but the artistic result that is the target of aesthetic appreciation.

Still, I do not find this view completely compelling. First, I do not see why viewers and listeners cannot have an aesthetic interest in the activity that is causally related to the processual character of the art they are perceiving. In point of fact, they perceive not only the dance or the music, for instance, as an unfolding process, but also how the process is engendered (especially when they are attending to a live performance). Although, arguably, not all information they get from perceiving the artists at work is relevant for the aesthetic focus of appreciation, denying that this plays a role at least in providing a cue for grounding the aesthetic qualities of the music, the dance, etc. as the unfolding process does not seem to be plausible. Second, the notion of process is not exclusive to improvisation. Generative art seems to be perfectly well understood as an art form whose main aspect is to manifest itself as a process, rather than as an object. Yet generative art, such as Brian Eno's generative music, is not improvised but instead created by systems designed or initiated by composers, that work producing variations by executing algorithms. The difference between generative art and artistic improvisation is indeed that in the second, but not in the first, the process quality of the artistic content which is the focus of appreciation depends, in an aesthetically relevant way, on the actions producing them. In fact, the material gets its shape and makes sense as artistic content thanks to the qualities of these actions, which develop by responding to what happens in the moment of the performance.

In any case, even if the "procedural thesis", as we can call it, were right, and the "action thesis" wrong, this would not imply the rejection of the view that, besides cultural constraints and the aesthetic standards of a practice, the evaluation of improvisation must take into account the fact that, as is clear, especially in the cases of so-called free improvisation, what is going on here is a performance that develops in a self-organizing way: it is not simply the application of a predetermined plan, such as a script or a score, but the shaping of an articulated artistic content, which makes – or it is supposed to make – aesthetic sense, through the confrontation with a developing contingent performance situation.

5. Normativity as Sense-Making and the Aesthetic Paradox

To cut a long story short, I take it as essential for artistic improvisation, and its aesthetic appreciation, that the process of its making, including the actions accomplished by its performers, is displayed as the performance's aesthetic content. Different from the interpretive rendition of an already prepared artistic construct, improvisation is the articulation of the aesthetic sense of artistic material in the performative process and as an unfolding process. Of course, the performance as a procedural activity of dancers, musicians, and actors is different from the performance as a procedural artistic result of this activity. The fact remains that improvisation presents the process of articulating an artistic content through (cor)responding to unexpected contingency as the focus of appreciation – while generative art does not. If one does not perceive the formation of an artistic content that makes an aesthetic sense, that is, an aesthetic sense in formation – i.e., the artistic product as a *sense-making process* –, the process is hardly grasped as improvisational. At stake in the aesthetic experience of an artistic improvisation is not simply the quality of the performance as a process (and not as an object), but the quality of artistic performance as a process of aesthetic *sense-making*.

Thus, although norms – such as formal, stylistic, syntactic social constraints – are in play in even the freest improvisations, the audience is attending to the negotiation through and within the performance of the way to achieve artistic goals, and sometimes even to the very formation of artistic goals themselves. Consequently, the particular artistic character of improvisation seems to rely on the generation of specific criteria for its aesthetic evaluation on the spot.

In this regard, the *aesthetic paradox* of improvisation comes into play. As mentioned above in Section 1, the paradox goes as follows. If an improvisation manifests the unpreparedness and the uncertainty of the performance, it displays artistic failure; if it exhibits a successful performance, it is not perceived *as* improvisation.

The paradox seems to present a problem of *aesthetic unforeseen*: the appearance of successful improvisation is taken as (the performance of) a previously prepared artwork, i.e., in Saint-Germier's and Canonne's words, is perceived as an "object" and not as a "process"; therefore, as improvisation, it fails to satisfy the audience's aesthetic expectations: in this sense it is unforeseen. Unfortunately, it is unforeseen in the wrong way.

Thus, a successful improvisation can conceal what it is, i.e., an improvisation. Consequently, aesthetically misunderstanding an improvisation as carefully planned, studied, and prepared – i.e., as not improvised – can be an indication of its artistic success, thereby at the same time possibly being a symptom of the failure of the perceptual appreciative performance.[15]

6. Normativity in *statu nascendi*

In order to avoid this misunderstanding, and to appreciate a performance both as successful and as improvised, it must be considered that improvisation is neither, as such, absolute creation nor uncreative repetition. In improvisation, innovative invention emerges through the application of the known as a condition for felicitously coping with contingency, and in coping with contingency the extant norms and skills are put into play, re-organized, and (trans)formed. This coping with contingency – which is articulated in the multifarious interactions in which improvisation consists – (trans)forms the known, *making* it unexpected.

In improvisation normativity works in such a way that the applications of cultural, technical, and aesthetic norms continuously transform normativity as they are confronted with the reality of the contingent performance: Wittgenstein's (1958, p. 39) saying "We make up the rules as we go along" suits perfectly improvisation. This is, generally speaking, also the aesthetic theme of improvisation: *normativity-as-transgression*. Again, this implies that the aesthetic success of improvisation may appear as the negation of improvisation.

As rightly observed by Bertram 2021, in improvisation what, against the background of expectations, is unexpected, is welcomed as an impulse or as an *affordance* (Gibson, 1979) that prompts re-actions and, since it is developed by the responses elicited, it "changes the way the practice is continued" (Bertram, 2021, p. 23). Each event in the performance is both an impulse to the ensuing responses and a response to the previous impulses. Improvisation forms and transforms itself through the way the interactions of the performance produce events that, being both impulses and responses, construct "constraints for themselves" (Bertram, 2021, p. 25). Normativity is generated through the way an event is taken as an impulse or affordance

[15] As I argued elsewhere (Bertinetto, 2021, pp. 73-6), both the "Romantic" prejudice of the immediacy and absolute spontaneity of improvisation and the "Adornian" prejudice of the falsity of improvisation fall victims to the aesthetic paradox of improvisation: they arise from misconceptions of the normativity of improvisation.

that elicits a response that retroactively makes the impulse binding, by adhering to it and accepting it as a normative force – or, conversely, deviating from it, rejecting it, and denying it its sense. Through the collaborative or conflictual interactions within the performance, which appear aesthetically in the artistic content thereby progressively developed, norms are formed and transformed in the course of an improvisation. As Bertram (2021, p. 29) nicely remarks: "The constant making of norms (norms in *status nascendi*) is what explains improvisation's creativity".

In fact, the norms and skills that are in place as cultural and technical pre-conditions of the artistic improvisational practice are also themselves retroactively transformed by the performance that applies them: they are "plastic" because they absorb the contingent performative situation, adapting to it and transforming themselves in unexpected ways with respect to the expectations they previously elicited.

7. (Dis)Solving the Aesthetic Paradox

Moreover, the skills for producing the unexpected also include perception. The unexpected is not simply something that happens but is something that should be perceived as what it is, i.e., *as* unexpected. By developing an "ability to notice" (in) the flow (Doughty, 2019, p. 147), performers should be able to perceive the unexpected even though they cannot anticipate it. They have to be able to grasp aesthetic and artistic events and qualities that do not precisely fit within the normative order of the performance, thereby making the normativity of improvisation transform. As Bertram (2021, p. 30) writes:

> the perceptive skills that ground improvisation must be open towards non-normalized impulses, which makes it possible for improvisers to overcome given patterns and established schemes. Only through such openness can improvisers assess the unexpected affordances of impulses. In this sense, the process of unlearning and relearning in improvisation applies not only to playing and acting but also to perception.

In other words, as famously claimed by saxophonist Lee Konitz, performers must "not be prepared" and "that takes a lot of preparation" (quoted in Hamilton, 2010, p. 55): in order to perceive the unexpected and properly deal with it, performers have to prepare themselves by

training in the skill of perceiving the unexpected and reacting to it appropriately. In point of fact, only by practicing improvisation do performers acquire the ability to participate in the *making sense process* in which improvisation – as the articulation *in fieri* of an aesthetic normativity as *trans-formation*, or as an "artistic grammar of contingency" (Bertinetto, 2021) – consists.

My point is that this kind of preparation that happens through, and thanks to, a practice for which one should already actually be prepared, is what is also required by the improvisation's viewers and listeners. The audience also has to develop the skills of perceiving the unexpected as a reason for a (trans)formation of normativity. In other words, they must participate through their perception in the transformative *sense-making* process driven by the performers' actions aesthetically displayed as sounds, gestures, movements, etc.

Appreciators should not exclusively rely on the evaluation criteria in place of the artistic improvisational practice at issue as parameters external to the situational concreteness of the performance; instead, they should welcome aesthetic criteria as plastic norms, capable of interacting with the contingent unexpectedness of the single case that retroacts on the evaluation standards, thereby contributing to their trans-formation.

As aforementioned, in improvisational interactions the sense of each move is retroactively generated by the reactions to the following moves (Bertram, 2010 & 2021) and normativity emerges as (trans)formed through the process. Nothing is *per se* a mistake (Bertinetto, 2016): it is a mistake when no reactions follow such as to welcome what happened as an invitation to the performative articulation of normativity, presenting it instead as a stumbling block, a deviation from the rule or indeed an error.

This requires, even on the part of the perceiving public, particular attention to the specific case, a readiness of responsive reaction to what happens: that is, it requires staying in the moment, not as a fixation on the present as an instant detached from the context, but rather as a participation in the performance flow. The "grammar of contingency" that is concretely specific to improvisation invites perceivers to focus their attention on what happens as produced through the artists' interactions with each other, with the materials, with the situation, and with the audience. And since this process involves, or is, the (trans)formation of artistic normativity, the process of normativity (or normativity as process) is (part of) what improvisation is about, i.e. (of) the aesthetic theme or content of improvisation: improvisation makes *sense* as a process of sense-*making*. Therefore, the aesthetic perception of improvisation

is itself an achievement, something one has to be prepared for, even though, when it happens, the aesthetic experience is, somehow, unexpected.

Why is it, therefore, that improvisation, when it succeeds and makes sense, may appear as not improvised – and therefore failed as improvisation? Improvisation may appear as not improvised, and consequently as a failed improvisation, in spite of being a successful performance, because its sense does not appear in its making, but rather as *made* (or *ready-made*). Briefly, since the activity of sense-making does not appear as such, the improvisation does not appear as such. The answer to the aesthetic conundrum I am focussing on in this article, I contend, must be sought precisely in the unpreparedness of the public's perception, in its inability to adapt to the improvisational process through a *perceptive performance which is also (a kind of) improvisation*. In order for the improvisation to appear as such, spectators must assume the perspective of the participants in the ongoing practice, so that their aesthetic appreciative perception *corresponds* to, and is attuned with, the articulation of artistic normativity *in fieri* in which artistic improvisation consists.

In other words, as jazz pianist and improvisation researcher Vijay Iyer (2004) avers, the proper perception of an improvisation is itself *improvisational*: it adapts to a process that is characterized, potentially, by unpredictability, by means of being itself unpredictable and ready to change as regards expectations, aesthetic attitudes, and even criteria of evaluation. Improvised art calls for participatory perception. Entering an in-between state of joint attention and awareness, the audience members immerse themselves in the process of the spontaneous decision-making of the performance and so an implicit collaborative partnership with the artists may emerge (Machon, 2019). A *shared* experience – an experience which is lived through together – then develops (Linson, Clarke, 2017), not only between performing artists but also between artists and audience, since the audience shares with performers the attitudes and feelings of curiosity, trust, joy, alertness, sensitivity, adventure, risk, frustration and wonder that are gesturally expressed and impressed in the improvised performance. Perceivers are not only contemplative observers: they actively participate in the negotiation of the artistic shape and sense of the performance.

The audience members feel or perceive the artistic performance as improvised when they feel proprioceptively – and empathically – that their perception is also moving, so to speak, in an improvised way. For instance, listeners to a musical improvisation have to play, as it were, with their experience of the performance, even while they are witnessing it; thereby they

have to experiment with the perceptual possibilities opened up by the improvised music by shaping sounds as music as they are produced; they have to feel their being-in-the-moment while still imagining possible ways in which the performance might develop – and these imagined expectations, in as much as they are fulfilled in the course of the performance, will then impact the actual perception of the performance. Something along the same lines can be argued also for the perception of theatrical or dance improvisation.

This is not an easy task, however. Accomplishing the task of producing the unexpected while also perceiving the performance requires training and exposure to the practice at issue. Hence, there are good and bad improvising listeners and spectators: they can improvise *well* if they are cultivated, and if they 'know how' to act as listeners and spectators. Listeners can actively perceive the music improvised, playfully interacting with it, if – and to the extent to which – they know, or can grasp, what is happening. The skill of "playing with the music", i.e., of grasping its sense, while it is being invented in the course of performance, depends upon the listeners' experience and knowledge of musical traditions, instrumental techniques, performing conventions, musicians' personal styles, and artistic personalities, etc. Yet, through the practice of perception, understood as repeated and continuous perceptual exposure to artistic improvisation, it is possible to develop a proprioceptive sense of "being-in-the-moment" while perceiving and being attuned to the "being-in-the-moment" of the improvised performance. Thus, perceivers can train themselves to resonate with the improvised event, savoring the improvised character of perception understood not only as a feeling of concomitance between plan and realization but also as a feeling of concomitance between the unfolding of perception and the unfolding of the performative event, i.e., as "the sense that the improviser is working, creating, generating musical material in the same time in which we are co-performing as listeners" (Iyer, 2016, p. 80)". Perceivers also can, or rather should prepare themselves for being *rightly* unprepared.

8. Conclusion: Improvisation as the Enactment of the Aesthetic Judgment

It is not, I repeat, an easy task; but it is a key task of the aesthetic appreciation as such. As I have argued elsewhere by adopting a Kantian view of aesthetic evaluation (Bertinetto, 2021, pp. 169-183), in point of fact whoever aesthetically appreciates something does not apply abstract criteria to concrete cases regardless of the work's concreteness. Indeed, aesthetic

evaluative concepts exert normative force only through interaction with the contingency of single cases and are (trans)formed in virtue of the specific applications to concrete works. Thus, the logic, as it were, of aesthetic judgment is (analogous to) that of improvisation, and improvisation may be rightly understood as the enactment or the performance of aesthetic judgment (Peters, 2017).

Artistic improvisation invites perceivers to exercise a performance of aesthetic evaluation that has as its target a performative enactment of aesthetic evaluation through the arrangement of materials offered for appreciation in which artistic normativity is generated in the exercise of a grammar of contingency. Hence, when a performance of free improvisation appears as a perfect and complete organization of a content in which a sense has been made, rather than as a live process of making sense, the doubt about the improvisational nature of the performance suggests to us that we ought to refine our perception, sensitizing it through repeated practice, in order to grasp the aesthetic emergence of the artistic sense of the performance from the interaction with contingency. This training, I claim, is not only a fundamental ground for exercising and improving our aesthetic perception and the aesthetic judgment of improvisations, but is a crucial requirement of aesthetic perception as such. Therefore, practically solving the aesthetic paradox of improvisation, through repeated exercise aimed at grasping the emergence of the unexpected aesthetic sense of improvisation as a constitutive part of its artistic content, trains us in the practice of aesthetic evaluation as such.[16]

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[16] This paper was made possible thanks to financial support from the research project "Normative aspects of aesthetic appreciation" (PID2019-106351GB-I00) of the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. A previous version of this paper was discussed at the online ESA conference in June 2021. I am grateful to E. Arielli, E. Terrone and other participants in the Q&A session. I also thank CAPES PRINT for having offered me a "bolsa de professor visitante Chamada interna PRPG 04/2019" in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

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European Society for Aesthetics

The Pictorial Narrator

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ABSTRACT. This paper argues that paintings manifest something akin to effaced narrators. The account is developed starting from the paradigmatic cases found in the literature, and revised to fit visual cases. I argue, against longstanding objections, that viewers represent all pictorial content mediately. My novel model provides a principled way to distinguish between mediated access that goes via 'empty' or 'vacant' perspectives and ones that are 'occupied' or 'expressive'. In the final section, I briefly sketch out the model and the productive upshots in regard to our concept of pictorial narrators.

In our everyday discourse, we make frequent reference to pictorial narrative. We say that the caves at Lascaux depict hunting stories, that quattrocento paintings magniloquently encapsulate tales of good and evil, and that Hogarth's multipart paintings are humorous and political commentary (Baxandall, 1988; Jones, 2018; Greshko, 2019; Bataille, 1955). Yet, a more precise question concerning narrators and their relation to these so-called pictorial narratives remains overlooked.

Kendall Walton is an exception. In his paper *Points of view in narrative and depictive representation,* he compares literary and pictorial cases (Walton, 1976). He sceptically concludes that when it comes to pictorial narratives, picture viewers can just directly see what goes on. So, no narrator is required. Whereas for novels the narrator plays a crucial role because "he mediates the reader's access to the rest of the fictional world; we know what happens in the fictional world only from his reports about it." (Walton, 1976, p.50)

Yet Walton also notes that some paintings can give us the impression of the kind of person who created them. This kind of intuition has been developed into a persona theory of

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expression by Jenifer Robinson who strengthens 'can' to 'must' in respect of expressive paintings (Robinson, 2005). She says some pictures, for example, Delacroix's *Raft of the Medusa*, contain a psychological trace of the artist who created them and that meaning coheres and unifies through the perspective of the actual painter of the work. The viewer can only adequately apprehend the picture if they appreciate the scene from the artist's emotional point of view as it is implied into the work.[18]

Hence, it is not really clear where theorists stand in regard to the ontological status of *pictorial narrators*. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to reflect on the following:

(1) Can paintings manifest something akin to a literary narrator?
(2) If they can, they how might they do this?

In part I, I sketch out the concept of a paradigmatic narrator - as found in novels - which I roughly map onto putative pictorial cases. In Part II I consider some existing friendly and sceptical responses to (1) and reconstruct some suggestions in regard to (2). The evaluation includes building a basic taxonomy of implied, explicit, and effaced narrators. I show that there is a gap in the current literature regarding *effaced* narrators. In Parts III and IV, I work constructively, offering a novel argument that shows it is reasonable to think there are effaced pictorial narrators. My goal being to narrow the skeptic's options rather than offer a watertight explanation for (2).

My argument hinges on a precise articulation of the role that perspectives play *per se* in our engagement with pictures. In the first instance, I draw attention to something that needs to be explained. This is the need to explain the relationship between immediate (direct) and mediated perspectives in respect of pictorial content. The explanation respects the way in which paintings fix their vantage points. I show how this entails that our pictorial representations **must** be mediated, at least in terms of when and where events are seen as taking place, *pace* Walton. In order to see the objects in a Chardin still life, we must shift (imaginatively) into a pictorial perspective that is distinct from our actual perspective.

In the second instance, I show that the ubiquity of mediated pictorial perspectives grounds the explanation for pictorial narrators. Encountering the Chardin from merely a Spatio-temporal

[18] Walton does not endorse Robinson's view and Robinson is not claiming that (a) she develops Walton's intuition or (b) implied painters just are pictorial narrators.

perspective precludes the viewer from seeing the painting as a tender, gentle and loving record of the domestic scene. To see the Chardin this way (richly and expressively) requires that the viewer shift into something like a 'Nagelian' perspective (Nagel 1974). This provides the distinction we need to locate the pictorial narrator.

1. The Narrator

The wealth of historical, biblical, and mythological paintings suggest it is reasonable to think that some pictures do more than depict objects; they can recount events in a way that renders them dramatically intelligible, conveying psychologically infused perspectives, not merely information. Call these 'pictorial narratives'.

But, how do pictures *narrate*? An intuitive answer is that pictorial narratives prescribe viewers to imagine pictorial *narrators*. This makes use of a distinction familiar from the philosophy of literature between narrative (story) and narrator (teller). The distinction is settled in that domain along with the idea that 'story' and 'teller' can be transposed between mediums (Carroll, 2009). Call this the symmetry claim (Diehl, 2009). If one thinks literary narratives imply narrators and one is committed to a symmetry claim, then pictorial narratives imply pictorial narrators.

Meanwhile, Bence Nanay has independently argued that the right account of narrative will "cover both pictorial and literary cases" (Nanay, 2009:119). He notes that while there is an apparent asymmetry in the way the verbal and visual mediums are time-sliced and time-sequenced, this should not prohibit us from referring to 'pictorial narratives' (Nanay, 2009). I will adopt his distinction between mere depictions and pictorial narratives in what follows. Nanay defines a narrative picture using the following bi-conditional.

A picture is a Pictorial Narrative if and only if a suitable spectator is supposed to undergo an experience of 'engaging with narrative' when apprehending it.

The definition invites further questions. I will distinguish between 'mere depictions' and 'pictures that convey psychologically infused points of view' in what follows. In other words, I side-step the thorny issue of sorting out what exactly pictorial narratives are or becoming entangled in definitional worries arising from Nanay's paper.

Despite Nanay's sympathy for the symmetry claim, discussions in the philosophy of *pictures* trend toward scepticism in regard to pictorial narratives and specifically the possibility

of pictorial narrators (Walton, 1976). Yet, there is general agreement that pictures can 'convey psychological points of view'. This has led Kendall Walton to argue that there is "no counterpart to a narrator in depiction" since "one's access to the fictional world is not mediated by another (fictional) person" (Walton, 1976, p.50). On his view, the scope of our scepticism should be both phenomenal - we do not have a sense of going through another fictional person - as well as epistemic - we do not need narrators to "mediate access to the rest of the fictional world.

Roughly, this gives us '*Scepticism'*

Scepticism

(I) Some narratives are pictorial

(II) Our access to picture content is direct (i.e., not mediated).

(III) So, pictorial narratives do not imply pictorial narrators and there is no pictorial equivalent to the literary narrator.

In what follows I intend to challenge *Scepticism* by showing that premise (II) is false and so (III) is unpersuasive.

2. Implied Narrators

In this section, I consider the issue of (1) in terms of implied narrators.

In Book Three of the Republic (392c-8b), Plato argues that any narrative requires the actual author to directly impart the story. They do this either by making their identity deliberately obvious to the audience, or, by embedding their voice parenthetically. That is, by imitating a character in the scene. This view, in weak and strong forms, is a commonplace belief outside of philosophy.

James Elkins, an art theorist, promotes a strong formulation (Elkins, 1999). He claims that artists "cannot distinguish themselves from" their paintings (Elkins, 2000, p.165–166) since oil paint is the painter's "life's blood". This means that a "painter's life becomes …a story told in the thicknesses of oil" (Elkins, 2000, p.5). Elkins' view is ontologically dubious resting on the claim that paintings are literally corporeal since they have digestive and psychological properties. Less strongly, art historian David Rosand has asked if there is a,

> …meaning initiating in the artist, a meaning that may itself be mediated by the imitated subject matter but that resides essentially in the visible traces of the painter's gesture. (Rosand, 1981, p.95)

Whether and how facture provides a conceptual tie between artist and image which is 'picked up' by viewers remains unclear in the paper (Rosand, 1981). Analytic philosopher Robinson has tried to clear this up in her book *Deeper than Reason* and subsequent papers (Robinson, 2017). She argues for a conceptual or psychological link holding between the actual artist, and an implied version of themselves which is implied into the picture and which is later recovered from it by a sort of affective attention (Robinson, 2005). Her view is that we detect e.g. *Kokoschka's* emotions in Kokoschka's paintings. However, the two-step process required to 'connect' viewer and artist has been criticised (Brassey, 2019). Robinson's model remains unconvincing. Specifically, her claim that the viewer infers facts about the artist's psychology by reconstructing an implied persona who is a psychological extension of the flesh and blood artist. This makes the connective tissue linking persona and artist tendentious. As a result, securing the claim that implied artists are a *necessary* condition on seeing narrative content in pictures remains unsecured (Brassey, 2021). Recall that *Scepticism* needs to show that there can be a pictorial narrative without a narrator to remain undefeated. The existing views do not overcome this hurdle.

Walton's explicit scepticism in regard to pictorial narrators is accompanied by the observation that we *sometimes* experience a sense of the artist in our apprehension of the work. For example, when we sense the dementedness of Bosch in Bosch's demented narrative paintings of purgatory and hell. Hence, it is better to interpret his *Scepticism* as merely anti-essentialist. This is consistent with his premise II - we do not **need** an implied agent *to mediate our access* to the pictorial content. While this is a slightly weaker position than an outright rejection of implied artists qua narrators, it does not provide reason to disagree with premise (II). Thus, *Scepticism* (III) stands.

3. Explicit Narrators

Plato also mentions another type of narrator. Explicit narrators are characters who the author mentions parenthetically or by imitating a character's manner.

A pictorial example due to art critic Laura Cumming involves two tiny flicks of paint hidden in the ribbed metal breastplate of St. George, in van Eyck's monumental picture, *The Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele* (Cumming, 2009). She interprets these flicks to represent van Eyck in the pictorial scene, lending an ironic 'voice' to the story of the "wily old canon sucking up to the mother of God". We can make sense of this philosophically by drawing on the work of Erie Watkins (Watkins, 1979). Watkins's discussion of explicit pictorial narrators further demonstrates that Walton draws an unreasonably strong conclusion. Recall that Walton has claimed that there is "no counterpart to a narrator in depiction, one's access to the fictional world is not mediated by another (fictional) person ... One does not have a sense of going through another person, of "seeing the fictional world through someone else's eyes," as the reader of a literary narrative does. Watkins however argues that explicit pictorial narrators *do* provide a comparable form of mediation in paintings. He cites several examples where a depicted figure in the depicted world acts as a gateway between the actual world and the one we are looking into. These include Peter Brueghel's *The Peasant and the Birdnester* which features a figure placed between the scene and the viewer, with whom the viewer establishes eye contact and who directs the viewer's attention (that is, toward a human figure climbing the tree in the background). We see this also in Nicolaes Maes's *An Eavesdropper with a Woman Scolding* and in the glint of amusement in the frank gaze of Manet's *Olympia.* Sceptics might be concerned that these characters are not explicit narrators in the sense intended by Plato. But does this matter? Watkins's study illuminates that we miss elements of the story when we do not pay attention to what these characters endeavour to show us. Apart from 'breaking the fourth wall' explicit narrators, he points out the sense in which the partial representation of Gaston La Touche caught lasciviously gazing at the wan barmaid in Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergere* changes the mood of the scene. By changing the mood, the partially seen character mediates and modifies the viewer's access to the story of the barmaid.

From this, it seems that (1) painters *can* paint something akin to a literary narrator and that (2) they do this by parenthetically embedding an attitude or emotion in one of the characters partially or wholly depicted in the pictorial world. An explicit narrator represented in mirror images will enable the viewer to follow their sightline and this will direct the viewer's attention to particular parts of the scene. The best explanation for this interactive way of looking at the pictures is that the figures were put there to imply that these characters belong in the pictorial world but lie partially outside the depicted scene. Their function is to mediate

the viewer's access to pictorial space.

Given that "the location of those persons seems to coincide with our own" concludes Watkins, "we are left with the illusion that we see the depicted world from their point of view" (Watkins, 1979, p. 383). Thus, while Watkins introduces and explores the possibility of mediated attention to the pictorial content, he still accepts Walton's II premise. Explicit narrators 'seem to coincide' with our direct seeing.

Even if we accept the explicit narrator, this still leaves *Scepticism* equipped to deny that all pictorial narratives require narrators.

4. Mediated access to pictures

In this section, I turn from reviewing what has been said, to offering a novel constructive argument that falsifies *Scepticism* premise II. I begin by more precisely articulating the role that perspectives play *per se* in our engagement with pictures. In the first instance, I draw attention to something that needs to be explained. The explanation respects the way in which paintings fix their vantage points and entails that our representations of pictures **must** be mediated, at least in terms of when and where events are seen as taking place.

It is uncontroversial that all-seeing is perspectival. But what is meant by 'perspectival'? The relevant notion is of a literal Spatio-temporal vantage point or outlook from which objects are seen. Or more precisely, from which *the facing or non-occluded parts of the* object is seen. Our perspective determines how much, what aspect, or which bit of that object is most prominent or salient within the visual field and this restricts or constrains how much of the world is in evidence at any given point in time. Take 'I see the cat on the mat' to be shorthand and unpack it. The longhand version is, 'I have a partial perspective from here and now on the parts of the cat that are presented to the viewpoint I currently occupy'.

Although all-seeing is perspectival, not all-seeing uses the same *kind* of perspective. Actual seeing involves actual perspectives. However, non-actual seeing, that is, visualising and, as I will argue, pictorial seeing involves non-actual perspectives. The significance of this is apparent when we consider three jointly consistent claims:

(a) Actual perspectives entail occupied viewpoints.[19]

In other words, I see *that* cat from my actual perspective which I necessarily occupy here and now.

(b) Pictorial seeing entails a viewpoint.

In other words, to see the depicted cat we must see it from a perspective.

(c) Some non-actual perspectives are unoccupied.

In other words, I can see things from a different perspective than the one I or any other subject occupies.

For instance, suppose I see the cat on the mat by looking at it on the CCTV live feed. The viewpoint of the camera is not my actual perspective – it is a non-actual perspective that is made visible to me via the monitor. Since neither the CCTV camera nor the monitor is a subject, the perspective is best described as unoccupied or vacant.

Now, actual occupied and non-actual vacant perspectives behave differently. When I actually see the cat, each shift of location – whether by a cat or by me - shifts how much of the cat is presented to my actual viewpoint. Contrast this with pictorial seeing. I can shift my position in relation to the picture but how much of the cat is presented remains fixed. This suggests that the seeing appropriate to depicted cats is relatively insensitive to one's actual occupation in actual world space-time. Small shifts in my actual perspective– such as walking from the left to the right of the picture, sitting down, or climbing a few steps of the ladder in front of it - will not change the perspective from which the depicted cat appears. Depicted cats are *stubbornly* presented from a determinate and fixed perspective.[20]

This is puzzling if Walton is right that we look directly at depicted cats just as we look directly at actual cats. My perspective on the depicted cat should be sensitive to changes in my actual perspective. Yet this is not the case.

The puzzle can be solved by noting that there are two perspectives in play when I see

[19] I use 'viewpoint' to stand for the spatio-temporal location the subject occupies.
[20] I put aside complex cases of cubist cats and so on for now.

the depicted cat. My actual perspective and also a *pictorial* perspective. Pictorial perspectives being the fixed and determinate viewpoint to which the parts seen of the depicted cat subtends. This suggests that pictorial seeing is less like actual seeing and more like visualising.

When visualising a cat, I see the cat 'in my minds-eye' sitting on my driveway. Given that I can do this while actually sitting in the library, I must be visualising the cat from a non-actual perspective. Similarly, I can imagine what the cat looks like dancing in a pair of booties. Since I have never actually seen a cat dance in this way, such imagined scenes are also presented to us from a non-actual perspective.

Pictorial depictions operate similarly. A depicted cat can be seen from an unusual angle – from above, from the side, from below - and in each case, this can be in conflict without actual perspective on the picture (directly in front of it a few steps back). In this way, seeing a depicted cat is like visualising a cat. Furthermore, just as I can visualise a cat without imagining myself occupying the perspective on the cat, so too can I pictorially see a cat on the mat from a pictorial perspective I do not imagine myself (or anyone else) occupying.

Now, if pictorial seeing is like visualising in regard to perspective-taking, then pictorial seeing *is always* mediated through a **non-actual** perspective. We have observed that pictorial seeing is insensitive to small shifts in my actual perspective and in this regard it *is* more like more like visualising than it is like actual seeing. We have also noticed that actual seeing always takes place from an occupied perspective. The perspective we actually occupy on the thing seen. Whereas we can pictorially see from a vacant perspective. In this regard, too pictorial seeing is more like visualising than it is like actual 'direct' seeing. Thus, it is reasonable to think that pictorial seeing *is* like visualising in regard to perspectives.

These considerations cast suspicion on *Scepticism* II.

Instead of

(II) Our access to depictions is direct (unmediated).

We should adopt

(IIa) Our access to depictions is indirect because it is always mediated by a non-actual pictorial perspective.

An objection can be raised here due to trompe l'oeil. But to this one can reply that trompe l'oeil can operate either as a picture or as an illusion. When I mistakenly believe I see the cat on the mat when pictorially seeing the trompe l'oeil cat I do so because my actual perspective and the mediating pictorial perspective are coincident, leading to an illusory but false experience of seeing a cat. When I come to realise that I am pictorially seeing a depicted cat, what happens is that the mediating pictorial perspective and my actual perspective have come apart. The change in my actual perspective interrupts and shatters the illusion of seeing a cat in favour of pictorially seeing a cat. Mediated seeing becomes suddenly apparent, but not suddenly manifest.

However, all this only goes as far as to show that when we pictorially see we see a depicted x from a pictorial perspective and this pictorial perspective is not my actual perspective. To be clear, I am emphatically not saying that mediating pictorial perspectives entail pictorial narrators. I am not claiming that when I see the table in the Ikea drawing, I require a narrator to mediate my seeing. In other words, and for clarity,

> (IIa) While our access to picture content is mediated via a not-actual perspective, this can be a mere or *vacant* perspective.

In this section, I have argued that one must see pictorial content from the pictorial perspective. I have also pointed out that non-actual perspectives can be vacant or unoccupied. We can see depicted and visualised objects from what is sometimes called the 'bare' pair of eyes perspective. For example, as we do with botanical and medical drawings.

In this section, I showed that by seeing any depicted object, be it a Necker cube or a Chardin still life, what we are doing is shifting (imaginatively) into a pictorial perspective that is distinct from our actual perspective. This pictorial perspective accounts for the way depicted objects are seen from particular viewpoints. The imaginative shifting accounts for how we experience depictions without having to make our actual vantage points coincident with the spatial location or temporal index implied by the pictorial scene. This shows that contra premise II, the seeing appropriate to depictions is always mediated through a pictorial perspective.

5. Effaced Narrators

I have argued that a complete explanation of our ability to see plants in botanical illustrations must include the mediating pictorial perspective. But some pictures do more than depict. Some pictures capture an attitude, preserving it across time. Cave paintings can capture the urgency of a hunt and Hogarth's *Gin Lane* conveys chaotic desperation. In *Chardin and Rembrandt,* we find an attempt to evocatively unpack this phenomenal difference as a shift from the depictive to the expressive (Proust, 2016). Describing the attention appropriate to Chardin's still lifes, Marcel Proust recounts a,

> journey of initiation into the unknown life within the still life, which each of us can make if we let Chardin be our guide, as Dante was guided to Virgil. (Proust, 1865, p.22)

What Proust intimates is that we might explain our ability to feel this sense of attitudinal or emotional intimacy with a pictorial scene without requiring there to be *explicit* narrators partially or wholly depicted in the picture. His essay confronts both aspects of Walton's scepticism. The phenomenal aspect is confronted by showing that we have a sense of going through another fictional person to appreciate the picture. The epistemic aspect is confronted by suggesting that we need this person to mediate our access to the affective or ambient qualities that give the picture an air of modest tenderness. That is, what Proust calls "things in their most profound aspect" (p. 24). Adequate viewer appreciation requires, Proust continues, that "you yourself will be a Chardin" (p. 13). Note, that Proust does not say you will be Chardin – merely that you must represent a Chardin-like perspective on the scene.

I want to finish by sketching out how this pictorial seeing is best explained. Earlier, we observed with Watkins, that in the Manet, we can just about make out the hazy figure reflected in the mirror as Gaston La Touche. Only once we represented Gaston at the point of origin did it make sense to see the predatory ambiance.

But we could have seen things otherwise. We could replace Gaston as occupant of the pictorial perspective with another, less lascivious occupant – say, a Victor Hugo type. By representing this kind of occupant at the psychological point of origin (the pictorial perspective) we alter what we see. The air of the picture is now infused with outrage at the partially depicted predatory figure looming over the barmaid. Whether or not it is correct to

replace occupants in this way is not my question or pertinent to the point. What is pertinent is that *it is only by representing an occupant* occupying the pictorial perspective that the viewer can access affective, ambient, or psychological pictorial content.

From this, we can draw a distinction between mediating through merely vacant and through *occupied* pictorial perspectives. The addition of an occupant accounts for the difference between seeing a depiction and seeing an expression of an attitude in the picture. This sketch does not prove that represented occupants who are represented as occupying pictorial perspective are explicit or effaced pictorial narrators. But it opens up a productive pathway to investigating that further possibility and it narrows down the options for *Scepticism*. My novel model is friendly to Walton's intuition yet successfully evades relying on philosophically troubling constitutive or conceptual ties with actual artists. Moreover, it is consistent with the insights found in Thomas Nagel,

> Whatever may be the status of facts about what it is like to be a human being, or a bat, or a Martian, these appear to be facts that embody a particular point of view (Nagel, 1974, p. 441).

The significance of Nagel's insight in regard to pictorial narratives should now be clearer. We said that pictorial narratives do more than convey information. They can recount events in a way that renders them dramatically intelligible, conveying psychologically infused perspectives. I have been arguing that they do this by prescribing the viewer to represent a point of view that captures 'what it is like' to hold or feel a particular attitude toward events unfolding in pictorial space. For example, in Chardin's *Fruits and Animals,* we experience "the same pleasure – seized in passing, detached from a moment, deepened, eternalized" that we can experience when actually occupying a perspective on "a sideboard, a kitchen, a pantry or a room where someone is sewing" (Proust, 1865, p.13). This is because the Chardin awakens in the viewer a kind of appreciation or positive attitude toward one's "humble existence" (ibid), rather than the viewer strictly and literally feeling Chardin's actual pleasure. The viewer represents a fictional occupant, "summoned" by the extraordinary colour, facture, and composition of the painting.

In this way, pictures can capture and preserve a record of the psychological. They can appear demented, exciting, sad, outrageously unfair, or thrilling. I have said that in order to access these features, the viewer access to the picture must be mediated by a subjective or

phenomenal perspective. Hence, I argue that the point of view on a pictorial narrative is not going to be exhaustively accounted for in terms of what is presented, or seems to be presented, *to* the pictorial perspective. That would not get us beyond depictions of visible objects. When we come to see the tenderness of the still life, the melancholy of *Nighthawks,* and the anguish of *The Scream*, we do so by mediating our attention through an occupant occupying the pictorial perspective who projects the tenderness, melancholy, or anguish that bathes the pictorial world. Because only something that can experience what it is like to be tender, melancholy, or anguished can mediate our access to these subjective features of pictorial space. It is in this sense, that I submit Walton is wrong and instead insist that we have good reasons to predict pictures do instantiate something akin to literary narrators.

Concluding thoughts

In this paper, I have argued for pictorial narrators. I briefly reviewed existing work in this area and then offered a quick constructive sketch of when and how they arise. I compared depictive and expressive pictures and said that in order to access an attitude or emotion 'trapped' in a pictorial scene, the viewer must represent the mediating perspective and in addition represent it as occupied. Encountering the Chardin from merely Spatio-temporal perspective precludes the viewer from seeing the painting as a tender, gentle and loving record of the domestic scene. To see the Chardin this way (richly and expressively) requires that the viewer shift into something like a 'Nagelian' perspective (Nagel, 1974). That is, one filled with a narrating consciousness who infuses a sense of 'what it is like' to tenderly and lovingly scrutinise these ordinary objects.

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European Society for Aesthetics

A First Approach to Intergenerational Aesthetics: Theoretical Stakes, Practical Examples, and Future Research Avenues

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ABSTRACT. Intergenerational aesthetics centers on the study of aesthetic values and aesthetic choices taking into account the aesthetic appreciation of future generations. Acknowledging a temporal dependency between the present and the future in aesthetics offers a new perspective to explore aesthetic values, perception, and judgments as well as practical aesthetic decisions. This essay discusses the main concerns of intergenerational aesthetics, including its theoretical stakes, its disciplinary and interdisciplinary influences, its normative aspect, and the role of intergenerational thinking in theory and practice. It focuses on aesthetic issues of our surroundings, as they relate to current concerns regarding sustainability and the environment. Through a specific example, it illustrates the importance of introducing intergenerational considerations to our current aesthetic practices. It ends by proposing a series of potential avenues of research in the field.

1. Introduction

Intergenerational aesthetics is a relatively new sub-specialty in the academic field of philosophical aesthetics. It centers on the study and examination of aesthetic values and

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aesthetic decisions bearing in mind not just the present, but taking into account future generations, thus being concerned with diachronic issues. Acknowledging a temporal dependency between the present and the future in aesthetics offers a new perspective to explore aesthetic values, perception, and judgments as well as practical aesthetic decisions. Including intergenerational concerns to the aesthetic discussion entails re-examining central issues raised in traditional aesthetics, such as the universality of aesthetic values and the conditions of both aesthetic judgment and aesthetic perception. These theoretical questions have practical consequences: whether aesthetic values are permanent or, on the contrary, change over time, affects the way in which we currently conceive and make our aesthetic choices, as these do not only have an impact on our current aesthetic perception but also on the range of aesthetic evaluation of future generations. Intergenerational aesthetics, thus, has a normative component both in theory and in practice, as it is concerned with aesthetic obligations towards future generations. Intergenerational aesthetics also aims at overcoming traditional separations between art and nature, lived and non-lived environments, temporal and atemporal, and theory and practice. To do so, it takes a highly intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach and aims at contributing to current debates in aesthetics as well as in discussions on sustainability, preservation, the environment, and urban development.

The study of aesthetic issues of our surroundings from an intergenerational point of view stems from a pressing concern regarding our present situation in terms of environment and sustainability, as our current exploitation, building, and living practices seem clearly unsustainable in the long run. Most recent data show that the construction sector is "responsible for almost 40% of energy- and process-related emissions" (IEA 2019, p. 3), and reducing them is crucial to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. All these processes of construction, including destruction and preservation, have aesthetic consequences, as they determine the appearance of our surroundings and our subsequent aesthetic appreciation. Even more, aesthetic issues may be the main cause for demolition: Palacios-Munoz et al. state that 44% of buildings surveyed in their study were demolished because of "subjective perception" (2019, p. 2). If the possibility of changes in taste is not accounted for, then some structures that would have been appreciated in the future may be demolished, as happens with numerous cases of brutalist architecture. Intergenerational aesthetics aims at including aesthetic aspects to the debate and at influencing actual practice by considering also those aspects that have yet to be articulated since it is unknown how future generations will aesthetically appreciate their

environment. Taking into account the potential future appearance and aesthetic perception of what is currently built, restored, and planned opens the door to or, at the very least, does not foreclose from the get-go aesthetic appreciation and judgment in the future.

This essay first introduces the main theoretical stakes of intergenerational aesthetics, discusses its object of study, its intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary connections, and proposes a set of basic principles with a normative character that should be considered in current aesthetic practices illustrated with examples. Second, it discusses intergenerational thinking as it relates to aesthetic values and aesthetic practices, drawing upon intergenerationality in other fields, specifically intergenerational ethics. Third, it discusses the process of preservation of the Finlandia Hall, showing how intergenerational aesthetics engages in practice. It finally offers a series of possible paths for further research.[23]

2. The Theoretical Stakes of Intergenerational Aesthetics

2.1. General Context and Disciplinary Genealogy

The fundamental tenet of intergenerational aesthetics is that of including the potential aesthetic appreciations, experiences, and judgments of future generations to the current aesthetic reflection and practice. The emphasis is primarily on future aesthetic appreciators, which prompts us to rethink the present role and status of aesthetic objects and creators. Focusing on future appreciators and their potential conditions of appreciation includes temporality and shift the aesthetic discussion from issues of intentionality and creation to aesthetic reception, experience, and interpretation. It also brings us to consider the features of aesthetic objects from the perspective of future appreciators, which may entail rethinking their perdurance and include sustainability aspects. Additionally, the role of creators may be altered if their task is seen as shaping future aesthetic appreciation.

The object of study of intergenerational aesthetics includes aesthetic aspects of our surroundings. Following the recent approaches of environmental and everyday aesthetics, intergenerational aesthetics discusses aesthetic aspects within this larger framework and examines arts that have been generally disregarded in the traditional philosophy of art because

23 See Capdevila-Werning and Lehtinen (2021) for an extensive discussion on intergenerational aesthetics.

of their practical functions, such as architecture, urbanism, and public art, and design. Like environmental and everyday aesthetics, intergenerational aesthetics includes everybody in the aesthetic discussion and considers everyday interactions and the way we live and experience our surroundings to be central.

From a disciplinary perspective, intergenerational aesthetics builds upon several branches of aesthetics and philosophy:

- Environmental aesthetics: the aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic features of natural environments, including those influenced by humans, with a current focus on environmentalism and sustainability (Berleant and Brady, 2014; Carlson, 2020).

- Aesthetics of everyday life: expansion of the scope of environmental aesthetics to examine any kind of objects and activities in everyday life that take place in non-artistic environments. (Saito, 2007; 2017).

- Applied aesthetics: Intergenerational aesthetics is considered an applied field as it is concerned with actual practice. It refers also to the study of aesthetic values that engages in interdisciplinary research or collaboration with professions outside academic philosophy that deal with practical aesthetic issues.

- Urban aesthetics and philosophy of the city: Urban aesthetics considers the aesthetic experience of the built environment as a whole and centers on the lived experience and appreciation (Berleant and Carlson, 2007; Lehtinen, 2020b). The philosophy of the city explores the city in all of its dimensions: political, social, cultural, environmental, epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, and aesthetic issues (Meagher *et al*., 2020; Lehtinen, 2020e).

- Aesthetics of preservation practices: Includes questions of identity and authenticity, (Goodman, 1968, p. 99–123). It also addresses how preservationist interventions affect the artists' intentions, aesthetic experience, and the works' meanings and interpretations (Capdevila-Werning, 2013; 2014b; 2017; Capdevila-Werning and Spaid, 2019).

- Environmental ethics and intergenerational justice: Environmental ethics is interested in the future people in terms of intergenerationality and sustainability and focuses on ethical values in terms of the obligations to future generations (Brennan and Lo, 2020). Intergenerational justice focuses on justice concerns as applicable to relations between non-contemporaries (Meyer, 2020).

Intergenerational aesthetics also considers the research and concerns in the fields of sustainability studies, climate change ethics, heritage studies, historic preservation, and landscape preservation. The unique contribution of intergenerational aesthetics is that it puts aesthetic concerns at the center of theoretical and practical debates; it explores how these matter so that they may exert influence on decisions that go beyond the immediate aesthetic appearance and how such appearance is appreciated by current audiences.

2.2. Cognitive and Normative Aspects

The claim of putting intergenerational aesthetic concerns at the center acquires a broader significance if we consider that aesthetics is mainly a cognitive endeavour. Following Goodman, we take the objects of aesthetic appreciation as symbols that convey meaning. These aesthetic features grant unique cognitive access to our surroundings, convey meaning, and are open to interpretation (Goodman, 1968; 1976; Goodman and Elgin, 1988; Elgin, 2017; Capdevila-Werning, 2014a). That aesthetic experience is cognitive does not mean that it cannot be pleasurable or unpleasurable or that it excludes feelings and emotions. Rather, it means that feelings and emotions are already cognitive. Together with our senses and any other prior knowledge, understanding, and experiences we have, we engage in a cognitive process of interpreting what surrounds us, creating meaning, and gaining an understanding of the world and of ourselves. From an intergenerational perspective, aesthetic decisions have epistemological consequences, as they determine not only the possibilities of perception, but also the cognitive access of future generations.

Given the importance of what is at stake, intergenerational aesthetics includes an essential normative component and proposes a set of general principles or guidelines:

- Aesthetic decisions made in the present should not foreclose future aesthetic

judgment, experience, and attribution of values, nor limit the possibilities of interpretation and meaning.

- Aesthetic decisions should maintain access to existing aesthetic values and taste, but not impose one's aesthetic worldview on future generations.

- Aesthetic decisions should also aim at non-deception and at seeking truthfulness whenever possible.

To do so, one should consider the potential future appearance of that which is currently decided upon. This may require an act of creative imagination and the acknowledgment that not everything can be controlled nor determined, as garden preservation (Salwa, 2019; 2020) or unintended results in rewilding projects (Prior and Brady, 2017) show. The passing of time and its effect on aesthetic features and from the appreciators' standpoint should be acknowledged since it seems evident that taste and what is aesthetically valued evolves, and making decisions considering that our current aesthetic taste and values are permanent or even universal affects the aesthetic perception of future generations. Theoretically, intergenerational aesthetics challenges established theories on the universality of aesthetic value and taste and opens the door to rethink traditional conceptions in aesthetics and reframe questions regarding relativism, especially considering pressing environmental and sustainability issues. To avoid imposing present aesthetic taste and preferences, intergenerational aesthetics considers all sorts of aesthetic values, positive and negative, since what is considered a positive value now may not be so in the future, as our current aesthetic judgments regarding some fashion and stylistic choices from the past illustrate. Intergenerational aesthetics takes into account the possibility of aesthetic obsolescence and the possibility of such obsolescence turning into desirability in the future.

All these normative claims have practical outcomes and the guidelines of intergenerational aesthetics provide us with criteria to assess aesthetic choices and decisions. Several design practices are introducing "aesthetic sustainability" to their productions and consider intergenerationality in the design. This may entail adaptability and modular constructions in architecture so that usage and aesthetic appearance can be modified according to future appreciators, consider how time will affect materials and appearance, or select more

lasting and sustainable materials considering their aesthetic features, not just functional ones. Aesthetic decisions made taking into account future generations do not need to generate identical aesthetic outcomes nor be equally appropriate: modularity as a design principle in architecture and adaptability projects contribute to designing structures that will last longer as they provide a response to the uncertainty of not knowing the needs or preferences of future generations. They also open the possibility of aesthetic choices and grant the freedom to choose, albeit from a relatively limited range of possibilities, and thus do not foreclose aesthetic appreciation nor the possibility of change in taste since a project's inception. In contrast, designs made considering that aesthetic values are universal do foreclose appreciation and, despite taking into account future generations, are not intergenerational. Such designs are created from the premise that aesthetically sustainable objects are those that fulfill a series of specific qualities (harmony, symmetry, minimalism, timelessness, made of lasting and timeless materials) (Harper, 2018) and hence do not account for the possibility of a change in taste.

Intergenerational considerations are also relevant in historic preservation, heritage studies, and geoheritage. While such disciplines certainly consider the passing of time, introducing intergenerational considerations provides a new temporal dimension, because, in addition to looking backward from the future to our time as heritage does, intergenerational aesthetics proposes to include the future in our present aesthetic reflection and practices. This is especially important in urban geosites, which are intrinsically intergenerational entities where liveability and aesthetic aspects converge (Capdevila-Werning, 2020).

Intergenerational guidelines offer criteria to decide upon preferable preservationist interventions. Preferability may also be assessed in terms of the symbolic functioning of preserved structures (Capdevila-Werning, 2014b), as it is argued that one of the main roles of restoration is to preserve symbolic functioning (Elgin, 1997) and, consequently, at an epistemological level, preserve cognitive access. In historic preservation, interventions can be assessed according to their role in fostering truthfulness and avoiding deception (Capdevila-Werning, 2013). Less invasive practices like cleaning and maintenance may seem straightforward means to grant access to aesthetic properties that had been obscured by dirt, but maintaining the status quo or bringing back the original appearance may not always be preferable, as it erases the patina of time and multiple aesthetic properties and subsequent appreciations, judgments, and potential interpretations as well. A clear case of this would be when the patina of certain materials is removed, which alters its aesthetic properties.

From an intergenerational perspective, making the interventions visible – as happens with archaeological restorations that show the non-original prosthetic additions – is preferable to integral restorations, which bring structures back to their original appearance without providing perceptible hints to point that, in fact, it is not an original. But in some cases, an integral restoration may be preferable, as the cultural and social significance of a structure may outdo the claims for non-deception: consider the rebuilding of cities, downtowns, or significant places in Europe after World War Two, where reconstruction to the state before the war helped heal the wounds and reunite the people. Other preservationist interventions create palimpsests: layers of matter that show the passing of time and the history of a place. This seems to be the most truthful intervention possible as deception is avoided and interpretative possibilities remain open. There are however exceptions, as happens in the intervention of the Neues Museum in Berlin, where layers of matter that had never been shown are visible, and simultaneously certain existing layers were erased so that parts of the site's history are left untold; instead of truthfulness, deception takes place (Capdevila-Werning, 2015).

Lastly, total reconstructions may entail not simply a faithful process but an act of creative imagination that brings back a building to a stage that had never existed in any given time, therefore altering future aesthetic perception irremediably, as is the case of some of Violet-le-Duc's interventions (Capdevila-Werning, 2012; 2013). A similar issue of altering future aesthetic perception and foreclosing interpretation happens with copies or reproductions that aim at complete faithfulness, but whose aesthetic features are not exactly identical to that of the original construction, as happens with the 1986 reproduction of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion. Here the reproduction is a built interpretation of a 1929 original structure that retrospectively determines the meanings of the original and has an impact on the history of the building and modern architecture in general (Capdevila-Werning, 2017).

Intergenerational aesthetics aims at maintaining aesthetic appreciation open to future generations, but the passing of time also entails that things may be lost forever. In such cases, a project of descriptive aesthetics is helpful (Berleant, 1992, pp. 25–39).

3. Intergenerational Thinking and Aesthetic Values

Environmental ethics and social philosophy explicitly formulate intergenerational thinking through the concepts of intergenerational ethics and justice (Meyer, 2020). In aesthetics,

intergenerational thinking has not yet been fully articulated. Intergenerational aesthetics creates a new bridge between ethics and aesthetics, one that shares the same pressing concerns in terms of sustainability and the environment, allows the exploration of values and obligations towards future generations, and hopes to enact changes in practice. Four main topics of intergenerational thinking relate to aesthetics: environmental concerns, aesthetic values, and the perspective of ethics and aesthetics of care.

Intergenerational aesthetics draws upon the outcomes of environmental ethics, where intergenerationality is central to discussing sustainability, climate change, and justice; intergenerational justice, which focuses on the tenet that current generations have a responsibility or even obligations towards future generations; and social philosophy examines several approaches to the relationship between non-contemporaries including a distributive justice framework (Meyer, 2020).

Environmental aesthetics brings together intergenerational thinking with aesthetic values in the context of climate change (Brady, 2014). This research emphasizes the inevitable imbalance of power between generations because current changes have long-lasting effects on the future environment and its appearance. Intergenerational aesthetics is framed by "sustainable development" – the sustainability framework and its future-directed approach to intergenerational relations first formulated by the Brundtland Report in 1987. For aesthetics, the sustainability framework requires rethinking the role of aesthetic values in this process (Lehtinen, 2020a; 2021) and to think at the intersection of aesthetics and sustainability. Intergenerational thinking serves here to reflect upon how and in which ways aesthetic values change and to what extent can human activity take this change into consideration. Besides more pragmatic concerns related to design, aesthetic sustainability centers precisely in examining how well and in which ways aesthetic qualities are related to intergenerational fluctuations in taste (Lehtinen, 2020a). Introducing the test of time perspective recognizes and underlines the temporal reach of aesthetic qualities: not everything is aesthetically durable and what is valued also changes. Sometimes this change can be anticipated but is often unexpected. Aesthetic sustainability helps "to better understand how urban futures unfold experientially and how aesthetic values of urban environments develop with time" (Lehtinen, 2020a, p. 111). In architecture, the concept is a valuable tool for assessing the intergenerational relations between the users of the spaces and the overall change in aesthetic values (Lehtinen, 2020c; 2020d).

Regarding aesthetic values, intergenerational aesthetics assumes a more diverse,

decentralized, and equitable notion of what counts as an aesthetic value. The "right to beauty" is not easily defined and the objectivity of aesthetic values is still strongly implied in governments or authorities responsible for building regulation. Aesthetic preferences refer to those instances in which a choice between two or several options is possible. Aesthetic choices are present in our everyday life on an individual level (Naukkarinen, 1998; Melchionne, 2017) and they are also present also in intergenerational decision-making processes.

The intergenerational perspective allows us to grasp change in the appreciation of aesthetic values. These values change over time differently than "merely" ecological and environmental values, which can take a more sudden turn when, for example, a breakthrough in scientific knowledge is introduced to the wider public. Change in aesthetic values is not necessarily negative and the intergenerational approach explains the process of aesthetic habituation: it describes how we become accustomed to aesthetically entirely new things or how we react to changes in that which is already aesthetically familiar to us. An initially-considered aesthetic loss in a landscape might become aesthetically positive for future generations.

Intergenerational thinking in aesthetics may include the notion of care towards future people, which requires acknowledging different conditions and affirming the provisional independence of future generations (Groves, 2014). In aesthetics, care entails attending and respecting the singularity of an object, not imposing preconceived standards or ideals, and being respectful, considerate, and open-minded in one's engagement with the object of attention. Paying close attention to nuances and competing narratives as well as suspending one's judgment are also involved in the care approach. However, the direction of change in aesthetic values cannot be predetermined. Aesthetic deliberation is an important part of any design process, yet the futurity of aesthetic values cannot be entirely designed either. Aesthetic values take unexpected turns according to changes in politics, social movements, and other societally or personally important events.

4. Intergenerational Aesthetics in Practice

The discussion of the Finlandia Hall illustrates intergenerational aesthetics in practice, showing how a temporal change in values takes place and what type of factors play a part over the lifespan of an individual building. Architecture and the built environment constitute an

especially interesting field for developing and testing the idea of intergenerational aesthetics, as it combines functionality with the approaches of the philosophy of art, environmental and urban aesthetics, and heritage discourse. The value of architectural objects derives from their use and other values and meanings beyond their aesthetic appeal. This interplay of different values offers an opportunity to observe and assess the ensuing intergenerational changes and fluctuations in taste and appreciation. As brutalist architecture shows, change in aesthetic values can happen in the span of a few decades and something which lost its aesthetic value can regain it in the eyes of a new generation. The interlinked ecological, ethical, and social values might be different for the current-day admirers of brutalist architecture, but the aesthetic appreciation arises mostly by the same qualities present when the buildings were new. Thus, the perceptual qualities do not change, but fluctuation takes place in how these qualities are responded to, which reinforces our claim that aesthetics has an essential cognitive element.

Alvar Aalto's Finlandia Hall was designed in the 1960s and dedicated in 1971. It served as a concert hall until the early 2000s and is now a multifunctional space. Since the beginning, the white Carrara marble slates used in the main facade showed signs of wear: the marble slates curved, frayed, and crumbled five years after its dedication. The marble had to be replaced for the first time in 1998. Besides the massive expenses, the ecological consequences were significant, but the discussion then revolved around the costs of the operation and staying true to Aalto's original plans, not sustainability concerns. Some entirely new design ideas for replacing the facade material were presented in the 1990s, but the common ethos was still clearly against changing Aalto's original design. Resorting to aesthetic features as the main reason to choose an unsustainable material signals a specifically designer-oriented, intergenerationally insensitive, and tone-deaf understanding of aesthetics which reflects the overall ethos of the time.

The slates installed in 1998 deteriorated fairly quickly and their renovation will now take place in 2022–24. This time the choice of materials included alternatives, but the chosen material ended up being a new, more durable marble type similar to the original. Despite the similar material, the discussion and options presented were more open and took place from an intergenerational perspective. There had been a shift in the hierarchy of values: from Aalto's original intentions to concerns regarding sustainability and endurance and the discussion was public. The second renovation showed already more nuanced intergenerational deliberation, which was driven by sustainability principles and shows how change in aesthetic values can

take place.

5. Conclusions

The relationship between temporality and aesthetics is not a straightforward one. Intergenerational aesthetics proposes to engage with temporality leaving space for future appreciation and judgments and to intergenerationally think about change in aesthetic values, as our current ones may differ from the ones of upcoming generations. Thinking towards the future in the present, and not just in relation to the past, entails a shift in the theoretical as well as practical stakes of aesthetics.

Theoretically, intergenerational aesthetics brings about a shift in the discussion and emphasizes reception, experience, and interpretation by future generations. It also offers a normative component and proposes intergenerational criteria, such as not foreclosing nor limiting the range of aesthetic judgment and experience of future generations and aiming at non-deception. This requires acknowledging and maintaining access to present and past aesthetic values and tastes but not imposing one generation's aesthetic worldview to posterity, which becomes even more important if we consider that aesthetic experience is mainly a cognitive endeavour. Intergenerational thinking in aesthetics offers a way to explore change in aesthetic values and introduces new dimensions to aesthetics, such as care and sustainability.

In practice, intergenerational aesthetics aims at influencing actual practices and pushes for the inclusion of intergenerational thinking when making aesthetic choices. The discussion of cases, thus, goes beyond the mere illustration of theoretical points and shows how intergenerational concerns can contribute to solving the pressing issues of sustainability deficiency and environmental problems. Conversely, aesthetic practices contribute also to the formulation and theoretical discussion of questions in academic aesthetics.

Intergenerational aesthetics is a highly intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary field whose research aims at overcoming the traditional separations between art and nature, lived and non-lived environments, temporal and atemporal, theory and practice. Intergenerational concerns are actual and pressing; examining aesthetics from an intergenerational perspective aims at contributing to current debates in aesthetics as well as in discussions on sustainability, preservation, the environment, and urban development. It also aims at influencing actual practice. As a relatively new field, there are many avenues for further research, such as:

discussions on the universality and relativity of aesthetic values, aesthetic choices given our contemporary situation in terms of environment and sustainability, and specific case analyses of intergenerational interest, further interdisciplinary work. As a field intrinsically oriented to the future, intergenerational aesthetics is open to reflections that have yet to emerge.

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European Society for Aesthetics

A Brief History of the Reception of Laocoon in China: From the Perspective of the "poetical picture"

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ABSTRACT. "Poetical picture (poetisches Gemälde)," indicating a description or image in poetry, is one keyword in *Laocoon* and is maintained as a shared concern among Chinese scholars. The concept touches upon the very essential question in *Laocoon*: compared to painting (plastic art), to what extent can poetry (literature art) describe objects? In 1929, Wu Mi吴宓 published "The 200th anniversary of the birth of Lessing" in *The Critical Review*, where he, with a good understanding of the limited framework (mimetic illusionism) used by Lessing, values the detailed arguments related to literary expression in *Laocoon*. On the other hand, Qian Zhong-shu钱锺书, a student of Wu at Tsinghua University (1929-1933), recognized that "poetry's holding a wider sphere of expression than painting" is an opinion originated from Lessing and tried to develop it in "Reading *Laocoon*" (1962). I particularly focus on how Qian referenced Burke to argue that "emotional atmosphere" can only be expressed by words. Between Wu and Qian, the progress in understanding western art theory to bring out the very essence of *Laocoon* in China is clearly manifested.

1. Introduction

Recognized as one of the established classics in modern western aesthetics, G. E. Lessing's *Laocoon* (1766) has pointed researchers in various directions since its publication (e.g., paragon viz. relation between poetry and painting, semiotics, classics, intellectual history,

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comparative literature)[25]. In the early twentieth century, *Laocoon* was introduced into China with the purpose of reconstructing traditional culture with the reference to western scholarship and turned out to be one of the most revisited western aesthetic texts to this day. In previous studies, the basic contour of its reception in China has been outlined, with accounts by Wu Mi 吴宓 (1894-1978), Zhu Guang-qian朱光潜 (1897–1986), Zong Bai-hua宗白华 (1897–1986) and Qian Zhong-shu钱锺书 (1910–1998) from the 1920s to 1960s (Luo Ying-jie 2007; Lu Bai-yu 2018). However, an in-depth investigation, to which I refer not only to the content of arguments themselves but also how those arguments were posed and how they affected the course of modern Chinese aesthetics, has not been fully conducted.

I have hitherto scrutinized related treatises by Zhu Guang-qian, Zong Bai-hua and Qian Zhong-shu, and re-located them into modern Chinese aesthetics history[26]. In this paper, I will focus on Wu Mi and Qian Zhong-shu to examine the reception through the perspective of the "poetical picture (poetisches Gemälde)". "Poetical picture," indicating a description or image in poetry, is one keyword in *Laocoon* and is maintained as a shared concern among Chinese scholars. The concept touches upon the very essential question in *Laocoon*: compared to painting (plastic art), to what extent can poetry (literature art) describe objects?

2. Wu Mi and Qian Zhong-shu

This paper selects Wu Mi and Qian Zhong-shu for the following two reasons. First, in contrast Zhu Guang-qian and Zong Bai-hua's – deemed as the "two greatest modern aestheticians in China" – who attempted schematization of Chinese aesthetics, Wu Mi and Qian Zhong-shu act fundamentally as literary scholars and focus on the analysis of concrete examples. Regarding the problem of "poetical picture," it is their discussion that lively characterizes the reception in China.

On the other hand, although the above four scholars were familiar with each others' thoughts, Qian Zhong-shu had studied directly following Wu Mi at Tsinghua University (1929-1933), and treated the latter as his life-long respected professor[27]. Therefore, taking a

[25] On the latest researching tendency, see Avi Lifschitz, Michael Squire (ed.) (2017).
[26] Regarding Zhu Guang-qian, see Yi Ding (2020); On Qian Zhong-shu, see Yi Ding (2021).
[27] Qian himself had stated that Wu was one of his most respected professors in Tsinghua University and influenced him for life. See Yang Jiang (1998).

comparison between them is considered to be helpful to measure more accurately how the reception progressed.

3. Wu Mi's Reception of *Laocoon*

In 1929, Wu published "The 200th anniversary of the birth of Lessing" in *The Critical Review* 学衡, one of the most influential academic journals at the time where he served as editor in chief. This essay devotes half of the pages to introducing the person of Lessing and the other half to *Laocoon*. Wu states, "Regarded as a classic in the history of literature critics and aesthetics, *Laocoon* has not been fully introduced into China" (Wu, 1999 [1929], p. 12). Thus, this essay launches a formal introduction of the text in China.

Wu first overviewed the main conclusion of *Laocoon*, i.e., "painting and sculpture belong to spatial art whereas poetry to temporal art; the signs they utilize (for the former colour and line; for the latter tone), their [appropriate] subjects to be expressed (for the former one second in the [coexistent] ideal nature, namely object; for the latter successive process, namely action) are different" (Wu, 1999 [1929], p. 13). Obviously, this passage refers to Chap. XV and XVI in *Laocoon*. Moreover, Wu marked Lessing's several other arguments covering the so-called "the most pregnant moment" chosen by painting (which can be found in Chap. III, XVI, XIX); an expression that is only feasible in poetry via symbol (attribute) (Chap. X), regarding invisible beings (Chap. XII) or the ugly (Chap. IV); in comparison to painting's ability to represent formal beauty, poetry has methods of expressing from the effect of beauty or beauty in motion (Chap. XXI). It can be said that a comparatively thorough grasp of *Laocoon* has taken its shape.

What deserves particular attention is that Wu places his highest value on the view of poetry's expressing ability "from the effect of beauty or beauty in motion".

> The principle that [poetry] should give up the expression of "formal [or bodily] beauty" is indeed the most significant contribution in *Laocoon*. Lessing discovered one "dead end" in literature [expression]. Preceding literature scholars walked down there and never knew how to get out. [Lessing] found out this "dead end" and furthermore pointed out its exit [namely to express from the effect of beauty or beauty in motion]. (Wu, 1999 [1929], p. 18)

To understand the passage, a brief explanation of the "formal beauty" or "bodily beauty" and

why, to Lessing, it features the subject of the painting is in need. As Wu quoted from *Laocoon*,

> Bodily beauty [körperliche Schönheit] arises from the harmonious effect of numerous parts, all of which the sight is capable of comprehending at the same time. It requires, therefore, that these parts should lie in juxtaposition; and since things whose parts lie in juxtaposition are the peculiar objects of the plastic arts, these it is, and these only, which can imitate bodily beauty.
> [On the contrary,] the poet – since he can only exhibit in succession its component parts – entirely abstains from the description of material beauty as beauty. He feels that these parts, ranged one after another, cannot possibly have the effect that they produce when closely arranged together; that the concentrating glance which, after their enumeration, we try to cast back upon them imparts to us no harmonious image; that it surpasses the power for human imagination to represent to oneself what effect such and such a mouth, nose, and eyes will produce together unless we can call to mind from nature or art a similar composition of like parts. (Wu, 1999 [1929], p. 17; cf. Chap. XX in *Laocoon*)

This passage actually touches upon the very core of Lessing's theory. The fundamental logic here is not simple because "bodily beauty" demands a sort of coexistent order whereas painting deals with the coexistent, and hence it is considered capable of expressing bodily beauty. The sign used in painting and poetry, depicted as coexistent and successive respectively, do not refer to two types of signs belonging to the same dimension: to paraphrase with semiotic terminology, the former is categorized into natural sign whereas the latter into arbitrary sign. Natural sign means there is a necessary relation between the sign and the signified, while an arbitrary sign means the opposite. Based on this definition, it is legitimate to ask why the arbitrary signs of poetry cannot express the coexistent[28]. The answer is that, to Lessing, the purpose of art is not for pure expression, but a certain expression that can evoke the so-called illusion. That is to say, in the process of this sort of aesthetic illusionism, signs need to become transparent and disappear from the consciousness of readers, whilst the signified is, so to speak, directly appealing to them. According to the latter half of the above quote, to Lessing, when poetry presents the co-existent, readers cannot combine images from different parts of an object signified individually to achieve a whole image.

The thought of aesthetic illusionism prevails in western art theory in the eighteenth century, and within this framework, Wu assessed and acclaimed the contribution of *Laocoon*.

[28] This question was actually posed first by Moses Mendelssohn, and later mentioned by Lessing himself in the Chap. XVII in *Laocoon*.

However, it is not because Wu had no knowledge of other kinds of possibilities of art mechanisms. In order to clarify this, I will take a look into Irving Babbitt's (1865-1933) understanding of the text, who was Wu's professor at Harvard University from 1919 to 1921 and exerted a far-reaching influence on his whole life.

4. Irving Babbitt's *The New Laocoon*

Known as a precursor of the "New Humanism" movement and study of comparative literature, Babbitt contributed a broadly acknowledged response toward *Laocoon*, titled *The New Laocoon: An essay on the confusion of the arts* (1910). Wu concluded its main idea correctly at the end of "200th anniversary of the birth of Lessing" as follows.

> …Lessing restricts his discussion on the object of poetry to action. He pays no interest in emotion. To him, the end (purpose) of art lies in mimesis of ideal nature. His art theory is in essence rooted from Aristotle, aiming at overturning "the pseudo-classic" and re-setting up "the truly classical". Whilst Lessing has swept away the pseudo-classic confusion of the arts, there appeared later the Romantic confusion of the arts. Therefore, Professor Babbitt published his *The New Laocoon.* (Wu, 1999 [1929], p. 18)

Babbitt's main criticism towards Lessing is Lessing's constricting the discussion within the framework of "mimesis," which is the foundation of aesthetic illusionism. Babbitt devoted most of his work to tracing down the previous conditions that led to the writing of *Laocoon.* He achieved one main conclusion: Lessing's interest in ideal nature as the object of art was inherited from the Aristotelian orthodoxy backward to the Renaissance. One of the essential criticisms of Babbitt is as follows.

> He [Lessing] does not for example concern himself sufficiently, to our modern thinking, with the suggestiveness of words. He looks on them too much as a sort of passive material, and on the poet as too conscious and deliberate in his combining of them. (Babbitt, 1910, pp. 51-52)

Here, "suggestiveness" means the function of utilizing imagination to allude or express more than words themselves, as what Lessing has noticed about the painter's ability to select the moment that has the most suggestiveness -- the so-called "the most pregnant moment".

It can be concluded that what Babbitt criticizes most about *Laocoon* is its framework of aesthetic illusionism and its inadequate understanding of literature. In this regard, Wu's praise of Lessing's arguments shall be considered as being conditioned with a good understanding of the limited illusionism framework, and, regardless of this limited framework, Wu still holds an interest in detailed arguments related to literary expression in *Laocoon*. This is in sharp contrast to Professor Babbitt's reception of *Laocoon*.

5. Qian Zhong-shu's Reception of *Laocoon*

However, is Lessing truly being ignorant of the ability of words as Babbitt pointed out? In exploring Lessing's understanding of literature in *Laocoon*, I will concentrate on Qian Zhong-shu's "Reading *Laocoon*" (1962). In this long essay, Qian set forth many viewpoints as responses to the text that are regarded as the representative literature theory in twentieth-century China.

Like other scholars, Qian first took a look at the central conclusion from Chap. XV and XVI that poetry and painting use different signs and thus have different subjects to represent. But Qian also has unique concerns with Chap. XIII and XIV. He comments,

> According to Lessing, "a poetical picture (ein poetisches Gemälde)" is not convertible into "a material picture (ein materielles Gemälde)," for linguistic words describe successive action in time, whereas colours and lines can only depict an object that extends in space. This conclusion is not wrong, but taking the above-mentioned Chinese pre-modern poetries into thoughts, it is not fully enough considered: "a poetical picture" that does not describe action but stable object is not necessarily convertible into "a material picture" either. (Qian, 2002 [1962], p. 38)

"Poetical picture" refers to an image in poetry whereas "material picture" to concrete painting work. Because poetry and painting utilize different signs, the image regarding "action" achieved successfully in poetry may not be able to be represented in painting. However, with the reference of detailed instances of Chinese poetry, Qian maintains that even in terms of "stable object," which shall be the domain for painting, poetry may still perform superior. He gave out a heap of Chinese poetry examples but his intention is to explain poetry in general. Elsewhere, I have examined how he facilitated scholarship from Chinese tradition and the west to re-explain Chinese poetry, while here I will pick up one point where he referred to western

thoughts to see how he demonstrated the argument itself. That is, Qian maintains that only poetry can express the "emotional atmosphere" brought about by the object.

> Preceding to Lessing, Burke has already pointed out that when describing concretes objects, to insert some abstract or general words is useful to bring out a grand and magnificent atmosphere that concludes everything. For instance, when Milton depicts the rocks, caves, lakes, bogs, etc. in the gloomy and miserable hell, he concludes them as "a universe of death" – this is the unique ability of literature art, compared to plastic art. (Qian, 2002 [1962], p. 39)

In the eighteenth-century paragon study, Edmund Burke's *A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (first edition in 1757, the second in 1759) shows a different stance from that of *Laocoon*. Here, Qian stresses the importance of using "abstract words" proposed by Burke, which does not exist in Lessing's linguistic view.

Inheriting the semiotics from Leibniz-Wolf School, Lessing treats the basic function of words as means to analyze marks (Merkmal) of the representation of an object. If to describe the object "hell," following the example from Burke, to Lessing, it is necessary to depict carefully what "rocks, caves, lakes, bogs, etc." are like respectively. On the other hand, as already stated, Lessing's understanding of art's purpose is illusion-evocation. Hence, Lessing's task, as shown in *Laocoon,* is to figure out a way to conquer the clarity of linguistic signs to reach illusion (David E. Wellbery 1984; Tanehisa Otabe 1995). However, compared to that, Qian points out another solution manifested by Burke in considering other possibilities of words' function.

Burke's theory is assessed as basically following the mimetic illusionism framework while showing the very first sprouting of new art theory, which gives room to the role played by the artist and recipient. However, what is important here is that, to Qian, Burke's stance is not totally the opposite of that of Lessing, because fundamentally speaking the aim of Qian is not criticizing Lessing but developing the latter's theory. In the end of "Reading *Laocoon*" writes Qian,

> Lessing admitted that while poetry and painting have their own strengths, poetry, compared to painting, holds "a wider sphere" for expression. Supposing my foregoing accounts have some sense, then the expression sphere of poetry may be slightly wider than what Lessing has considered. (Qian, 2002 [1962], p. 57)

"Poetry holds a wider sphere of expression than painting" is considered to be an opinion that originated from Lessing himself. In saying this, Qian indicated his grounds of argument to Chap. VII and VIII in *Laocoon*. Let us confirm the corresponding passage from Chap.VII.

> … if we simply consider the wide sphere of poetry, the boundless field of our imagination, and the spirituality of its images; a great and various throng of which can be placed in the closest juxtaposition, without concealing or disfiguring each other, which perhaps would be the effect that objects themselves, or their natural signs, would produce in the narrow limits of space and time. (Lessing, 1914 [1766], p. 44)

Lessing maintains explicitly that poetry, with the help of imagination, has a wider sphere of expression possibility than painting.

6. Conclusion

As an established classic in the eighteenth century, *Laocoon* illustrates the course of the transformation from old art theory to the modern. As pointed out by previous studies already, the central conclusion in Chap. XV and XVI of this treatise can by no means be seen as a reduced scheme for the whole text. Rather, Lessing's arguments scattered in other parts are suggestive of the emergence of new art theory (Friedrich Vollhardt, 2013). If we focus on the main conclusion of the text, it is not difficult to understand the criticism from Babbitt. Indeed, compared to the Romantic art theory, the linguistic view in *Laocoon* is very limited to the mimetic illusionism framework.

On the contrary, what Wu and Qian focused on are other arguments embedded in *Laocoon* that deviate from the main conclusion. Wu finally gives his highest consent to Lessing's discussion within the range of illusionism (admitting that pursuing formal beauty is the "dead end" in literature expression), while Qian values *Laocoon* for its insights regarding the function of imagination that exists in literature art and tries to develop it. On the other hand, As Wellbery (1984) has pointed out, the very authentic purpose of *Laocoon* is to render poetry a higher status to re-locate it to be equal to painting – via demonstrating the possibility of naturalness of signs in poetry, not in the level of signs themselves but in the level of structure of

signification.

This paper, focusing on the problem of "poetical picture,"– the term directly mentioned by Qian along though – has clarified that in referencing to *Laocoon,* Wu Mi and Qian Zhong-shu's interests are on Lessing's detailed discussions on literature instead of the academic framework in general and that they showed great progress in understanding western art theory to bring out the very essence of the treatise in the span of around 30 years: from 1929 by Wu to 1962 by Qian.

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Hermeneutic Truth in Contemporary Opera

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ABSTRACT. While an enormous number of aesthetic texts have been produced in recent times, opera continues to occupy very limited space, one that is even more reduced when thinking about contemporary opera. However, few art forms pose as many questions to the formulation of aesthetic thought as current musical creation, specifically opera. It is here that an ecosystem of cultural actions is brought together that, in light of hermeneutics, opens up to truth in different possibilities. This paper focuses on the notion of hermeneutic openness in contemporary opera, providing certain aesthetic criteria to substantiate the ontological validity of the contemporary opera.

1. Introduction

As Gadamer manifested in his body of thought, a work of art has an anthropological base that we believe is unfolded in contemporary opera with all its interrogative force, since new integrations of artistic experience are incited within it. These reflections are based on different opera typologies, all composed or staged in the 20th and 21st centuries, which include *literaturoper*, (*El público*, opera by Mauricio Sotelo based on *El público,* by Federico García Lorca, *première* in Teatro Real de Madrid on 2015), experimental stage, (*Die Zauberflöte, performed by La Fura dels Baus using digital technologies,* in Bochum in 2003), feminist opera, (*A Amnesia de Clio*, from Fernando Buide, performed in Santiago de Compostela in 2019) or *Lulu*, from Alban Berg, staged by Andrea Breth, in 2015.

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2. Contemporary Opera's Truth

Gadamer carries out a profound hermeneutic study on the experience of art and its truth content on the basis of the fusion of horizons. This lecture builds on his reflections from the point where historical tradition and the contemporary historical moment meet, interrogating the present as he interrogated the past: "We should not think of historical awareness in terms of rather scholarly ideas or in terms of world-views. We should simply think of what we take for granted when confronted with any artistic work of the past" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 43). In order to reach this meeting point, this lecture begins with the music of the present. Specifically, it begins with opera.

For this purpose, I will alternate between two levels of exposition: one purely theoretical; the other focused on the operas mentioned, but not as examples or as specific epistemological phenomena but as hermeneutic paradigms, addressing our own prejudices and delving into them and into the work based on an open game of questions and answers. I shall develop a concrete dialogue between theory and artistic representation to try to understand "this totality with the individual utterance, and the individual utterance with this totality" (Gadamer, 1977, p. 360).

Thus, I shall reflect on the being that opens up to the authentic in contemporary opera based on Hermeneutics, since it allows us to penetrate the different possibilities for comprehension that are rooted in the truth of a work—work that heretofore has not received much attention by theorists of Aesthetics.

Lastly, I must point out that the staging is as important as the music. Many times, when reflecting on opera, the fundamental role that scenography and stage direction have in the work is forgotten, especially when it comes to CD recordings or formats without images. This role is fundamental in 21st-century opera productions, where reflections on the implications of the stage (as a space where a specific time passes, as a "house of music") are extremely important and provide a specific meaning to the work. As argued by Gadamer, performing or executing poetry and music are essential and in no way adventitious actions. Only they fully realise what the works of art are themselves: the there being of what is represented through them. The specific temporariness of the aesthetic being—i.e., its existence consists in being represented—comes to exist in performance, as an autonomous manifestation with its own relief (Gadamer,

1977, p. 181).

We are going to start with a hermeneutic question: The notion of hermeneutic openness in contemporary opera, especially regarding the possibility that it opens up to the truth from avant-garde operatic writing: is current opera a language open to universality and with that, to the truth, or is it, on the contrary, a closed language and with that, veiled? Contemporary opera expands on the suppositions established by Heidegger and continued by Gadamer, who contended that the way in which poets speak of the world then becomes a condition of the experience of the world. In contemporary opera, this experience is the result of conceptual inquiry, of an art that is given to the experience of doing, sounding, and thinking. By way of illustration: the sound "G/sol" is a symbol of what Lorca means to the composer Mauricio Sotelo and on which the entire opera develops musically; furthermore, five notes open the work because there are 5 letters in Lorca.

Figure 1. *El Publico,* Opera by Mauricio Sotelo

This truth of art is revealed, at the same time that the opera becomes *Aletheia*, by bringing out the truth in another way (for example, the opera *Falluja,* from Tobin Stokes, first opera on the Iraq War, premiered by Long Beach Opera on 2016*,* that reflect the artistic experience of the vision of war).

3. Hermeneutic Criteria for Contemporary Opera

Contemporary opera musters the authentic task of performing as a result of dramaturgical, scenic, compositional, and scenographical creation.

We must provide certain aesthetic criteria to substantiate the ontological validity of a contemporary opera. These criteria must have a fundamental condition: their permanent nature. They must allow an assessment that places us on a different plane to that of art critics and to that of purely historical studies, despite the fact that contemporary opera is not, indeed, an *ex-novo* discourse, unconnected to tradition. As argued by Gadamer—though not in reference to today's opera— "here there is no random succession, a mere variety of conceptions; rather, by constantly following models and developing them, a tradition is formed with which every new attempt must come to terms. The performing artist too has a certain consciousness of this" (Gadamer, 1977, p. 164). Beyond the outlooks of creators, critics, and historians, I shall address the truth of opera in the 21st century from the standpoint of philosophical reflection.

3.1.1. Self-Interrogation Criterion

It is clear that meeting the truth also involves meeting oneself since the work always questions each of us in a unique way. This is the reason why there is so much variability in the interpretation of works of art, as pointed out by Grondin (Grondin, 2008, p. 75). However, this does not imply falling back into subjectivity or mere historicism, because the experience of truth does not depend on my own perspective. Above all, it depends on the work itself, which "opens my eyes to that which is", says Grondin. But what is the meaning of 'that which is'? Some notions common to Hermeneutics and the Aesthetics of reception delve into this approach.

In this vein, in the *Salzburg Colloquium* on musical and literary hermeneutics, Jauss presents the following questions: in what conditions may certain interpretations end up prevailing, becoming generators of standards? When and how are they recognised as such or again dismissed? How does this permanent process of formation and transformation of canon take place in the history of music? From my point of view, through various criteria, such as **self-interrogation**, open to the full historical dimension of the past and the present. As argued by Gadamer in *Truth and Method*, one who wishes to understand a text must, in principle, be ready to allow it to say something to one. A hermeneutically formed consciousness needs to display receptiveness to the text's alterity from the start (Gadamer, 1977, p. 335). When we delve into a work created today, the problems with its evaluation increase if we look at them under the light of the fusion of horizons, since we cannot bring into play that which the German philosopher refers to when he argues that the perspective of time and temporal distance allows us to distinguish between good and bad prejudices. We can see this in contemporary art for example, where only the perspective of time offers some aid (Grondin, 2008, p. 79).

The horizon of the present is constantly forming, inasmuch as we are constantly forced to test all our prejudices. Part of this test is meeting the past and understanding the tradition from which we ourselves come. Gadamer accords crucial importance to tradition: "Every experience has implicit horizons of before" (Gadamer, 1977, p. 376). Even if generally agreeing with it, this approach does not suffice for the purpose of generating an authentic discourse and unveiling what happens inside a current opera, created and evaluated within the same contemporary horizon.

Is then no more than a sort of critical position possible in the objective evaluation of truth, or the specific value that an opera offers today as an artistic experience? What if a work does not directly fit into tradition, such as the opera *Omnivore*, composed by Miika Hyytiainen in 2012 to be viewed on a mobile device and fully conceived following such criteria? What if an opera also breaks with the genre's tradition as it had developed up until now, as in the case of Maria Kallionpäa's *She*, based on the multitasking factor and conceived for augmented reality, or of composer Holzky's *Tragoedia*, which actually uses the libretto only as an indicator for the action (nobody performers it) and the entire opera is a development of the light and spaces? Does this lack of a horizon for deep evaluation of the work increase or decrease the hermeneutic value of its performance?

It is necessary to proceed radically in this self-interrogation process in order not to fall

into the circle of one's own preconceived views. In no way can one take for granted that what is offered in a contemporary opera may easily be fitted into one's own opinions and expectations. On the contrary, what one is told falls, in principle, under the opposing presumption, that those are other opinions and not one's, and that one is to acquaint oneself with it but not necessarily share it. This becomes more problematic when the individual's judgement or prejudice has to be validated within a larger entity, such as that which includes the controversial notion of the audience. Thus, according to Gumbrecht (1977, p. 77), the degree to which a work has an effect on a given audience is one of the factors of its validity as a work of art. This becomes especially problematic for all works that have been validated and judged from the point of view of their own aesthetic horizon—Ars Nova versus Ars Antiqua, Brahms versus Tchaikovsky, or some of today's composers versus the so-called 'conventional classical audiences'.

Karl Krauss himself demanded that art should operate on the reverse path, i.e. the one on which it is not the custodian of tradition, arguing that the role of art is not to bring order into chaos but to bring chaos into order (Wellmer, 1994, p. 41). And this is without even looking at all critical or openly negative authors. From my point of view, the audience's reception cannot be deemed to be a definitive value when it comes to approaching the work of art from its underlying truth. A new opera may represent a change of horizon by rejecting familiar experiences or developing awareness of those that manifest for the first time. And, as it happens with almost all contemporary scenic music, a part of the audience and the critics materialise criteria that do not persist with time. Thus, for some conservative audiences, an opera such as composer Fernando Buide's *A Amnesia de Clío* does not unveil truth because it neither contains it nor covers it; for others, however, it unveils truth to the highest degree.

Figure 2. *A Amnesia de Clío,* opera by Fernando Buide

I propose that the coincidence of factors deemed sufficient by Jauss—the horizon of expectation, which is the primary code implicit in the work; and the horizon of experience, which is the secondary code supplied by the recipient—be subjected to the self-interrogation criterion, i.e. opening up the historical depth of the present itself, in order to unveil what the work is in reality, which, as argued by the German philosopher, is part of the self-understanding of the contemporary subject beyond the forms of the path of history.

3.1.2. Realisation of the audience's self-interrogation

The hermeneutic criterion of self-interrogation of the audience of contemporary opera is essential since it is the one that tackles the work's *Aletheia*, the one that allows operas made in this century to become historically relevant processes. Nowadays it may be clear that many of our judgements of art are or have been historically conditioned. Thus, Kant considers the authentic carrier of beauty in painting to be form, and Fauvism extended that horizon (Gadamer, 1991, p. 74). We might conclude the same regarding music with a melody, an

imperative which is nowadays no more. At the same time, it may be that the audience's taste in a period is not the same as the interpretation of the truth, for a highly educated individual may consider one contemporary work to be a failure and another to be a masterpiece.

This does not imply that we should proceed with the work as with a product. The purpose is not to insert it into the happening of tradition, as Jauss would put it, but to actively appropriate the work through the previous approximations that make up the history of its reception (Jauss, 1986, p. 347) alongside the prejudices activated in the listener faced with new work, both constituents of their horizon of expectation: the capturing of form in a single representation, the weight of traditional listening, the capturing of what the new work brings that is new, the possibility of evading the weight of historical opera or not, etc. This horizon of expectation must be realised between a present subject and a likewise present discourse. Under what conditions of possibility is the truth unveiled in a work that is rejected as much as it was valued by the audience for which it was conceived? Gadamer speaks of the "overpowering impact of a compelling work" (Gadamer, 1991, p, 95). But how and in what way is a contemporary work compelling to its coevals? The German philosopher posits that the experience of historical tradition essentially goes beyond that which can be researched in it. It is not just truth or untruth in the sense decided by historical critique; it always provides truth—truth in which one must get to take part (Gadamer, 1977, p. 25). In the face of a contemporary opera, the audience is asked to position themselves at the moment described by Jauss as the threshold to an epoch and the consciousness of an epoch. This obviously carries certain risks.

In order to unveil the full truth content of the contemporary work, it is necessary to reach beyond what is described by Jauss when he distinguishes between the effect of tradition, determined by the work, and its reception, which depends on the active and free recipient who judges it in accordance with the aesthetic standards of their time and modifies the terms of the dialogue (Jauss, 1990, pp. 246 and 259). However, now that we are well into the globalisation epoch, if I may paraphrase Adorno, it seems evident that the aesthetic standards of our time are no longer evident.

3.2. Futurity Criterion

3.2.1. Contemporariness in its Hermeneutic Projection of the Present

> Art is knowledge and experiencing an artwork means sharing in that knowledge (Gadamer, 1977, p. 139).

Contemporariness as a present moment of history may appear to be a *contradictio in terminis*. Comprehending historical and artistic phenomena that have come to be in the present is the great task delayed after being enunciated.

Heidegger, who was the first to qualify the concept of comprehension as the universal determination of the there being, does use it to refer to the project nature of comprehension, i.e. the **futurity** (*Zukünftigkeit*) of the there being.

In a sense, we could say that Gadamer does not delve into the comprehension of the contemporary work. Even when he mentions it, he immediately circles back to so-called *classical* art: "How can we find an all-embracing concept to cover both what art is today and what it has been in the past? The problem is that we cannot talk about great art as simply belonging to the past, any more than we can talk about modern art only becoming 'pure' art through the rejection of all significant content. This is a remarkable state of affairs. If we reflect for a moment and try to consider what it is that we mean when we talk about art, then we come up against a paradox. As far as so-called classical art is concerned [...]" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 59). His approach to contemporary art and its comprehension is even more disheartening when he digs into the concept of play as an essential ingredient of art in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*: "it seems a false antithesis to believe that there is an art of the past that can be enjoyed and an art of the present that supposedly forces us to participate in it by the subtle use of artistic technique" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 76).

From my approach, the hermeneutic criterion of futurity opens up what pertains to the work in terms of enjoyment and play by its questioning of the being from the perspective of the new realities brought by global contemporariness, where the break value is much more decisive than the continuity value (Groys, 2005, p. 23).

In *Truth and Method,* Gadamer speaks of an epoch as if there were epochal unity today

as if the historically and politically fragmented time of Globality were a whole made up of common features. The philosopher argues that "every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself" (Gadamer, 1977, p. 366). While it is true that in the 21st century the conditions are not in place for speaking of common epochal features, we can recognise a common world that would allow self-understanding of a wider ego with space for the multiple conditions of possibility of the contemporary subject.

3.2.2. The Self-Understanding approach

Delving into contemporary music requires a self-understanding effort that even the philosopher himself appears to reject. Gadamer questions "the messianic consciousness of the nineteenth-century artist, who [...] as a social outsider pays the price for this claim since with all his artistry he is only an artist for the sake of art. But what is all this compared to the alienation and shock with which the more recent forms of artistic expression in our century tax our self-understanding as a public?" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 37). But I ask, did the contemporaries of Guillaume de Machaut or Beethoven not make the same self-understanding effort?

Other assertions are even more disconcerting due to their traditionalist nature since they seem to settle into certain prejudices instead of taking them into account in order to overcome them hermeneutically, such as when he contends "I should like to maintain a tactful silence about the extreme difficulty faced by performing artists when they bring modern music to the concert hall. It can usually only be performed as the middle item in a program—otherwise, the listeners will arrive later or leave early. This fact is symptomatic of a situation that could not have existed previously and its significance requires consideration. It expresses the conflict between art as a 'religion of culture' on the one hand and art as a provocation by the modern artist on the other" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 37).

In this sense, Grondin contends that when Gadamer refers to tradition, he does not do so in the way in which we usually perceive a traditionalist, which he is not, but rather thinking about the work of history that is being forged underneath tradition (Grondin, 2008, p. 79). With all due respect, I disagree. He himself asks in *The Relevance of the Beautiful* "why does the understanding of what art is today present a task for thinking?". However, he only dedicates a

few pages of his two *Truth and Method* books, not mentioning his lectures and other books. In very few lines does Gadamer talk about music, and when he does so he deals with general questions and in a very vague way, such as when he speaks of time (Gadamer, 1991, p. 107) or rhythm (Gadamer, 1991, p. 109), absolute music (Gadamer, 1991, p. 96), etc., and when he finally discusses music with text he does so to legitimate urban or popular music, but without dedicating it specific exegesis, remaining in a position of intentional subjectivity that does not match the great hermeneutic task undertaken in other pages: "I would insist that the Threepenny Opera, or the records of modern songs so popular with the young people of today, are equally legitimate [as the Passion music of J. S. Bach]. They too have a capacity to establish communication in a way that reaches people of every class and educational background. I am not referring here to the contagious and intoxicated enthusiasm that is the object of mass psychology [...]. Yet it is surely significant that the younger generation feel that they express themselves spontaneously in the obsessive rhythms of modem music, or in very barren forms of abstract art" (Gadamer, 1991, p.120). From my point of view, these assertions place the philosopher among traditionalist prejudices that hinder his penetration into the authentic being that is unveiled in contemporary music.

For example, this moral guardianship regarding youngsters does not quite fit with the age of the people who go to see contemporary opera performances or of those who follow them on social media or download their digital content. Reflecting on and digging deeper into this is a task that we the researchers who deal with the nature of contemporary music are called upon to carry out.

4. Range of Truth of Contemporary Opera

Under the heading 'range of truth' I will focus on the following two theses:

1) No one can remain indifferent in the face of a work of art that subjects us to its truth (Grondin, 2008, p.76).
2) The word 'art' does not denote the concept of a mere happening. It is a concept of range. Art is not something found among other things, which one also performs and often enjoys. Art places the whole of existence in the decision

> and keeps it there, hence why it is itself placed under unique conditions (Heidegger in Molinuevo, 1998, p.178).

As argued by Heidegger in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, history, art, and truth are the same in origin: the happening (history) of the being as the opening (truth) of the entity is art. This thesis is taken further by Gadamer in the first part of *Truth and Method* when he posits that art contains and conveys truth (López Sáenz, 1998, p. 333). The legitimation of art, therefore, does not just lie in the aesthetic pleasure that it produces but also in its revelation of the being (López Sáenz, 1998, p. 338).

The work is never received—cannot be received—as it was conceived or created. It is clear that the composer conceived the work in the context of their world, which is not ours. And what makes a work 'eternal' is certainly the fact that it adapts to the conditions of each time to say something to the spectator, because it answers the questions asked by the spectator.

No conductor would replace a D major chord with a C minor chord, and no singer would replace an instance of *Sprechgesang* with bel canto vocals. However, in contemporary direction we have characters in the scene without the libretto placing them there (as in *Don Carlo* by, Warlikowski performed at Garnier in 2019) or Act 1 of *Un Ballo in Maschera* opening with the characters singing while sitting on the toilet (as at the Liceu's production by Calixto Bieito in 2000). Such direction may alter the nature of the work but does not compromise its being, since the staging does not alter the message of the opera and is also 3aimed at an audience whose conditions of existence have substantially changed since the time in which it was conceived.

Thus, current direction can open up the work to truth by presenting a new interpretation of the conflicts inherited from the past—that which Gadamer considers to be 'our tradition', from which a fusion of horizons develops.

Let us take a hermeneutic look at two operas on the basis of contemporary instances of direction, which represent what is considered a new paradigm of opera. To do this, I will start with the specificity of opera. While it is true that no work of art exists as something independent of its representation, scene direction in opera is specifically not an autonomous creation, in contrast with that of a play. Instead, it constitutes mediated creation, since it is not disconnected from what the libretto says and what the music expresses. In this sense, it is formally subordinated to an objective that it cannot contradict. Its function is to take hold of one of the

aforementioned planes of creation in order for the authentic reality of the work to emerge.

4.1. Direction that Opens up the Understanding of the Hermeneutic Truth of the Work

> In the work, the struggle of truth is always reopened. (Rebok, 2017, p. 255)

Some direction takes the audience to a logic of theatre that is different to the codes with which it was written, conceived, and imagined. Thus, it interrogatively opens up the truth of the work. This is the case with La Fura dels Baus's version of *The Magic Flute*, whose staging incorporated great transformations: the original libretto was replaced by a long poem created based on it by Rafael Argullol and recited through voice-over, and the dramatic action was moved to the protagonist's brain: a non-physical space—the imaginary inside of the protagonist's mind—and a time outside of time—an instant shorter a second. The floor symbolised the units of memory stored in the mind which also pointed to possible play between truth and fiction, as noted by those responsible for the staging.

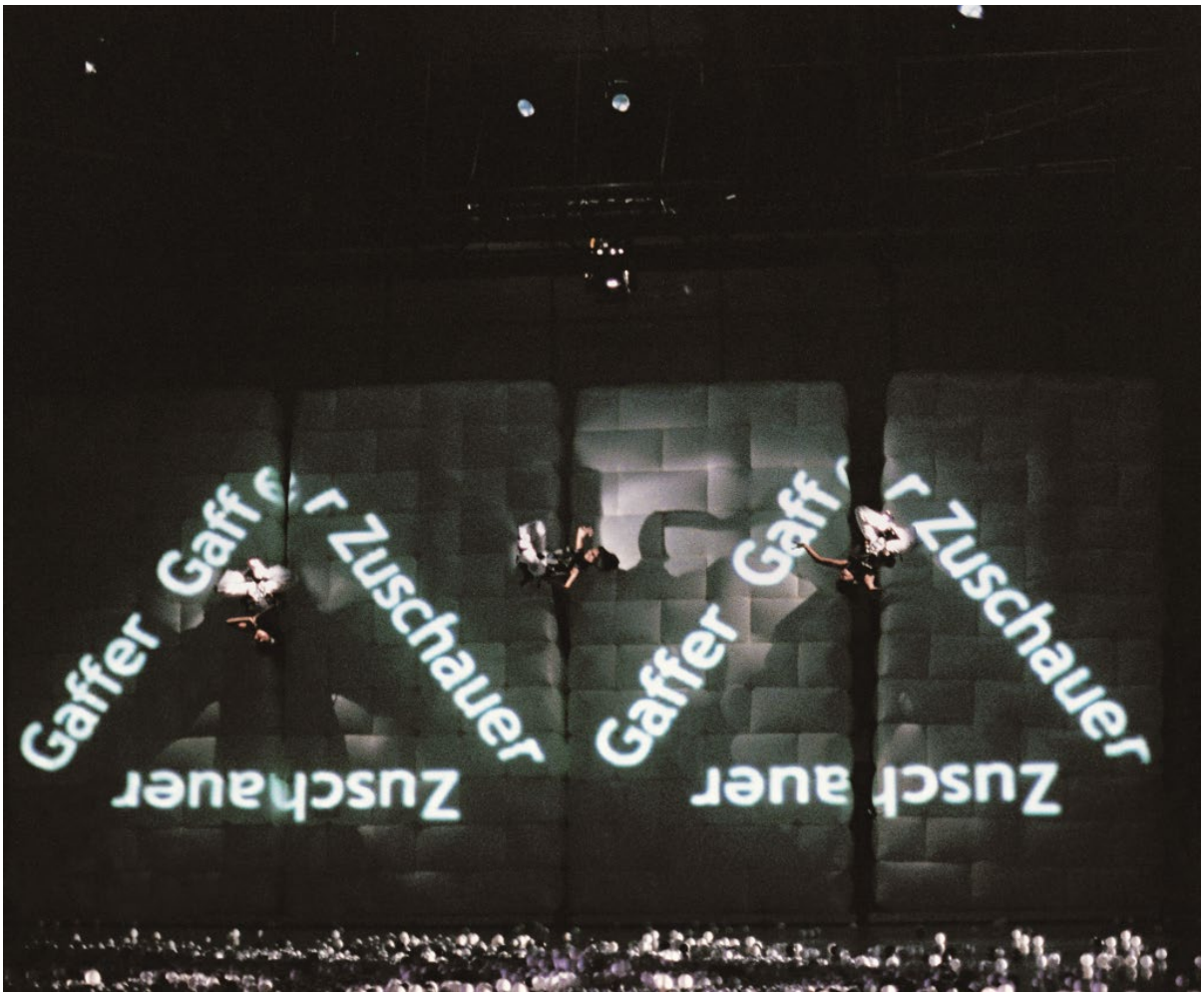

Figure 3. *The Magic Flute*, Opera by La Fura dels Baus

In this case, Àlex Ollé and Carlos Padrissa's direction brought light to what Mozart and Schikaneder had written. I am not speaking from the perspective of relevance or interest—an area more pertaining to critics—but from the sphere of hermeneutics itself and its capacity for opening up the true being of the work through *polemos*, so that the work thus regenerates its existence in the 21st century. In this sense, I share the hermeneutic theses that consider that interpreting directions consists in them being followed in accordance with their sense and not literally. These theses base themselves on the fact that a text is not a given object, but instead a phase in the realisation of a process of comprehending.

4.2. Direction that Veils Understanding of the Hermeneutic Truth of the Work

> All authentic art, not just avant-garde art, represents a challenge. (Martel, 2015, p. 55)

However, what about direction that radically strays from the original sense and openly contradicts the libretto, preventing the audience from comprehending and thus penetrating the truth of the work?

This is the case of Andrea Breth's staging of *Lulu* in 2015 at Berlin's Staatsoper. Breth overhauls Bertolt Brecht's dramaturgical conception of *Regietheater* according to which theatre is a non-affirmative reading of the world and must deploy philosophical, political, and ideological mechanisms to open up a decentralisation of the reading of the text in order to comprehend the mechanisms that it implicitly carries. Brecht proposes a different reading of the text, one that evidences the alienation that society is subjected to at the hands of the dominant class, in the same vein as Adorno brings forward, albeit in a different way, in his Minimum Moralium 22 "that culture produces the illusion of a society worthy of human beings, which does not exist". But Brecht never mentions vandalising the text to the point that understanding the meaning of the work becomes almost impossible. This is what Andrea Breth does. She has generated such a radical and independent narrative development that a neophyte spectator will not comprehend the truth of this work. In fact, they will not even glimpse its threshold. The original work contains many relationships that have disappeared in this staging: at a structural level between the characters and some musical forms—i.e., Dr. Schön is represented by the sonata and Lulu by the parlour music—and between characters and instruments—the athlete is symbolised by the piano, Alwa by the saxophone and the Marquis by the violin. Lulu's portrait, an essential element of the works on which the libretto is based and of the score, does not appear either. Thus, when Lulu looks at herself in it (act I) or destroys it (act III) the audience cannot understand what is happening in the scene. Berg wanted the film that divides the opera into two parts to narrate Lulu and the Countess' stay in prison and in hospital. It, too, disappears, skipping to Scene 2 of Act 2 without giving the audience the necessary information to comprehend it. In summary, if direction problematises comprehension of a work to such a degree, the interpretation paradigm runs counter to the

possibilities that the work would open up.

Figure 4. *Lulu*, Opera by Andrea Breth

We do not intend to open the debate on the validity of beauty as constitutive of art, but we cannot omit reflections on what is beautiful in contemporary opera, re-assessing the Adornoian theses in light of what the 21st century has experienced musically. Contemporary opera is by no means foreign to this way of revealing the truth of what beauty is, and there are numerous examples. We refer to the beauty that makes the instant significant: the thousands of LED light bulbs that, in the scenography of *L'amour de Loin* by Saariaho at the MET, symbolized the Mediterranean Sea; the symbolic play of lighting, choreography, and chorus in *The First Emperor;* or Julieta harassed by white horses representing heterosexual desire in *El Público,* by Mauricio Sotelo at the Teatro Real. We also refer to allegorical beauty, subjected to time, which goes to its essence to transcend it, in the most Hegelian sense of the term. If we take into account that beauty is one of the ways of presenting the truth as *unconcealment,* this happens in contemporary opera with a revelatory force, since it allows the artistic mediums involved to go much further than when they are presented separately. Robert Lepage introduced circus,

acrobatics, and digital media to opera; William Kentridge used puppets, drawings, and animation; Robert Wilson, lighting and 3D animation; and Franc Aleu, robotics, and virtual reality. All these approaches come from a rigorous conception of opera, which broadens its horizons, those of art and, therefore, of ourselves.

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On Deconstruction and Construction in Picasso's Las Meninas: Political Reasons for and Death Exorcisms in the 1957 Barcelona Suite

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ABSTRACT**.** On the tricentennial of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656–7), Picasso made a peculiar and titanic tribute to this historical masterpiece of Spanish painting, deconstructing it in a series of fifty-eight oil paintings between August 14 and December 30, 1957. We could reach a consensus in accepting – at least – that two creative processes are at play in Picasso's *Las Meninas*: (1) the deconstruction of the Velazquez's work in a series and (2) the construction of a total of 58 oil paintings that deserve to be appreciated qualitatively as a totality, an aspect to which I will refer using the term *suite*, which (like Goodman's word *variation*) I will borrow from the field of music. This article aims to explore the qualitative reasons of this *suite* as a totality, exploring its strategies of deconstruction of Velazquez's 1656-7 work and focusing on what I consider the political reasons of *Las Meninas* and Picasso's intimate relationship to death exorcism as the inner construction devices of the suite.

Introduction

In 1971, the American philosopher Nelson Goodman went to Barcelona. There, he discovered Gaudí's *Sagrada Família* (begun in 1882 and not yet finished), as well as Picasso's series *Las Meninas*. Goodman considered the latter work to be "the most impressive variations ever done in painting," as he writes in his article "Variations on Variation – Or Picasso back to

[30] Email: Jessica.Jaques@uab.cat. This article has been realized with the support of the I+D Research Project PGC2018-097568-B-I00: *Los escritos de Picasso: textos poéticos 1935-1945* financed by the *Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades* in which the author is main researcher.

Bach …" (1988).[31]

This critical judgment focuses on two issues that are present in this paper: the issue of the procedures of qualitative deconstruction inner to *Las Meninas suite* and the issue of the procedures of qualitative construction inner to *Las Meninas suite*. Either in deconstruction and construction creative processes I will follow Goodman's expansion of the use of the term *variation* from music to painting, and I will establish a gap between the notion of *variation* and the notion of *suite*, which provides a theoretical statement of the first term in the philosophy of painting, *variation* being considered from now on as an indirect mode of reference.

For the first creative process – that is, deconstruction – I will present a political reading of Picasso's *Las Meninas* in their contemporaneity with the tricentennial of Velázquez's work, and the use of Tv and cinematographic gazes. Next, for the second creative process – that is, construction – I will present the underlying reason for the creative procedure of the *suite* and also for the presence of it in its final location in the *Picasso Museum* in Barcelona. These reasons are the exorcism of two deaths: that of Picasso's father, José Ruiz y Blasco (who passed away in Barcelona in 1913), and that of Jaume Sabartés (who died in Paris in 1968).

Regarding the dating of the work, it should be noted that the *Las Meninas* series (MPB 70, 433–90) was done feverishly by Picasso probably between August 14 (the first oil in the series –MPB 70.433– dates from August) and December 30, 1957[32], months after the tricentenary of the original painting. It was possible for me to establish the date of the inception of this series by pointing out the creative hybridization that Picasso exercised between it and the long poem *El entierro del Conde de Orgaz*, which was composed at the same time.[33]

Picasso's *Las Meninas* is obviously an exercise in deconstructing the aura of historical painting or, in fact, of a historical painting, which is decomposed into fifty-eight oils on canvas. Some of these were, in my opinion, worked on simultaneously, even if finished on different

[31] Goodman, Nelson, "*Variations on variation, or Picasso back to Bach", Reconceptions in Philosophy, and other Arts and Sciences*. Cambridge (MA) : Hackett, 1988, p. 76. See also : Pérez Casanovas, Àger, «La variació com a experimentació : un apropament pragmatista a la creació simbólica de Picasso», V Congrés Català de Filosofia, Canillo (Andorra), 20-22 june 2019 ; most of the thesis of this article are resumed in Rafart Planas, Claustre, « *Les Menines*: Variations Picasso », *Les musiques de* Picasso, Catalogue sous la direction de Cécile Godefroy, pp., 209–17.

[32] See http://www.bcn.cat/museupicasso/ca/colleccio/mpb70-433.html

[33] See Jacques, Jèssica & Michael, Androula, "El Entierro del conde de Orgaz", *Picasso Poeta*. Museu Picasso de Barcelona, Musée Picasso de París, November 2019, pp. 84–89.

dates, which are noted in each case by Picasso himself. Since May 1968, the series has been located in the Picasso Museum in Barcelona.

1. The *suite* as a Strategy of Deconstruction and the Political Reasons for Picasso's *Las Meninas*

Picasso's *Las Meninas* is a journey – a series fragmented into 58 moments – back and forth in time and space and it is this aspect that makes it a performative work.

We need to pause for a moment on the concept of *series* as such. Many languages have been able to translate *suite* adequately. A Bach suite is not a Bach series: *suite* connotes quality, *series* only connotes quantity. Picasso's *Las Meninas* is a *suite* and not a *series*, as are Goya's engravings. This means that once serialized, each element can transgress the serialization and be placed next to a non-correlative element, generating receptive events other than the initial ones and enabling the return from succession to simultaneity. The *suit*e as a whole thus becomes an installation. As consequence, I suggest that chronological ordering should not be imperative (as it is now in the Picasso Museum), since combination according to the criteria of what could be called a *performative installation* (in my opinion, what Picasso was aiming at) can generate receptive experiences that are as or more fruitful than the original intentions and as rigorous as them. I would add that chronological recounting can even be damaging, as is the case for the *Portrait of Jacqueline* (MPB 70.489), which is currently "in exile" near the room of the sub-series *The Pigeons*. The spatial requirements of an institution are perfectly understandable, but, according to the criteria of the performative installation, the portrait plays the role of the mirror of the royal couple in the original painting (*The Portrait of Jaqueline* represents, indeed, a mirror which reflects "the queen" Jacqueline and "the king" Picasso, who is present only as a gloomy half-face) and "exiling it" condemns it to being displaced and performatively disempowered. Something similar could be said of the subseries *Els colomins* (MPB 70.450–8); but here subjection to the dictatorship of space is unavoidable since the subseries consists of nine oils, which, moreover, enjoy a certain autonomy that softens the receptive consequences of their "exile."

Thanks to this <simultaneity – succession – simultaneity> round trip, Picasso's *Las Meninas* achieved in an undisciplined way something that critics have only wanted to

acknowledge in Duchamp's work: the transgressive exploration of the performative capacity of the traditional arts – in this case, of oil painting.

I will now turn to a little-known and highly surprising article by Michael Foucault, who explored this transgression in 1973. Foucault was the author of the first text in history that was dedicated to art – specifically to *Las Meninas* by Velázquez – and served as a prologue to a book of philosophy (see, respectively, "Les suivantes" – written in 1964 – and *Les mots et les choses* [1966]). He also wrote some reflections on Picasso's suite that were supposed to serve as a film script: reflections that are based precisely on the game of <simultaneity – succession – simultaneity>. It is worth mentioning that the text is entitled "*Les ménines* de Picasso" and that the film could not be made, since the footage that filmmaker Guy de Chambure managed to shoot at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona was confiscated by the censorship of the Franco regime. It should be remembered that Picasso's *Las Meninas* series was exhibited at the Louise Leiris Gallery, between May 22 and June 27, 1959, and that Foucault may only have seen them there and not necessarily installed in Barcelona.

Let us now return to the deconstruction of the historical painting. One of the ways to achieve this is to try to transmute the simultaneity proper to it into the form of succession. Picasso had learned to free images from the weight of simultaneity thanks to his work as an engraver. Engraving and series are two terms with a strong historical relationship that link Picasso to "his Goya" and "his Rembrandt." On the other hand, as Nelson Goodman detected when he discovered Picasso's *Las Meninas* on his trip to Barcelona in 1971 (it is worth mentioning that Goodman regarded this Picasso series as "the most imposing variations" in the history of art), the practice of variation is akin, by nature, to serialization, and hence Picasso did not hesitate to explore the serial procedure in his research from 1954 to 1963 on Delacroix (in the series *Les Femmes d 'Alger*; 1954-5), on Velázquez (in the series *Las Meninas*) and Manet (in the series *Dejeuner sur l'herbe*, 1959-62).

I will argue that the fundamental reasons underlying the creative process of deconstructing Velázquez's *Las Meninas* are political and that Picasso transforms the *speculum principis* that configures Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (a literary genre which, as I understand it, is one of the structuring devices of the artwork) into a funhouse mirror in which he is able to emphasize the shortcomings of the future monarchy of Spain. Franco had already established this future monarchy by way of the *Law of Succession,* which was promulgated more than a

decade before Picasso's series (on March 31, 1947). Twenty years after painting *Guernica,* the *Las Meninas* series constituted a denunciation of the dark continuity of Franco's dictatorship in the form of a monarchy appointed by the dictator himself.

Let us have a closer look at the series. As I have said, it consists of fifty-eight oil paintings and was completed on December 30, 1957. Jaume Sabartès, in writing the introductory text, said that this was the manifestation of a deep desire for "New Year, new life", in my opinion with an ironic and angry political tone. Picasso, director of the Museo del Prado (in exile) in 1937 and curator of the arrival of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* in Switzerland to protect them during the Civil War, recalled by way of the similarities between *Guernica* and the first oil in the series (MPB 70.433) – gray and the largest canvas he painted after the immense oil of 1937 – that the political situation had not fundamentally changed in Spain since the year in which he painted his anti-Franco *manifesto* for the Pavilion of the Spanish Republic at the Universal Exhibition of Paris. Moreover, he remained deeply committed to the efforts made by "the Spanish people" to "save Spanish art" during the Civil War, standing by the statements and commitments he made during the period of his leadership of the Prado Museum. This is why on the first page of *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (written on January 6 – the Feast of the Epiphany – in 1957), he affirms:

> evidentemente las cosas no están para desnudos y escaparates ni en museos ni grandes almacenes de modas - porque es así.
> most likely things here aren't meant for nudes and showcases not in museums nor the larger fashionable boutiques – because that's the way it is. [34]

Two decades after *Guernica*, the political landscape was largely hopeless: the monarchy of, as Luis Carrero Blanco put it, "the Catholic, anti-communist and anti-liberal Spain of the National Movement" had been announced in the *Law of Succession* of March 31, 1947. The future King Juan Carlos was nineteen in 1957 and had been appointed successor to the dictator Franco when he was nine. By way of a very peculiar rereading of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, Velazquez's kings were transmuted into festival giants in the *Las Meninas* series and their entourage into bigheads or jesters. Picasso continued to uphold the commitment he assumed and proclaimed

[34] Picasso, Pablo, *The Burial of Count Orgaz & Other Poems*, University of California Press: Eds. Jerome Rothenberg & Pierre Joris, Exact Change, 2004, p. 288.

in 1937, and he revitalized it with a work as gigantic as *Guernica* that involved an update of his critique of the Franco regime, which in 1957 was drifting towards monarchy.

Let us recall his best-known and sharpest statement regarding the political power of art, which he formulated in 1944 in the midst of World War II:

> No! Painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of offensive and defensive war against the enemy.[35]

Las Meninas de Velázquez was a work made in the royal court; those of Picasso were done in a voluntary, anti-Franco and communist exile (no matter how heterodox his communism was, like Sartre's, like Foucault's). In his words:

> Have the Communists not been the bravest in both France and the USSR or in my Spain? How could I have hesitated? Fear of making a political commitment? On the contrary, I've never felt more free, I've never felt more whole! And then, I was in such a hurry to have a homeland again: I have always been in exile, and now I am no longer; while waiting for the time when Spain can finally welcome me, the French Communist Party has opened its arms to me; I have found in it all those whom I most respect: the greatest scholars, the greatest poets...[36]

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, with their peculiar desire for a "new year, new life", Picasso's *Las Meninas* restored the battle for two dissolutions: that of a political regime and that of a visual regime.

2. The Series as a Deconstructive Procedure Using Television and Cinematographic Devices

In *Las Meninas,* Picasso uses TV images and photograms as a pictorial device for

[35] Presented by Tery, Simone in the interview "Picasso n'est pas officier dans l'armée française", Lettres Françaises, París, 24 març 1945, p. 5, also presented by Bernadac, Marie-Laure., Michael, Androula, *Picasso. Propos sur l'art*. Paris : Gallimard, 1998, p. 45.

[36] Picasso, Pablo, "Pourquoi j'ai adhéré au parti communiste", *L'Humanité*, Paris 29-30 october 1944. Also presented by Bernadac, Marie-Laure., Michael, Androula, *Op. cit.* p. 41. About Picasso's peculiar communism, Utley, Gertje, *Picasso. The Communist Years*. New Haven & London: Harvard University Press, 2010, and Cohen-Solal, Annie, *Un étranger nommé Picasso*. Paris, Fayard, 2021.

deconstructing Velazquez's original painting. While Velazquez painted his *Meninas* in 1656-7, following my aforementioned interpretation, through the optical device of a huge out-of-canvas mirror, Picasso deconstructs the Sevillian master's work by way of two optical devices proper to the mass media culture of his time: the television screen and the cinematic frame.

This strategy is made manifest in two aspects of the 1957 series. Firstly, some television screens appear in Picasso's *Las Meninas*. As a matter of fact, he was a regular television viewer, and autumn 1957 was a peak time for televised events, especially because of the raging space race since the first two Russian *Sputnik* launches. As a matter of fact, I bet that the dog in the screen in the oil on canvas MPB 70.445, who makes the ears of Picasso's Teckel (Lump)[37] perk up, is none other than Laika, the female dog who died in space on November 3, 1957. The painting was done on September 4th, so we can assume that Laika was added to the TV screen later.

Secondly, Picasso was a cinemagoer as well, and even an everyday life filmmaker (and photographer) himself.[38] He was fascinated by the simultaneity in cinematic images that the succession of frames permitted. This is why cinematic devices allow Picasso to prioritize succession in his series as opposed to Velazquez's simultaneity.

As mentioned above, Foucault cinematically explored Picasso's *Las Meninas*, writing what, according to the filmmaker he commissioned, Guy de Chambure, are "essentially literary texts that indicated the spirit in which the script would be treated." It is illuminating for the question before us to review the moments on which it is based. The basic plot is given by the first title, "I. La *Desaparition du peintre*", which explains the appearance of the other moments and the successive tone: the painter disappears in the series until he is nothing more than an absence in tension with the resounding presence of the artist in Velázquez's work. The simultaneity of the gaze, from the succession of the first "menina" to the last, gives the following titles: "II. The Growth of the Musician", III. "The Transformation of the (Chromatic) Sentence", "IV. Dance and Metamorphosis". as the place where, definitively, succession and simultaneity find the perfect tension in dance, in the movement of music, which, moreover, has no face, thus inviting us to give it ours and "dance" Las Meninas.

Curiously, for the 2017 Picasso Congress, the choreographer Laura Vilar – with whom

[37] About "Lump", see Duncan, Douglas, *Lump. The Dog who Ate a Picasso*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2006.
[38] Baldassari, Anne, Picasso, *Picasso and Photography*: *The Dark Mirror*. London: Flammarion UK, 1997.

I carry out artistic research projects – and I proposed to the Museu Picasso in Barcelona a study on the choreographic movement that is implicit in the tension of succession–simultaneity in Picasso's *Las Meninas*. Her starting point was the suggestion that this figure was that of a girl in motion and metamorphosis. At the time, we still did not know Foucault's text. Its discovery has reinforced our commitment to this line of research and will have a strong impact on her doctoral thesis. I owe the suggestion that Picasso makes the painter disappear and focuses on the girls to Laura Vilar and the playwright Sílvia Galí because ten years before he had written *Les quatre petites filles* (the second play in the history of theater starring only women, which I translated into Catalan and Spanish), where he already presented the stereotype of the girl (the girls) as the regent of the future of humanity. Twenty years after *Guernica*, the girls of *Las Meninas* worked hard to deconstruct the history of Spain in order to defeat Francoism and artistically found a Spain free from its yoke.

3. The *Suite* as a Construction Strategy and the Exorcism of the Death of Don José

Picasso's *Las Meninas* is a series quantitatively speaking (i.e., it consists of a set of more than four paintings), but it is also something else: the quantity of oil paintings that it includes has a qualitative value, since there are fifty-eight, because, as Sabartés has pointed out, they are a way of wishing "New year, new life". A wish voiced at the end of December 1957, despite the political situation indicated in the previous section. But this is not the only thing that allows us to consider the series' constructive dynamics beyond its deconstructive mechanisms. The constructive impulse that led Picasso to carry out *Las Meninas* emerges, as far as I am concerned, from the fact that he was the same age as his father was when the latter passed away (75 years old). From this point of view, the dynamics of excess performed in this series are a way of exorcising his desire to surpass the age at which his father dies and the challenge of so doing. Death's exorcism was a recurring creative process for Picasso (recall, for example, the incidence of Apollinaire's death – which took place in 1918 – in the sign language of a decade later). This dimension will be further developed in what follows.

Picasso's fear of death is well known, and some of his masterpieces serve (among other things) as ways of exorcising it. This fear must have had one of its fiercest moments when

reaching the age of Don José Ruiz when he died. Picasso overcame his exorcisms by imposing titanic challenges on himself: such as he had already done in the cases of the *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (MoMA, New York), and *Guernica* (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid). *Las Meninas* also involved an obvious Faustian motivation for the cited reason. This intimate dimension of the series was firmly intertwined, in my opinion, with the radical political motivation I set out above.

4. The Exorcism of Jaume Sabartés' Death as the Reason for the Definitive Location of Picasso's *Las Meninas* in the Picasso Museum in Barcelona

After eleven years during which he did not choose their ultimate destination, in 1968 Picasso gifted his *Meninas* to the Picasso Museum in Barcelona. This gesture also constituted a kind of exorcism: this time of the death of Jaume Sabartés, *factotum* of the museum, and the closest friend of the artist since their shared youth in Barcelona, as well as a companion of Picasso's life and work. After Sabartés's death, Picasso donated the series on the condition that the totality of the fifty-eight paintings would never be replaced or split up. This donation was therefore an exorcism in the form of homage and expression of gratitude to his friend and to the city that had brought them together. This decision endowed Picasso's *Las Meninas*, many years after its realization, with another strong qualitative dimension (as *suite*), since today it remains the only one of Picasso's series which can be viewed in its entirety in one museum, thus confirming exorcism and homage as underlying creative reasons for the series and empowering the creative agency of the act of placing it at the museum. It is not for nothing that the series is located in the walls built on *Sabartes' Square*, thus highlighting Picasso's umbilical link between the creative act and the power of friendship.[39]

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Beyond Internalism / Externalism Dispute on Aesthetic Experience: A Return to Kant

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ABSTRACT. This paper consists of four parts. In the first part, I mention different ways in which one can view our aesthetic experience, and I elaborate upon a distinction that seems to be the most fruitful one, namely Shelley's classification of the main views as internalist and externalist.[41] In the past few decades, the externalist view has seemingly prevailed, and this was brought upon in part by Dickie's criticism of Beardsley's internalist position. However, one cannot fully grasp the argumentative significance and potential of aesthetic experience without including both elements. In the rest of the paper, I aim to show how, starting from Kant, we can go beyond the dispute between internalists and externalists. In the second part of the paper, I discuss internal elements of Kant's conception of aesthetic experience and, at the same time, his argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste. In the third part, I put an emphasis on the key external component of his views – namely, the notion of the formal purposiveness, which pertains to the object we judge to be beautiful. In the fourth part of the paper, I discuss two main interpretations of Kant's argument and his conception of aesthetic experience – Paul Guyer's and Hannah Ginsborg's. Neither interpretation takes into account the external aspects of aesthetic experience. This, as I claim, makes such conceptions vulnerable to the 'everything is beautiful' objection.

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[41] This paper is written within the project no. 179041, which is financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. I discussed some of the ideas I develop in this paper at a conference titled 'Kant's Third Critique: Historical Context and Contemporary Relevance', held at The University of Rijeka on July 19th, 2019. I thank the audiences at this conference and the ESA conference for valuable comments and feedback.

1. Contemporary Approaches to Aesthetic Experience

The concept of aesthetic experience is one of the most prominent concepts in contemporary aesthetics. It has exceptional historical significance. Namely, the shift from beauty to aesthetic experience (initially called 'pleasure of the imagination'[42]) marked the end of traditional aesthetics and the beginning of modern aesthetics. Aesthetic experience has maintained its prominence in the following centuries, with no equally radical shift. However, its impact goes far beyond the history of aesthetics: many of the most prominent debates in contemporary aesthetics – debates about the definition of art, interpretation, and evaluation of artworks, to name just a few – feature to a greater or lesser degree a specific view of aesthetic experience.

One of the clear signs of the ubiquity of this concept are not only various debates, but also distinctive classifications of positions taken within those debates. Here I will mention only four of the many relatively recent attempts to summarize these debates. First, Noël Carroll distinguishes between the content-oriented account and the affect-oriented account (Carroll, 2001, p. 8). The second classification is that of Garry Iseminger (Iseminger, 2003), who sees the debate as involving primarily those philosophers who favor the phenomenal conception of aesthetic experience and those who favor the epistemic conception. Third, Robert Stecker mentions five different conceptions of aesthetic experience: the selfless absorption account, the object-directed pleasure account, the two-level conception, the minimal, view and the content-oriented conception (Stecker, 2010, ch.3). Finally, and most importantly for my goal, James Shelley states that the debate on aesthetic experience is best viewed as the dispute between internalists and externalists (Shelley, 2017). Shelley outlines this dispute by drawing a contrast between Monroe Beardsley's and George Dickie's views in the following way:

> According to the version of internalism Beardsley advances in his *Aesthetics*, all aesthetic experiences have in common three or four (depending on how you count) features, which "some writers have [discovered] through acute introspection, and which each of us can test in his own experience" (Beardsley, 1958, 527). These are focus ("an aesthetic experience is one in which attention is firmly fixed upon [its object]"), intensity, and unity, where unity is a matter of coherence and of completeness (Beardsley, 1958, 527). […] Dickie's most consequential criticism of

[42] One of the most prominent early authors who views experience in this way is Addison. His theory was first formulated at the beginning of the 18th century (Addison and Steele, 1712/1879).

> Beardsley's theory is that Beardsley, in describing the phenomenology of aesthetic experience, has failed to distinguish between the features we experience aesthetic objects as having and the features aesthetic experiences themselves have. So while every feature mentioned in Beardsley's description of the coherence of aesthetic experience—continuity of development, the absence of gaps, the mounting of energy toward a climax—surely is a feature we experience aesthetic objects as having, there is no reason to think of aesthetic experience itself as having any such feature. (Shelley, 2017, 2.4)

As we can see, the question of what is distinctive for aesthetic experience, compared to other types of experiences, according to this view, can be approached from two different perspectives. We may ask what is characteristic of the experience itself, as a psychological state, or we may wonder what causes that experience. What is important about our aesthetic experience and, furthermore, what defines it, according to internalists, has to do with its psychological features: what aesthetic experience consists of, what it is like to be in such an experiential state. This perspective is an instance of an overall introspective approach to human experience that has long been the dominant view. The fact that this mentalistic picture is largely rejected certainly influenced the abandonment of aesthetic internalism. However, a more immediate aesthetic reason for turning toward the opposite, externalistic approach, pertains to a debate between Dickie (Dickie, 1964; Dickie, 1965; Dickie, 1974; Dickie, 1988) and Beardsley (Beardsley, 1958; Beardsley, 1962; Beardsley, 1982), which resulted in Beardsley's modifying his position.

By expounding Kant's view of aesthetic experience, I will try to show that both internalistic and externalistic elements of aesthetic experience should be taken into account in a plausible conception of aesthetic experience. The merit of such a comprehensive view is apparent when we judge it not only by its coherency and its extensional adequacy but also by its explanatory force which can be seen when, for instance, aside from explaining aesthetic experience itself, we have a more general goal, i.e., answering the question whether aesthetic evaluation has inferential structure or arguing for the thesis that aesthetic judgments have universal validity. Plausible answers to these central aesthetic questions require both the elements of the experience itself and the causes and conditions under which it occurs.

2. The Role of Aesthetic Experience in Kant's Argument

In the 'Analytic of the Beautiful', Kant (Kant, 2000) contrasts the judgments of taste with judgments of the agreeable and theoretical judgments. What distinguishes judgments of taste from the other two types of judgments is, according to him, a combination of two properties – their subjectivity and their generality. However, there are numerous disputes on how to understand the thesis that aesthetic judgments are, at the same time, subjective and universally valid. Many commentators agree that Kant was torn between two tendencies. On the one hand, he was leaning towards aesthetic subjectivism. This was mainly due to his idealist turn toward the subject. On the other, Kant wanted to show that, despite the subjective ground of aesthetic judgments (the fact that these judgments rest on aesthetic experience), aesthetic relativism is untenable, that there are criteria of validity of our aesthetic judgments.

I believe that Kant didn't completely abandon the idea that beauty is an objective property. He considered it to be an external source of aesthetic experience, as a quality in an object 'by means of which it corresponds with our way of receiving it' (Kant, 2000, 5:282). Only with this assumption, Kant can resist the 'everything is beautiful'[43] objection and answer the question why some objects cause what he terms 'the free play of understanding and imagination', which in turn enables him to argue for the universal validity of aesthetic judgments. This shows that every plausible conception of aesthetic experience which aims to be part of a comprehensive aesthetic theory must account for both internal and external elements.

To make this obvious, we can draw a distinction between internalist and externalist elements in Kant's 'Analytic of Beautiful'. Having expounded the thesis of disinterestedness in the first moment of the judgement of taste, at the very beginning of the second moment, in paragraph 6, Kant puts forward the thesis that the universal validity of the judgment of taste stems from disinterestedness in the pleasure we feel toward a given object.[44] However, he immediately makes a caveat and no longer claims that universal validity is a logical

[43] There is a wide range of authors ascribing this difficulty to Kant's view, and it is sometimes even used as an argument against the validity of an interpretation of his views. See, for instance, Ginsborg, 2014 and Guyer, 2017. See also: Merbote, 1982, p. 82, and Ameriks, 1982, p. 295-302.

[44] As Guyer says, this is an 'ill-fated claim that the definition of the beautiful as the object of a universal delight is deducible from the definition of it as the object of a delight free of any interest' (Guyer, 1979, p. 118).

consequence of disinterestedness, but rather that the subject who (believes that he) has excluded every interest feels that his pleasure is free and (necessarily) sees it as a state that has its basis in something that can be *assumed* to be the case for every other subject. (Kant still doesn't say what that is. The ideas of a 'universal voice' and '*sensus communis*' are introduced later, in paragraphs 8 and 20, respectively. See also: Guyer, 1979, p. 118-127). Restating his thesis a few sentences later, he puts forward a stronger claim from the beginning of the paragraph and says, as if there really was a logical implication, that the judgment of taste, through elimination of all interests, 'lays claim' to universal agreement.

In that section, Kant seems to waver between the internalistic and externalistic views of disinterestedness. According to the first, one can introspectively recognize not only pleasure but also its disinterestedness. According to the second, disinterestedness is, as a negative condition, a part of the causal history of a mental state. In the end of the paragraph, Kant chooses the internalist view according to which the subject's awareness that he has excluded all interests guaranties that no interest plays a role in making the judgment of taste. If this is true, it seems that he has abandoned the view, put forward in *The Groundworks of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant, 1996), according to which we can err in recognizing our 'pathological' inclinations or lack thereof, and, in my opinion, made his position less plausible.[45]

This view of disinterestedness can be successfully defended only under the assumption that interests are transparent mental phenomena and that the subject can't be mistaken in recognizing them. However, since our interests are dispositional motivational factors, as to which we can err, the internalistic view of disinterestedness appears to be quite problematic. Even if that weren't the case, the very fact that all interests have been excluded still wouldn't imply that our judgment has universal validity, because human beings could still, *ex hypothesi*, differ in other, non-conative respects. Contrary to the thesis that Kant implicitly endorses in paragraph 6, disinterestedness is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the universal validity of judgments of taste.[46]

Aside from the aforementioned internalist elements of Kant's conception, his view

[45] Guyer notes that Kant 'undermines the traditional view that the nature of our mental states must always be immediately transparent to us' (Guyer, 1979, p. 105). However, he doesn't consider whether Kant really did move away from this view. This, though, cannot be further pursued here.

[46] See, for example, Allison's account and his criticism of Guyer's view in: Allison, 2001, ch. 5.

features another, even more distinctively internalist element – the free play of imagination and understanding, which we are aware of at an affective and quasi-introspective level. By drawing a distinction between judgments of the beautiful and judgments of the agreeable, Kant claims that judging of an object must precede the feeling of pleasure (Kant, 2000, §9). Since it doesn't depend on anything empirical, which could vary from subject to subject, but only on the (common) cognitive structure of all subjects, it functions the same way in every subject. In other words, the common cognitive structure is a precondition for the universal communicability of the judgments of taste. The idea of common sense, as Kant also calls it, has a transcendental role in Kant's argumentation for the universal validity of the judgments of taste because it helps us answer the question of how judgments of taste are possible.

3. External Source(s) of Aesthetic Experience

Kant's argumentation in paragraph 9 crucially depends on the similarities and differences between the way in which we formulate empirical cognitive propositions such as: 'This table is rectangular' and the way in which we make aesthetic judgments such as: 'This rose is beautiful'. Aesthetic judging is a quasi-cognitive process resembling empirical knowledge: they both start with perception and comprises the same cognitive powers. However, in making judgments of taste we don't subsume intuitions under concepts, so there is no real analogy between these two activities. What, then, guarantees that the thesis from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that we use our cognitive faculties in the same way and have a common cognitive structure, can plausibly be extrapolated to this case, considering that our cognitive powers play entirely different roles in this context?[47]

Aside from this, disinterestedness and common cognitive structure are not sufficient to justify the inference that judgments of taste are universally valid: even when these conditions are satisfied, without an explanation of why some objects elicit the free play of imagination and understanding, while other objects do not, it seems that we still must accept that 'everything is beautiful', which is untenable. It seems that, just like before, Kant was at least partly aware that his argument must be supplemented with a discussion of the object. As Guyer states:

[47] Guyer seems to suggest a similar point in: Guyer, 2017, p. 8.

> The third moment represents Kant's attempt to accomplish the traditional objective of aesthetics: that of directly specifying certain properties or even kinds of objects which license judgments of taste, without a need for further reflection on our response to these aspects or kinds of objects. (Guyer, 1979, p. 185)

Kant's aim is, as we can see, to identify what it is with respect to a beautiful object that renders a judgment of taste appropriate. In Kant's words, the beauty of an object is 'the form of *finality* in an object, so far as it is perceived in it *without representation of an end*' (Kant, 2000, 5:236). The object that satisfies this criterion has formal purposiveness, i.e., purposiveness without purpose. We can now see how the first two moments can be distinguished from the third moment. The theses of disinterestedness and common cognitive structure pertain to the subject and correspond to the transcendental ideality of beauty, thereby having a predominantly internalist character. By introducing the notion of formal purposiveness Kant, by contrast, emphasizes the empirical reality, which is an externalist element.

By introducing this externalist condition which pertains to the content of aesthetic experience, Kant goes a step further and tacitly equates the formal purposiveness of an object with its purposive form. The question is whether Kant is correct in doing so, since the two are categorically different. Formal purposiveness is purposiveness without purpose (and thus without a concept that determines the purpose), whereas a purposive form is a shape in the literal sense: a drawing, a composition, etc. In talking about purposive form, Kant most likely advocates the doubly formalist thesis that some property can be aesthetically relevant only if 1) it is manifest and 2) it belongs to the form of intuition (unlike colors and sounds).

If we, following Guyer, interpret the formal purposiveness of an object as 'its disposition to produce in us [the free play of imagination and understanding]' (Guyer, 1979, p. 69), we have a way to answer the 'everything is beautiful' objection; namely, we can reply that only beautiful objects have this property. However, we are immediately faced with the following problem. It seems circular to say that representations of beautiful objects arouse the free play of our cognitive powers because they have the capacity to do so. This objection can be answered by giving a detailed account concerning the basis of such a capacity. The representation of the object, we might say, has formal purposiveness because the object to which it pertains has a purposive form. Going beyond this is both risky and unnecessary.

Kant, however, adds that shapes which arouse the free play cannot be reduced to simple symmetry and regularity, and this makes his answer seemingly more informative. However, that view is only a natural implication of the relation between the purpose and the concept and doesn't really add anything new. If we want to remain true to the thesis that in giving judgments of taste we don't apply any concepts, it is clear that there can be no concrete answer to the question what the properties of the objects which arouse in us the free play are.

Although Kant doesn't state necessary and sufficient conditions for assessing whether the form of an object in our intuition is purposive, in the third moment he clearly adds an externalist element to his argument, and thus to his view of aesthetic experience. However, both his argument and his view of aesthetic experience are usually interpreted as internalistic, almost certainly under the influence of two main interpretations.

4. Main Interpretations as Essentially Internalistic

The first of these interpretations, the 'two-act view', is put forward by Paul Guyer (Guyer, 1979; Guyer, 2017). According to him, aesthetic experience consists of the two-step judging of the object. The first step, or act, is a simple reflection of the object, that is, a reflection that has been devoid of any interest. The expression 'simple reflection' refers to the free play of imagination and understanding, where 'simple' doesn't mean anything negative, but merely points to the view that this activity does not consist in the application of the concepts to individual cases. It is a quasi-cognitive activity in which indeterminate concepts play a role and which Kant sometimes calls knowledge in general. None of these concepts is further expounded by Kant. However, it seems that their main function is to make it clear that the activity in question is not genuinely theoretical.

The simple reflection results in a pleasure that pertains to the form of the object in subject's representation. Saying that it is 'disinterested' doesn't suggest that we are talking about some qualitatively distinctive type of pleasure, but that we merely talk about the causal history of this feeling. To say that pleasure is disinterested is to say that it is free (that it doesn't pertain to any interest). The former is a negative; the latter a positive formulation of the same thesis. Guyer's 'second act' refers to genuine aesthetic judging, that is, to a genuine judgment of taste. This act, or process, consists in some sort of analysis of the causal history of pleasure

which results from the 'first act'. A subject's claim that no interest occurs among the antecedent factors that led to our pleasure is, according to Guyer, the proper judgment of taste which is universally communicable.

Several criticisms have been put forward against this interpretation, from the thesis that it represents an uncharitable reading, according to which some of Kant's views from paragraph 9 seem like nonsense or remnants of the views that Kant previously rejected (Allison, 2001), to the thesis that it focuses on a contingent relationship (Zinkin, 2006) which cannot explain normative necessity (Ginsborg, 1989; Ginsborg, 2014; Ginsborg, 2017). Hannah Ginsborg levies one of the strongest charges against Guyer by saying that his view is vulnerable against the 'everything is beautiful objection'. Her main criticism is that Guyer seemingly equates an element of aesthetic reflection with two elements of synthesis Kant discusses while elaborating on theoretical cognition – the apprehension and reproduction (Guyer, 2017, p. 6). As the objection goes, since those elements are present in each cognitive act, and they are supposedly identical to an aspect of aesthetic reflection, then every time we cognize an object we have to render an aesthetic judgment:

> Does the concept-free performance of apprehension and reproduction require only those capacities needed for the application of concepts to the manifold, or does it call on capacities over and above those required for ordinary synthesis in accordance with concepts? On the face of it, the first alternative may seem more plausible: if we take literally Kant's suggestion of a threefold synthesis, then there may seem to be no reason why apprehension and reproduction should not occur without the final stage of recognition. But this alternative appears to lead to an unacceptable consequence, namely that we should feel pleasure in every act of cognizing a perceptually given object. (Ginsborg, 2014, p. 35).

Immediately afterward, Guyer proceeds to defend his interpretation by pointing out that:

> [The free play of imagination and understanding] must be something like a sense of unity in the experience of an object that *goes beyond* the unity dictated by whatever empirical concepts are recognized to apply to the object. […] I do not see why [this clarification] would entail that every object of knowledge will be found beautiful. Only some objects will allow this extra sense of unity in their experience. (Guyer, 2017, p. 7).

However, there is one general difficulty with Guyer's interpretation. If genuine aesthetic judging does consist in what Guyer says it does, then the true judgment of taste isn't aesthetic, but rather a theoretical judgment. Furthermore, it is a paradigm of a theoretical judgment (X causes Y). It looks like Guyer (implicitly) equates two types of judgments which Kant wanted to differentiate.

The second interpretation of Kant's argument comes from Hannah Ginsborg. According to her view, aesthetic experience is a singular, homogenous whole in which judging, judgment, and pleasure blend into one. Pleasure is not merely something we feel, but it also claims something (as if it were a judgment). This judgment, which is at the same time a feeling, has no (determinate) content (i.e., matter), and is in so far purely formal. But, this still doesn't mean that the judgment of taste refers to nothing at all. Namely, it recursively refers to itself and claims its own universal validity. As Ginsborg describes her view:

> To say that we find something beautiful in virtue of being in a state of mind which self-referentially claims its own universal validity is [to have the thought] '*This* state of mind is universally valid', where the demonstrated state of mind has a phenomenal specificity which is not exhausted by its incorporating a claim to its own universal validity. […] This claim to the universal validity of our experience does indeed imply that everyone should feel pleasure in the object, that everyone should judge the object to be beautiful, and that everyone's faculties should be in free play, but it also implies something more specific, albeit something which cannot be conceptually articulated: that everyone should feel *this* pleasure, that everyone should experience *this* beauty, and that everyone's faculties should be freely harmonizing in *this way*. (Ginsborg, 2014, p. 125)

It seems to me that here, as in the case of Guyer's interpretation, we have one general problem: can there really exist legitimate reasons for equating categorically distinctive things such as pleasure and judgment? Furthermore, her own view is itself the subject of the 'everything is beautiful objection', which Guyer formulates in the following way:

> [Ginsborg's] account now seems open to the objection that she made against mine, namely that it will make everything beautiful. For certainly the experience of every object, or at least of many objects that we would not ordinarily judge to be beautiful, has the kind of specificity that can only be capture by pointing and saying 'this'. For example, if I now stare at the contents of my office wastebasket I will be having an experience of which, after I have said it looks like it contains some plastic wrapping, a card advertising a service I don't want, etc., I can only say 'it looks like *this*',

> but of which I can also say 'and if you are not colour-blind, and don't have a bad astigmatism, etc.) it will look like *this* to you too' – but none of that is enough to make it look beautiful or pleasing to any of us. (Guyer, 2017, p. 11-12)

Setting aside the potential issues that each of these interpretations faces, what they have in common is a reflexive or recursive view of aesthetic experience: Guyer sees aesthetic experience as a two-step mental act or process, whose one element refers to the other, whereas Hannah Ginsborg sees aesthetic experience as a homogenous unity of pleasure, judgment and judging. Even though Guyer and Ginsborg extensively discuss formal purposiveness elsewhere, they interpret Kant's view of aesthetic experience and his argument for universal validity of aesthetic judgment as *par excellence* internalistic. Without appealing to external elements of aesthetic experience, it would be difficult for either of them to answer, on Kant's behalf, the version of the 'everything is beautiful' objection outlined in the previous section.

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A Brief Insight into the Musical Role of Non-Tonal Aspects

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ABSTRACT. In this essay on musical experience, I would like to make an initial exploration of those aspects of sound that, on first approach, do not fulfill a role in the perception of a tonal organisation in sounds. I will consider the following dichotomy as forming two aspects of the same experience: the 'sensual' attention to the sources of sound and their modes of production and the 'organisational' attention to the relationships between sound pitches in time. In order to understand the latter, I will rely on Roger Scruton's concept of 'acousmatic listening' in view of its considerable explanatory power. However, I will consider some objections to his aesthetics of music with regard to the 'sensual' experience of sounds and how this influences the concept of musical understanding resulted. I propose that, in order to understand this twofold musical experience, we can take methodological inspiration from Richard Wollheim and his view on representational experience. Once we consider how to understand this analogy in the musical case, we can see its usefulness in making explicit the dialogue between tonal and non-tonal aspects of our musical experience.

1. Introduction

My proposal is to conceive the experience of musical understanding in the following way: listening to music with understanding includes two aspects, the sensual enjoyment of sounds – appreciation of timbre, instrumentation, the virtuosity of the musicians, circumstances of sound production, etc.–, and the cognitive enjoyment of a certain organisation in them (Davies, 1994, p. 323). I would like to review the role that the former plays for Scruton within our musical

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understanding and consider some criticism.

One way of summarising Scruton's reasoning for my purpose would be to say that experiencing music involves, first of all, a contemplative attitude towards sounds (Scruton, 1997, pp. 225–228). And we can define this attitude by contrasting it with its opposite, 'informational hearing', that is, not the contemplation of sound for sound's sake, but attention to sound as it informs us of events in the world. In searching for information about the world by hearing it, we try to find out the material cause of the same, its spatial position, whether its source moves in certain directions, and so on. In contemplative listening, on the contrary, the intentional object of our listening is no longer these causes or spatial positions, instead, we listen in search of a different experience.

This experience, distinct from the mere sound-material-cause linkage, is described as 'acousmatic listening' (Scruton, 1997, pp. 1–2), which in short consists of a kind of attention to sound in whose experiential content the material cause of the aural event does not figure in an essential way. In this sense, we can see how there is a clear boundary between ordinary hearing sounds and listening to music even when both actions occur simultaneously in musical contexts.

The key point is that, although it may appear that we are dealing with two completely different listening experiences, on the one hand, Scruton's view on musical experience derives from his definition of sounds as a *secondary object* (Scruton, 1997, 2009a, 2009b), from which the idea of acousmatic listening is a corollary. And on the other hand, in some sections we can read that for Scruton (2009, p. 64), our listening to music –that requires 'acousmatic contemplation'- is just an extreme case of something we ordinarily experience. Given the nature of sound, this separation from its material causes is conceivable in any context, not just musical.

I will now summarise what seem to me to be the key points of Scruton's musical aesthetic that we will discuss below.

Firstly, is only through listening that we have knowledge *by acquittance* of 'what a sound is like' (Scruton, 1997, p. 1). Sounds are essentially, *things heard*, i.e., *audibilia*.

Secondly, sound allows us to conceive of it as separate from its material cause, being an object in its own right. A sound has no body, movement, or position in the sense that its material source does. This peculiar kind of object is called a '*secondary object*' by Scruton,

and its identification[49] can be made independently of its material cause (Scruton, 2009a, p. 50).

Thirdly, that sounds are not anchored to the things that cause or emit them makes them a particular kind of event. We do not have to understand them as events occurring to something. For example, we could not perceive the event 'traffic accident' without identifying the individuals involved. But the sound events that we hear could be identified without knowing anything about their cause. An event that does not require identifying its cause is a *pure* event (Scruton, 2009a, pp. 61–62).

This independence of the sound event from its cause and the perceptual privilege conferred on a single sense-modality does not make sound a kind of illusion, nor does it make it an unparalleled phenomenon. Scruton on several occasions names other secondary objects that are also *sensibilia* such as rainbows (Scruton, 1997, pp. 3–4, 2009a, pp. 59–60) or smells (Scruton, 2010, pp. 272–273) and from which these particularities of sound can be better understood.

There is thus a tendency in Scruton to conceive of sounds and hearing in a merely accidental relation to their material causes and contexts of production (Scruton, 2009, pp. 61–62). Because of this, I find it interesting to study how other authors, on the contrary, tend to give a much more essential role to the material circumstances of sound production in order to account for our musical understanding.

2. Some Cases Studies

Adrian Renzo in his article *Exploring an Everyday Aesthetics of Popular Music* (2018) points out that historically there are two ways of studying popular music, either trying to find the compositional complexity that can be rescued from the pop and rock phenomenon, or understanding it as a sociological phenomenon of identity construction. In both cases it seems

[49] Identifying a sound means being able to classify, differentiate and generally experience a sound meaningfully. For example, walking through the forest we feel various sounds and are able to differentiate them without yet knowing what produces them. In music we can identify a sound object independently of the development of its material sources. For example, a piece ends on a long F note, and as we lengthen that note we go from the voice gradually fading out to a flute that finally sustains the same note for a few seconds. The timbre changes, the material source of the sound changes, the way it is produced, even the position from which the orchestra plays that note, but we still identify a single sound object: the final F note of the piece. The material reality of the sound does not interfere in the perception of the concrete tone that we have to perceive.

that we are left with, either recognizing the experience of popular music as a minor form of musical immersion –as it never reaches the complexity shown by listening to the classics–, or as a phenomenon whose only novel aspect comes from outside the music itself, i.e., its media spectacularization and sociological role.

His article moves in the direction of discovering new ways of studying the act of listening to music itself, looking at what we can learn from the actions that the consumer of popular music performs when listening to music with a particular understanding.

In view of this, he compares the 'standard kind of listening', that of the musicologist as opposed to the ordinary listener. He considers the former as isolated, generally sedentary, and concentrated listening whereas the latter seems to be distracted and superficial. However, it seems that basically, the criterion for this hierarchy has to do with how much of the musical structure we are able to listen to with understanding. Whatever terms the listener uses, we want to find out whether they are able to hear key changes, harmonic sequences, tensions, resolutions, etc.

On the basis of his observation, Renzo concludes that, despite this attention arising in a different context than the isolated listening of the 'musicologist', that is, listening while gaming, while shopping while dancing in a concert, and so on, the everyday listener of popular music pays much more detailed attention to the music than appears to be the case. Now, this attention is focused on moments –even brief seconds– rather than on the whole song, a question that is interesting insofar as it seems opposed to a tendency in musicology to analyse listening to complete pieces (Renzo, 2018, p. 340).

What I am interested in highlighting is how this kind of immersion in the music is externalised, because it gives us a clue as to what it is that these listeners seem to be understanding. Are they understanding the music or something else that happens while there is music?

In Renzo's experiments, the subject after presented one of his favourite songs often enacts an embodied response to the moment such as lip-syncing, facial expressions, gestures, body movements, etc. Implicit in such studies seems to be the idea that acousmatic listening, that is, the abstraction of the circumstances of sound production, as also criticised by Hamilton, seems to be an ideal rather than an actual listening (Hamilton, 2007, p. 113). As I understand Renzo, these experiments could show that in the ordinary listener of popular music we can

discover, perhaps more obviously, the role of our attention to the circumstances of sound production when listening to music.

Naturally, Scruton also has certain ideas regarding the listener of popular music. His main criticism is that these consumers relate to aspects that are external to the music. For example, in his opinion, some pop music has no musical rhythm but a kind of external body dynamic imposed. For example, some songs seem to generate the rhythm internally while other songs seem to be composed to follow the movements of the musician (Scruton, 2018, p. 233).

In Scruton's view, the listener is not immersed in the music but in the presence of the artist; the listener does not follow the musical movement, but the movements that the artist imprints on the music (Scruton, 2018, p. 239). Here, Scruton defends the idea that the spectacularization of these elements unrelated to musical movement results in an experience that diminishes our musical understanding. Of course, Scruton thinks that attending to the material sources that produce the sounds in which we listen to music has a role, although a secondary one as in the case of sound timbre (Scruton, 1997, pp. 77–78).

The main problem for Scruton is that here our listening is guided by the literal movements of the musician and not by the musical dynamics. The musical movement for Scruton is better imprinted on other aspects of the sound, those that can be experienced without relating them to their material sources, such as pitch or its distribution over time.

3. Critics of the Acousmatic Listening

Scruton's idea of acousmatic listening and his notion of sound presupposes that the flow of sound contains in itself aspects that allow us to order it and thus to experience it meaningfully (Scruton, 2009a, p. 64). In other words, for some authors, the controversial issue here is the idea that we can have meaningful sound experiences –i.e., the ability to individualize sounds, recognize them, group them as 'belonging to one event distinct from another', etc.–, only by perceiving sound qualities without them being perceived in some essential relation to the source that emits them or the events that produce them.

Nudds comments that, for example, if we hear a glass breaking, we seem to have the choice of hearing the sound of the event or say that we hear the glass breaking (Nudds, 2010, p. 283). The second type of listening, he says, occurs for example in psychoacoustic

experiments with artificially generated sounds, which are difficult to relate to any cause. This type of listening would be similar to Scruton's acousmatic listening, which, he says, in an ordinary context would have little or no ecological significance, that is, it seems that «we do not describe the qualities of sounds that we hear, we describe the apparent sources of the sounds» (Nudds, 2010, p. 283).

The idea I would like to propose is that sounds are ordered on the basis of detecting in them a coherence that corresponds to the events from which they emerge. That is, in a sense, in listening to the sound of a car we perceive an 'aural image' of it.

This inevitable ecology of sound is also highlighted by Rob Van Gerwen. I could summarise his remarks in three main points (Van Gerwen, 2012, pp. 223–225):

1) Acousmatic listening is only one way of listening, the result of 'twisting' our ordinary listening by adding a certain level of abstraction, but it is not the main of performing it.
2) It errs in considering that I hear isolated sounds when in fact I hear events or processes happening to objects, thus their material cause is part of the content of my listening.
3) It is a theory that ignores that learning to have meaningful auditory experiences depends on their interaction and cooperation with the other senses.

Van Gerwen, therefore, suggests an *embodied* conception of perception, which implies not only that the senses directly perceive events without separating them from their causes, but also that they are in constant cooperation with each other in perceiving how the world appears to me.

From this perspective, it does not seem plausible that, even if I never see what causes a sound, I perceive it without any other information regarding its mode of production or apparent location. In fact, I think the interesting thing about sounds, as Matthew Nudds (2009, p. 72) puts it, is that they inform us about their sources and that the information from these sources is embodied in the patterns of frequency component of the sound waves. The information extracted from sounds, far from individualising them independently of their sources and contexts of production, seems to link them to each other.

Listening itself could not be developed by isolating these aspects. In this respect, Hamilton (2009, p. 179) points out that learning to have meaningful auditory experiences incorporates information that I have learned to perceive in my multisensory interaction with the world. The point is that, once I learn to listen in this way, I do not need to bring all this multisensory information back to me every time it occurs, it is somehow incorporated into my very listening experience.

It is a different matter to propose that, in musical experience, it is the *attention* to *some* audible aspects that is relevant. In that case, we would have to investigate whether even in ordering sounds on the basis of such aspects, the source of the sound somehow permeates the experience in a way that is relevant to our musical experience. If so, we could not completely rule out attention to the material sources of sound in our musical experience, even in its 'organising phase'.

3.1. A Case of 'Distances'

Let us consider a case in which, under Scruton's view, the musical experience is detached from its spatial context of production. He suggests the following example: the third movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. In this case, an English horn begins to play a melody which is answered by an oboe placed offstage. For Scruton, there are two distinct 'distances', on the one hand, the literal distance of the two instruments on stage, and on the other the musical distance between the first melody and the second. He states that: «the spatial array of the orchestra induces us into the musical space; but it is not part of it, and gives way to it, just as soon as we are gripped by the musical perception» (Scruton, 1997, pp. 12–13).

There are several senses in which we can understand what is meant by a 'musical distance', for example, when we speak about 'distant' or 'close' keys in which a modulation can occur. This analysis of the musical space seems accurate; however, Scruton seems to present those different senses of distance as if they were incompatible. We should oppose the hypothesis that perceiving this musical distance implies getting rid of the experience of the melodies as coming from a certain distance from us.

In my view, the experience of the spatial distribution of instruments in relation to us is a determinant part of our musical experience and musicians do not expect us to abstract it when

we listen to music. Of course, the position of an orchestra or a sound system is generally standardised, but taking its position for granted does not mean that it is not part of our musical experience. Berlioz could have placed the oboe on the stage and find another way to create 'distance', for example by playing two melodies in very distant keys or command the performer to play pianissimo, but this is not the musical experience he wants to achieve. To use Wollheim's term, the musician 'thematizes' that aspect of the sound which now gains aural prominence and guides our listening (Wollheim, 1987, p. 20).

Hamilton similarly comments that, in addition to hearing the tones arranged, part of our musical attention is also directed towards appreciating how the musician responds to the acoustics of the room. The musical experience would include the piece itself and the musician's adjustment of its performance based on a space that becomes part of our experience (Hamilton, 2009, p. 166).

4. Musical Twofold Thesis

Scruton's theory, as Hamilton points out (2009, p. 160), can provide a basis for understanding music listening as a single act with two aspects: an acousmatic one by which sound pitches are ordered tonally and a non-acousmatic one by which we attend to the material cause and mode of production of the sound. However, Scruton's version of the acousmatic thesis, as applied in music, only conceded that our organisation of sounds according to a tonal order carries a genuinely musical character. This view seems to fit with our use of the terms 'melody' and 'harmony' as essentially musical ordering experiences that we apply metaphorically in other situations (Zuckerkandl, 1969). Thus, we can accept to some extent the idea that attention to tonal relationships is particularly linked to music and sometimes has a significant *preponderance*

In this context, Hamilton (2007, pp. 108–111, 2009, pp. 169–173) proposes a *twofold thesis* that, in his view, is capable of justifying why, in experiencing music, we also attend to the production of sounds and their material sources; being this a genuine musical aspect of it, even if it is the case that this attention does not possess an organizational role. This proposal is inspired by Richard Wollheim's considerations regarding the experience of pictorial representation (Wollheim, 1980, p. 142). However, we will have to establish carefully in what

sense we can draw parallels between the terms used in the visual and auditory case. Let us examine how this step can be taken.

Wollheim (2003, pp. 132–133) argues that the particular experience we have in front of representations can be understood through the notion of 'seeing-in', which allows me to see something represented in a painting while simultaneously maintaining two aspects: seeing the surface on which the figure is painted and seeing the figure, or to put it another way, my vision is twofold distributed although it does not have to be evenly distributed (Wollheim, 1980, pp. 142–143).[50]

There are several occasions in which Hamilton proposes musical versions of Wollheim's formula: listening to music is «hearing the phrase that opens the second movement of Brahms's Symphony No. 4 as a melodic unity, at the same time as hearing that it is sounded on the horns» (Hamilton, 2009, p. 171), experiencing a literal as well as metaphorical dimension, (Hamilton, 2009, p. 169), having non-acousmatic and acousmatic experiences (Hamilton, 2009, p. 170), or that part of the pleasure in listening to music is a sensuous pleasure in sounds, which may not involve acousmatic experience (Hamilton, 2009, p. 170).

However, I do not find it easy to think of a 'musical arrangement' of the formula 'seeing *y* in *x*' based on the pictorial reflections that Wollheim proposes in his texts, but I think we can try to 'triangulate' a similar methodology in music. In my view, this proposal can be summarised as follows: in experiencing music, we can differentiate two aspects, that my listening orders the sounds but also attends to the cause of these sounds. Both experiences are genuinely musical, and one cannot happen without the other.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that composers present both, different proposals of sound ordering and the production of that sounds itself. For Wollheim, painters never cease to seek an ever more intimate rapport between the two experiences (Wollheim, 1980, pp. 144–149). It is this talent that we admire in the masterpieces of representational art (Wollheim, 2003, p. 147). What one cultivates is a kind of seeing-in appropriate to representations (Wollheim, 1980, p. 141), which deepening the sensitivity and knowledge of the viewer, in tune with the artist's intentions (Wollheim, 2003, p. 114).

[50] For example, in the case of Berlioz, if I place the oboe offstage and make it respond to the cor anglais from there, my attention to the space where the oboe is placed stands out much more than in normal cases, where I am generally hardly aware of the position of the instruments even though their location is part of the content of my experience of sounds and melodies.

The cultivation of our ability to adequately perceive a painting involves seeing something, but also *how* that something *in* a material object, is depicted, for example, that a figure is presented with colours that are not those it has in reality. Seeing these colours does not reorganise or change the figure we see, but presents it in another way. This is how, according to Wollheim, it is often initially ignored, but after special attention and cultivation of representational seeing, certain people can modify what they see by attending to how a figure has been presented (Wollheim, 2003, p. 144). Wollheim (2003, p. 142) presents three ideas: the 'Representational how', the 'Presentational how' and the 'Material how', but I would rather like to consider how these reflections can help us in musical cases.

1) Let us consider the following example: Voices are generally divided into bass, tenor, alto, and soprano. This division of course does not mean that a bass cannot sing tenor sections and vice versa. But the same melody, if sung by one or the other, is perceived differently because of the very nature of the voice. When a bass sings very high melodies, even if he sings them perfectly, the effort in his voice is noticeable. The tenor will sing the same section and sound relaxed. Here, a melody emerges from the sound with a certain tension or relaxation. Now precisely because that tension in the vocal cords is perceived, the musician may determine that such tessitura is more appropriately placed in a conclusive section rather than as a passage section. Part of this experience of resolution depends precisely on our attending to how the sound is produced and this matches perfectly with the musical practice where artists also thematise this aspect of sounds.
2) Tonal rearrangement through attention to sound production: Imagine, for example, someone playing the notes belonging to the scale of C major and its relative minor, A minor. As both groups of notes coincide, the scale I am listening to, that is, the tonal centre of gravity of the piece can be determined by the accents. Accenting has not only the tonal sense of placing a note at a certain moment in the bar, but also listening to the way in which the sound has been produced –the attack. This seems to cover some of the cases of ambiguities presented by Janet Levy (1995). She argues that certain musical sections can be heard as an ending or as a beginning and this tonal rearrangement can occur by attending to actions that have to do with

how the instruments produce sounds. The tones are the same, but the generation of the sound is not. She mentions various aspects of musical performance such as tiny hesitations versus rushings forward; agogic or dynamic stresses; points of attack and so on, which «are involved in conveying separation versus connection, event versus process» (Levy, 1995, p. 154).

3) Musical virtuosity: Several authors pay special attention to how the musician's movements are part of my musical experience, for example, Davies (1994, pp. 353–354), Hamilton (2009, p. 166) or Van Gerwen (2008, p. 34). What is interesting about this observation is that, when listening to music, we do not admire the virtuosity of musicians as long as they are able to manipulate with great speed or great technique the objects with which they produce sounds, as if they were juggling with the instruments –which on its own it makes no musical sense. In my view, in understanding musical virtuosity there is a reciprocal relationship between the musician's movements and how they execute a melody with certain movements that give it a new character. This 'character' includes the production of the sound in the content of my musical experience. Failure to include this aspect would be a detriment of the musical experience.

5. Conclusion

This short theoretical foray is intended to highlight the special character of musical listening without abstracting it from its contexts of production. If these latter aspects, even if they do not have an organisational role, can be thematised and musically exploited by artists, I believe that we will be favouring an interdisciplinary point of view on the question of musical meaning. Asking ourselves, for example, "in what sense is it important to discover that Berlioz's compositional practice is due to the idiomatic qualities of the guitar?", become not only an exploration in terms of chord sequences but also a new listening proposal: that of attending to how our musical understanding emerges from interactions with the material possibilities of our instruments (Hovland, 2017).

The study of musical aspects on which I focus here, have as a background objective to support the perspective according to which musical experience is best explained in terms of

musical understanding (Arbo, 2013; Defez, 2013; Kaduri, 2006; Scruton, 2004), a stance on meaning, influenced by Wittgenstein's texts. In my view, this analysis can help us to grasp the relevance of his remarks on music, in which he points out that understanding a musical tradition impels us to question such things as, "do children and women give concerts or only men do?", "is music played mainly in bourgeois circles?" and the like (Wittgenstein, 1967). This further link between music and its social function is additionally indispensable for a fair assessment of both, the role of the ordinary music listener and the musical traditions of others. In none of these cases would it be correct to say that we are dealing with "less musical" subjects simply because, in their relationship with music, attention to non-organizational elements of music is more prominent (Blacking, 1973).

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Literary Cognitive Benefits as Undecidable Mental Models

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ABSTRACT. Peter Lamarque has suggested that literature could not win the "battle for ideas" without engaging with a (propositional) truth theory of literary value. Thus, denying the theoretical role of truth in the aesthetic appreciation of literary works seems to compel us to leave any disputing arena. In that sense, accepting Peter Lamarque's arguments can be considered a wrong framework for any cognitivist approach to literature since his narrative opacity thesis seems to exclude a cognitivist elucidation. In this article, I briefly discuss that set of inferences. Firstly, I question the Lamarquean approach concerning the battle for ideas concept. Secondly, I propose an elucidation of the narrative opacity, which pretends to be cognitivist and non-truth dependent.

1. Introduction

The reason frequently offered for denying the cognitive value of literature is that literature has nothing to do with truth. According to many philosophical and poetic traditions, truth does not play any role in literary reading. For Aristotle, for example, the specific value of poetics is *verisimilitude*, not truth. Thus, in biological terms, an animal can be wrongly described in a poem but remain poetically persuasive because poets *only* need those elements from reality that can be convincedly recognized by the reader (*Poetics*, 1460b 30). Similarly, according to Frege, someone interested in literature cannot be worried about the truth of literary statements; they can be true, but it does not matter. Thus, denying the value of truth in a literary reading implies putting aside any concern about reference (Frege, 1960, pp. 62-63). Finally, Coleridge

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talked about a "willing suspension of disbelief" as the core of poetic faith (Tomko, 2015), and, according to Freud, there are two kinds of uncanny experience, from which the literary uncanny does not presuppose a *reality-testing* (Freud, 1974, pp. 263-264).

However, although Peter Lamarque's philosophical approach to literature also rejects any role of truth in literary reading, he takes a step forward from tradition, inferring that literature does not necessarily provide cognitive benefits. Thus, his position seems a little bit counter-intuitive, at least as seen through the eyes of philosophical tradition. Furthermore, an additional step, which is an apparent restriction, says that any non-standard conception of truth is useless for the cognitivist's claims or, in other words, that only a propositional truth theory of literary value can be acceptable for winning a place in "the battle for ideas." Thus, according to Lamarque, assuming that step and attacking a standard propositional truth theory of literary value seem sufficient to hear the retreat. Even more, any other traditional non-standard conception of truth and knowledge is finally not analyzed.

This paper discusses the Lamarquean set of premises from which a cognitivist approach to literature is denied. The first step consists of a brief review of Louis Althusser's Aesthetics. His theses are relevant in this context because he did not presuppose alternative theories of truth and knowledge; instead, that traditional theoretical background is compatible with a cognitivist approach to literature. The second step revisits the Lamarquean concept of narrative opacity to suggest a cognitivist interpretation, keeping in mind, for its part, the outcomes of the second step and a schematic elucidation of Maeve Cooke's remarks on Franz Kafka's prose. I finally conclude that the very concept of narrative opacity can be an optimal theoretical candidate to fight for the cause of ideas.

2. Truth and Opacity

There are many possible uses of literature. For example, we can use it as a pill because maybe we get to sleep with difficulties, and someone told us that a dense, extensive, even boring historical novel is the perfect non-pharmaceutical solution to that uncomfortable problem. To give another example, we can also use literature for historical purposes, not only for therapeutic ones. Let us say, for example, that we are interested in searching several conceptual representations of mental and physical health throughout history. Unlike that boring historical novel, *The Idiot*, the extraordinary work written by Fyodor Dostoevsky, can perfectly satisfy

our search. Reading that novel looking for symptoms or even comparing them with medical literature seems a proper way to find relevant historical information. This imaginative exercise, however, is not merely a hypothetical one. Many readers have been interested in, for example, understanding the actual Dostoevsky's physical health by analyzing fictional information on epilepsy (Bauman et al, 2005, p. 327) or identifying autism symptoms in Prince Myshkin's behavior (Bogdashina, 2013, p. 16). Moreover, Dostoevsky's works have been constituted an object of psychoanalytic interest too. Sigmund Freud wrote an essay on Dostoevsky's mind through biographical information as well as fictional one (Freud, 1961). However, despite that broad spectrum of uses, we can ask whether they actually constitute examples of literary uses of literary texts. If using literature as literature implies these examples, truth seems to be a literary value among possible others. Furthermore, if literature implies truth, literature also implies obvious cognitive benefits. Is then literature merely one among others in the universe of human cognoscitive practices?

Peter Lamarque's response is clearly *no*. According to him, truth has no part in interpreting and appreciating literature at all. Therefore, if truth has nothing to do with literature, Lamarque says, narrative literary works do not necessarily provide cognitive benefits, which implies, for its part, that there are no alternative epistemic sources for a possible literary knowledge other than truth. Moreover, his arguments against a role for truth in literature discard any non-propositional theory of truth or knowledge. Thus, by postulating some categorical distinctions, Lamarque sets out four main arguments. These categorical distinctions are organized in two combined pairs.

The first pair consists of distinguishing between, on the one hand, the explicit propositional content of a literary work and, on the other, the derived propositional content. The second pair differentiates between, on the one hand, the subject-level content of a literary work and, on the other, the thematic-level content. Combined, these two pairs are helpful, according to Lamarque, for finding "propositions, of a kind eligible for truth-valuation, in poetry or works of fiction" (Lamarque, 2014, p. 128). Therefore, a literary work contains explicit and implicit fictional information (corresponding with the subject level) and thematic information that can also be implicit or explicit. However, as we will see later, the thematic level does not constitute a category of literary interest because it entails a theoretical value for readers interested in *reality-testing*. Let us now briefly consider the four arguments and then a schematic description of narrative opacity.

According to the first argument attacked by Lamarque, the aesthetic appreciation of literary texts requires no mistake or false information in their subject levels. For example, any historical, scientific, or medical mistake in the implicit subject level of a literary work can be seen as an aesthetic problem. Departing from Ricks (1990), Lamarque notes that George Eliot in *Middlemarch* initially described "bright dilated eyes" as an effect "from taking opium"; however, "when she learned that pupils contract from opium, she changed the passage, in a later edition, to 'with a strange light in his eyes.'" (Lamarque, 2014, p. 130). According to the pro-truth supporters, that "mistake" and many others are evidence of the dependence of fiction on truth. Thus, appreciating literature would imply an essential role for truth. Denying that argument, Lamarque sees, however, genre conventions in these cases of falsehood implied in literature or, in other words, "Factual accuracy is a convention of the genres mentioned" (Lamarque, 2014, p. 131). Although Lamarque does not add further justifications, Aristotle in his *Poetics* can help him, pointing out, first, the fallacy described in subject-level of the *Odyssey* when Eurycleia recognizes Odysseus by seeing a scar just above his knee (*Poetics*, 1451a 25), and second, the no problematic picture of a hind with horns (*Poetics*, 1460 b 30). Poets can ignore the anatomy of hinds and make logical mistakes, but any of these epistemic problems affect the aesthetic qualities of their works. If truth has a role in literature, it is not a necessary one. What can be considered true in fiction depends on genre conventions and, above all, the opaque structure of a work, as we will see later.

According to the second Lamarquean argument, if truth has any role in literature, literary texts will necessarily contain then factual statements, which can be evaluated by truth. However, the interesting statements of the greatest novels are not true or false propositions but speculative ones. *Crime and Punishment* offers many monologues in which Raskolnikov speculatively entertains himself, for example, thinking about the frequent failures of intended perfect crimes (Dostoevsky, 1989, pp. 60-61). Therefore, according to Lamarque, literature cannot be interpreted and appreciated by truth because many literary works would be not true or false but epistemically vacuous. Thus, given that epistemic vacuity, even masterpieces could be considered merely trivial. That seems to be absurd or, at least, counterintuitive. However, against the epistemic and literary triviality of literature, a third argument infers that every apparent world-conception implied in a literary work entails an engagement by the critics with that world-conception. Pro-truth theorists affirm then that literature is not vacuous because those stocks of speculative propositions denote the world conceptions of the authors or the

critics. For Lamarque, however, neither the literary pieces nor the literary criticisms are the author's or critics' beliefs. An author does not necessarily accept all that is said by their characters; even more, a thematic identification by a literary critic does not imply a tacit engagement with the identified thematics.

These three arguments do not presuppose the concept of narrative opacity. It is possible to defend each of them without introducing any intensional content of it. However, the fourth – and final – argument indeed presupposes the narrative opacity. It is attacking the *so-called quotation industry*. Thus, that fourth argument is not logically stronger than the earlier three because the narrative opacity is introduced as an alternative response to what is demolished by attacking the pro-truth theorists, e.g., the specific literary interpretation and appreciation of literature. Thus, arguing against the quotation industry already implies those concepts to which Lamarque pretends to arrive. To sum up, according to him, literary texts cannot be reduced to quotes because every quote is a simple abstraction from the *clusters* in which every single literary sentence is embedded. Thus, let us begin by briefly introducing the concept of narrative opacity.

As an alternative response to the above question, Peter Lamarque (1981, 2014) and Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (1994) offers two important theoretical resources: 1) what Lamarque calls, thanks to Noël Carroll, "thought theory" and 2) the concept of narrative opacity essentially defined by the principle of "salva fictione." For this last principle, the authors mean that "story-identity is not preserved under some substitutions of co-referential singular terms in fictive utterances" (Lamarque & Olsen, 1994, p. 81), which signifies, appealing to an example, that any sentence as "Holmes returned to London" cannot be substituted by, let us say, "Holmes returned to Smoke" (ibid.). Thus, a sentence's "sense or connotation" (ibid.) is the most relevant *dimension* of fictive utterances whose regency is not truth. Why could connotation be almost an essential dimension of fictive utterances? That first theoretical resource is the answer we are looking for: the concept of thought-cluster, implied by the thought theory, entails, for its part two contents. First, according to thought theory, keeping something in mind does not necessarily imply believing that something. That is, in fact, a primary response to the paradox of fiction because fictive utterances are the kind utterances candidate to mind something without believing or, in other words, entertaining "a thought without being disposed to assert its content as a world-directed truth" (Lamarque, 2014, p. 142). Second, it is not one and only one sentence the cause of "significant emotional reactions" but an entire intertwined

structure (*clusters*) of thoughts. In that sense, narrative opacity consists of the impossibility of substituting fictive sentences by others because of the dependence of their sense on a global semantic structure. It is obvious now why Lamarque criticizes the quotation industry: every quote actually is an isolated thought from a global, particular semantic structure. Thus, the literary sense of a sentence is determined by its particular connection with many others. Finally, narrative opacity is not dependent on truth or strictly asserting a sentence. Thus, each of the three above arguments against the pro-truth theorists does not affect the concept of narrative opacity.

However, a problem arises: if truth has no role in the literary, narrative opacity, are the possible cognitive benefits of literature merely contingent? The four counterarguments by Lamarque attack any possibility to accept a role for propositional truth in the literary reading, but they do not imply any attack on any other conception of knowledge. The only worthy argument is the following one: "if this is not the standard kind of truth with a time-honoured connection to knowledge, then literature can seem a poor relation in the battle for ideas" (Lamarque, 2014, p. 127) or, in other words, "If literary truth is too remote from philosophical (or scientific) truth, then literature cannot seem to compete for the high-ground of truth to which human cognition aspires" (ibid.). Unlike Lamarque, many contemporary philosophers defend the distinction between art and science, defending, for its part, a propositional conception of truth, but without denying cognoscitive powers to art. If it were possible to defend another kind of cognoscitive experience, it would stay open the possibility of finding cognoscitive powers in the own concept of narrative opacity.

3. Althusserian Aesthetics

Louis Althusser's Aesthetics is a good candidate to satisfy the above conditions, e.g., defending the cognitive value of literature as well as denying alternative conceptions of truth. In other words, the Althusserian aesthetic approach to literature admits cognitive benefits in literary works without adhering to a non-propositional theory of truth.

In a letter originally published in the French journal *La Nouvelle Critique*, Althusser responded to a previous publication by André Daspre on the relationships between art and knowledge (Althusser, 1966). That relationship is one of the most discussed problems among contemporary Marxist aestheticians because it is implied in the larger debate on literature and

ideology. The thesis, according to which literature is a mirrored *image* of the actual reality as well as its antithesis, e.g., literature is no other thing than an inverted reality, presupposes a direct link between literature and knowledge. Against these called *vulgar* Marxist positions (Eagleton, 2002, p. 13), Althusser opposed a strict distinction between art and science. For him, likewise science, literature can deal with the vital experiences of an individual (Althusser, 1966, p. 142). Thus, the possible objects of literature and knowledge are, in fact, the same. However, literature does not pretend to explain its objects or, in other words, it does not pretend to explicit "conclusions" from "premises" or even remedy the effects of ideology on individual experiences (Althusser, 1966, p. 143). What literature pretends to be, according to Althusser, is to make us "see" the ideology from and in which the literary pieces emerge and are immersed (ibid.). "see" does not mean, however, literally *see* but feeling and generally perceiving the ideological stuff which constitutes the literary works.

Although the concept of *ideology* is extremely polysemic and disputed, I think theoretical resources from contemporary cognitive sciences can elucidate that thesis held by Althusser. In the next section, I will simply suggest some ideas to give a response to that problem. For the moment, however, I only offer some remarks departing from the Althusserian ideas. Firstly, scientific knowledge implies logical relationships that *explain* phenomena. Thus, the Althusserian Aesthetics of literature does not pretend to substitute a traditional conception of knowledge for a more esoteric one. Secondly, perceiving or – and – feeling ideology implies a cognoscitive experience irreducible to that traditional conception of knowledge whose regencies are consistency and truth. However, because of the essential role of that *feeling* in elucidating the cognoscitive experience of literature, it becomes necessary to explore it more deeply. Strictly speaking, literary works do not constitute any form of scientific knowledge because they do not pretend to explain anything. Assuming a polemical equation between knowledge and empirical knowledge, denying the empirical knowledge character to literature makes all sense. However, can we accept other forms of knowledge?

According to Hilary Putnam, that question has an affirmative answer since literature is a form of *conceptual knowledge*. Curiously, Peter Lamarque quotes a passage from a text where Putnam talks about literature but omits the Putnamean distinction between empirical and conceptual knowledge. Lamarque quotes Putnam in order to support his thesis on the irrelevance of truth and falsity to literary value (Lamarque, 2014, p. 136), but he leaves out that essential distinction postulated by Putnam, viz., between empirical and conceptual knowledge.

According to Putnam, "for being aware of a new interpretation of the facts, however repellent, of a construction that can [...] be put upon the facts, however perversely – is a kind of knowledge. It is knowledge of a possibility" (Putnam, 2010, pp. 89-90). However, my first attempt to elucidate the Althusserian use of *perceiving* by appealing to Putnam would not be accepted by Lamarque. Literary works can be constituted by sentences describing real or possible facts; that is fine. However, our literary disposition while reading literature as literature allows itself to play in such a way that no matter the sentences are – real or possible – the text turns opaque. The narrative opacity thesis implies not only the irrelevance of truth in literary value, but it also eliminates the possibility of abstracting any transparent conceptual knowledge such as that entailed in a possible world conception described in fictional works. As I merely suggested above, the thematic level of a literary work does not make sense in literary reading because the opacity inhibits the so-called "stability." According to Lamarque, "Beliefs formed about characters, attitudes, values, and meanings are much less secure and, being subject to hypothesis, supposition, and interpretation, are always liable for revision" (Lamarque, 2014, p. 148). Thus, abstracting conceptual knowledge from literary pieces seems incompatible with a strong engagement with an opaque reading of a literary text. Therefore, a Putnamean elucidation of Althusser is destined for failure.

Nevertheless, I would like to suggest an alternative response to our problem. An unconnected debate to our own discussion could be the key to postulating more sounded answers to our questions. In the following section, I will introduce some ideas departing from the famous *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* ("Notes on Kafka") by Theodor W. Adorno and the critical interpretation offered by Maeve Cooke (2014).

4. A Kafkian Opacity

In 1953 Theodor W. Adorno published his "Notes on Kafka," a long and complex essay constituted of nine sections on Franz Kafka's literature. Although the *Notes* have received a lot of academic attention, I would like to emphasize, however, the philosophical problems set out by Adorno on the nature of literary interpretation, which will help us to take some distance from a vulgar Marxist absorption into those theses on the mirroring powers of literature. His aim in the *Notes* is dependent on the explicit target of his critiques, e.g., the existentialist

approaches to Kafka's literature. "Existentialist," however, does not extensionally mean all the familiar doctrines by Sartre, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, Wahl, Jaspers, or even Camus, but, as Margarete Kohlenbach (2010) points out, that one held by Hans-Joachim Schoeps, an active literary critique who collaborated with Max Brod in editing some Kafka's works (Rubin, 2015). Thus, Adorno aimed to discuss a specific kind of interpretation of literature, which had its model in those forms of theological existentialism. Particularly, Adorno aimed to discuss the literary procedure according to which fictional information is collapsed into thematic non-fictional information. In other words, Adorno criticized the reduction of the subject level of a piece to its thematic level or even, in Lamarquean words, turn the opacity out to transparency. Thus, for Adorno, the objective of his essay is to oppose a *riddle* (*Rätsel*) to "a bitterly serious Kafka" (Adorno, 1986, p. 284)[52]. Although the word *Rätsel* has many senses from Adorno's Aesthetics, one of them is quite relevant for this context: the works of art are riddles for people who do not have a muse (Adorno, 1970, p. 183). The lack of muse then has all to do with the lack of imagination or disposition to play with imagination. A "bitterly serious Kafka" destroys the possibility of reading Kafka's works without reducing it to a set of transparent doctrinal thoughts. On the contrary, "the insistence on the riddle" (ibid.) is for Adorno an opportunity to argue against any transparent reduction. As an example, Adorno mentions the attempts to reduce Kafka to doctrinal thoughts such as "men have lost their well-being, their way to the absolute is blocked, their life is dark or confusing or even, as they say, today, they are obligated to, and remain in, the nothingness, taking care of their duties modestly and hopeless" (Adorno, 1986, p. 254). What we would learn from Kafka is, in fact, the mirror of a doctrine already known. In order to discuss these reductive attempts, Adorno introduces six interesting and sound arguments.

The first argument is the following: 1) by hypothesis, let us assume that Kafka's literature has a hidden message; 2) by a second hypothesis, let us assume that a philosophical doctrine can transparently give an account of that hidden message; 3) there is no one interpretation of Kafka's literature, but many; 4) from these previous steps, it follows a disjunction: i) all those interpretations are brutally trivial because they are trying to find senses that are clearly established in philosophical texts or ii) those diverse interpretations are actually a problem for the second hypothesis; 5) given the lack of consensus among the critics, it seems

[52] All translations from German are mine.

that (i) makes no sense. Therefore, if it is true that Kafka's literature hides a message, there is no philosophical doctrine that can transparently reduce its many senses. The second argument is equally interesting, and its structure, for its part, is a *reductio ad absurdum*. Its premises are: 1) by hypothesis, let us assume that Kafka wanted to communicate all those sets of philosophical slogans; 2) given that we needed tons of books and papers to explain the philosophical enigmas, 3) Kafka wasted a lot of time in trying to communicate simple ideas through complex resources and 4) he awkwardly failed into the task of communicating the intended philosophical ideas. Therefore, considering these absurd inferences, it seems reasonable to abandon the first hypothesis. The third argument is a counterargument because Adorno offers a response to an objection. It could be said that Kafka did not expressly communicate his ideas; rather, he appealed to symbolic communication. Adorno, however, responds that symbolic or not, it is not possible to systematize – or unify – the various senses contained in Kafka's works. The fourth argument, for the first time, hypothetically concedes a thesis from the opponent: 1) maybe some aphorisms written by Kafka can grasp some senses present in *The trial* and *The Castle*, however, 2) if it exists connections between prose and literature in Kafka, these connections should apply to every Kafka's literary work. Nevertheless, that is not the case. According to Adorno, tales like "The bucket rider" are not reducible to simple formulae. The last two arguments, however, are less clear than the earlier fourth. The fifth argument is against a possible objection: accepting the earlier arguments, one can argue the ignorance of Kafka in his own work. Adorno reasonably responds that the author's intentions cannot reduce the meaning of a work. Finally, Adorno saw an incompatibility between attributing one and only one transparent sense to a literary work and the historical changes experimented by the interpretations of a work.

Once the counter-arguments have been raised, an obvious question emerges: what kind of interpretation Kafka deserves? According to Adorno, a *mimetic* one. Reading Kafka is not a compulsive hunting of symbols but a mimetic encounter with the characters. Apparent irrelevant gestures are, for Adorno, on the contrary, very relevant for interpreting literary works. For example, Adorno considered the "old woman" perturbing gaze at the very beginning in *The Trial*. Connecting with that uncanny gesture allows us to open another text dimension, e.g., the psychological one. However, several authors do not agree with the Adornian treatment of literature.

Maeve Cooke, for example, recognizes the value of the Adornian reflections for the

debate on the theoretical limits of Jürgen Habermas' communicative ethics but denies the Adornian emphasis on gesture over concepts in literary interpretation. In her reading of Adorno, Cooke argues that the Adornian concept of *gesture* merely intends a pre-linguistic affective capacity, putting aside any conceptual or propositional content. This engagement with the affective predominance defeats all possible attempts to gain any cognitive benefit from Kafka's literature. An overemphasis on gestures, according to Cooke, does not allow us to live perhaps the most valuable literary powers of Kafka's works. Departing from an interpretation of "In the penal colony" by Kafka, Cooke argues that the possibilities of the polysemic character of Kafka's literature allows for an ethical significance emerging from the story but not as" something that is readily available to them, but rather something they have to work out for themselves in reasoning processes with others" (Cooke, 2014, p. 638) or, in other words:

> Kafka's story intensifies our affective response to it: it denies us the comfort of a stable intellectual framework within which our feelings of horror, distress and so on could be interpreted and subjected to rational control; nevertheless […] it does not prevent us from engaging rationally with the question of its justice/injustice (Cooke, 2014, pp. 638-639)

Therefore, our concepts are submitted to the opaqueness of Kafka's stories. By disturbing that stability, narrative opacity produces a feeling of strangeness in front of our conceptual frameworks. In that sense, Adorno's arguments against a serious Kafka are an instance of the Lamarquean arguments against the pro-truth theorists. Moreover, both philosophers have good reasons for defending Kafka's opacity over the theoretical attempts to reduce his work to philosophical doctrines. When we read Kafka's works, we use a complex cluster of profile and domain concepts to comprehend what is written. The reading process entailed in fiction is not quite different from that one entailed in non-fictional texts because the works require our everyday concepts but the works, for its part, organize our conceptual clusters in such a way that they are turned opaque. Particularly in Kafka's literature, our familiar concepts are obliged to absurd connections, which are utterly possible to us. *The metamorphosis* contains extraordinary passages when the absurd is subtly set as secondary information:

> But what was he to do now? The next train went at seven; to catch that, he would have to hurry at a frantic speed, and his collection of samples wasn't packed yet, and he certainly didn't feel particularly fresh and lively himself. And even if he managed to catch the train, he couldn't escape

> a dressing-down from the boss, for the attendant from work had been waiting at the five-o'clock train, and had long ago informed the boss that Gregor had missed it (Kafka, 2009, p. 30)

Gregor Samsa "found himself transformed into some kind of monstrous vermin" (Kafka, 2009, p. 29), but his concerns are losing the trains and, finally, a possible "dressing-down from the boss." All the horror we can feel at the story's beginning subtly turns into an absurd situation constituted of a vermin man and his concerns regarding his job. Once again, from the quotidian concepts emerge possible absurd situations. As Cooke remarks, Kafka does not say anything *straightforwardly*, but it does not mean that the narrative opacity of his works cannot convey deep cognoscitive experiences. On the contrary, the specific way through which his prose produces cognitive benefits is precisely its narrative opacity.

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European Society for Aesthetics

Novels and Moral Knowledge: Henry James Evaluating Guy de Maupassant

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ABSTRACT. Jacques Bouveresse in *La Connaissance de l'écrivain* (2008) addresses the question of whether literature (novels in particular) can provide moral knowledge and of what kind. He proposes three theses: 1) that literature can serve the cause of moral truth by combating moral idealism, 2) that the reader's aesthetic experience is a characteristic contribution to moral knowledge of literature, and 3) that the power of this value for moral knowledge lies in the inseparability of form and content in novels. My aim in this paper is to focus on one of the examples that Bouveresse mentions in his book: Henry James's evaluation of Guy de Maupassant's literature, which is an ambiguous mixture of admiration and reproach. The partial objectives of my argument are: 1) to show that James's criticism of Maupassant is based, among other things, on his not being able to recognize in Maupassant's work a non-reflective form of struggle against what Bouveresse calls "moral idealism", 2) to show that Maupassant's diatribe against realist writers (as "illusionists") is contradictory to the true character of his literature, and 3) to show that the experiential role played by "negativity" in Maupassant's work is the same role as played by the reader's involvement through the array of "possibilities" in James's work, in order to build a "perspective" (Donnelly) for the reader through the appropriate form-content warp.

Jacques Bouveresse in *La Connaissance de l'écrivain* (2008) addresses the question of whether literature (novels in particular) can provide moral knowledge and of what kind, entering into a discussion with the answers of Nussbaum, Pippin, Diamond, Lamarque & Olsen, etc. about it. I will start underlining three theses proposed by Bouveresse in his book. The first thesis is that

[53] Email: salrubio@um.es. Research work for this paper was funded by grants from FFI2015-64271-P, 18958/JLI/13, and PID2019-106351GB-I00 (MCIN/ AEI /10.13039/501100011033/ and FEDER), and 20934/PI/18 (Fundación SENECA, Plan Regional de Ciencia y Tecnología de la Región de Murcia, Spain).

"the best way in which literature can serve the cause of moral truth is by combating moral lies par excellence, in other words, moral idealism"[54] (Bouveresse, 2008, 137). The second thesis is that novels are not simple mental experiments, but rather that they entail an aesthetic experience for the reader, and that their characteristic contribution to moral knowledge is based on this feature. The third thesis is that the power of this value for moral knowledge lies in the inseparability of form and content in novels.

My aim in this paper is to focus on one of the examples that Bouveresse mentions in his book and that has always intrigued me personally: Henry James's evaluation of Guy de Maupassant's literature, which is an ambiguous mixture of admiration and reproach. James admires Maupassant's "prodigy" of writing, but he reproaches him for his "alarming" negativity, in terms of his characters' lack of moral reflection and a certain delight in the "vile, petty and sordid". James's opinion of Maupassant is already intuitively explicable from James's own mood (of his taste, his personal world, his *Weltanschauung*) as opposed to Maupassant's mood. But I think that this opinion can also be explained in terms of Bouveresse's theses, delving a little deeper into the brief reflections that Bouveresse himself offers about them in his book.

The development of my argument pursues various partial objectives:

1) to show that James's criticism of Maupassant is based, among other things, on his not being able to recognize in Maupassant's work another form (a non-reflective form) of struggle against what Bouveresse calls "moral idealism";
2) to show that Maupassant's "bad doctrine" (Bouveresse says) in his diatribe against realist writers, according to which "good realists would rather be illusionists" and based on an apparently superficial perceptivism, is contradictory to the true character of his literature, which confirms Bouveresse's thesis that "Maupassant's literature is better than his bad doctrine";
3) to show that the experiential role ("perspective") played by "negativity" in Maupassant's work is the same role as played by the reader's involvement through the array of "possibilities" in James's work; to show that Maupassant's "illusion"

[54] My translation, also in the following quotations of that text.

is precisely literature (or even good literature), that is, a writer's ability to build a "perspective" (Donnelly) for the reader through the appropriate form-content warp.

1.

Let us go along with the first objective which is related to the first of Bouveresse's theses. Bouveresse relies on Musil to define "moral idealism" in that way: "the idealistic exploitation of names [Shakespeare, Goethe] and mythical concepts [homeland, people's health, honesty, rigour]" as "adherence to what is presented as an 'ideal' but would not actually correspond to anything of what is actually the case and what is done" (Bouveresse, 2008, 138). Well then, Bouveresse says that

> It is possible that due to lack of attention to the complexity of moral life or because its means are not adapted to its representation, moral philosophy, or especially moral idealism, are condemned to enunciate as lies some truths that literature is in a position to express adequately. (Bouveresse, 2008, p. 138).

Nevertheless, literature is not exempt from moral idealism. In Musil's terms:

> A reasonable censorship should not have immoral writings under surveillance, but rather moral ones. […] In my opinion, the virtue of a writer such as Hesse [Hermann Hesse] is a corpse of that kind, and there the leaving virtue becomes not less complicated and incomprehensible than the perversity. [55] (Musil, 1992, p. 1)

James himself does not hesitate in order to condemn, to a certain extent, the Anglo-Saxon prudishness, guided by morality, when Anglo-Saxon critics come to criticize the "dark" Maupassant's writings:

> Nothing is more striking to an Anglo-Saxon reader than the omission of all other lights, those with which our imagination, and I think it ought to be said our observation, is familiar […]. No doubt there is in our literature an immense amount of conventional blinking, and it may be questioned

[55] My translation.

> whether pessimistic representation in M. de Maupassant's manner do not follow his particular original more closely than our perpetual quest of pleasantness (does not Mr. Rider Haggard make even his African carnage pleasant?) adheres to the lines of the world we ourselves know.
> [James refers here to Rider Haggard, the author of Allan Quatermain's stories.] (James, 1019, p. 272)

2.

Maupassant attacks Realist writers by means of a strange formula. He says that

> talented Realists ought to be called rather 'Illusionists'[56] (Maupassant, 1984, p. 23).

The main reason is, for Maupassant, that the aim consisting of "describing things", as Realists aspire to, runs into the fact that

> to each of us, the truth is in his own mind, his own organs. […] All the great artists are those who can make other men see their own particular illusion[57] (Maupassant, 1984, p. 24).

Even so, Bouveresse underlines the contradictory consequences of such a literary theory insomuch as our personal way of seeing the world becomes our own illusion which seems to collide with the possibility of making and sharing a true representation of the world. Despite that, Bouveresse (Bouveresse, 2008, p. 45), following James' diagnosis, finds Maupassant's literature better than his bad doctrine, a doctrine which can be called "superficial perceptivism". In fact, Maupassant leans on the presumed relativism of senses and the subjectivity of sensory experiences in order to state that there are as so many real things as there are particular men. But, as Bouveresse remarks, even accepting that our information about the world comes down to what our senses provide us with, we would not be obliged to conclude that our knowledge about the world is deprived of all kinds of objective content.

3.

[56] My translation.
[57] My translation.

The fact that Maupassant's literature is better than his bad literary doctrine could be illustrated by means of Maupassant's mastery concerning the use of literary tools in order to build a "perspective" (I am borrowing that term from Maureen Donnelly's theories on literature). Donnelly says that

> excellent literature impels the engaged reader to imaginatively transfer perspectival properties from things as they are characterized in his or her own experience to the fictional entities of the literary work. (Donnelly, 2019, p. 11).

Donnelly's "perspective" is "like a grid through which my experience is structured" (Donnelly, 2019, p. 14). Thus, for example, imaginatively engaging in the perspective(s) developed in a literary work such as Zola's "The Flood" implies that

> Imagining that an event is unfolding and horrific only requires that I imagine that it is characterized by the perspectival properties events have when they are unfolding and horrific from my own perspective. (Donnelly, 2019, p. 15).

Referring to Louis, the main character of "The Flood", "I have no problem understanding this character's perspective and respecting the motivations behind his decision to remain on his farm" (Donnelly, 2019, p. 18), even though engaging with the perspective of the text does not imply at all having (or having had) an experience similar to the experience of, or endorsing the perspective of, the character; often "we must to learn to temporally set important aspects of our own perspectives on hold" (Donnelly, 2019, p. 19).

Let us choose some examples from Maupassant's short stories. Nested stories and symbolic objects are used by Maupassant very often as narrative strategies purposed to involve the reader in even very extreme situations and characters. In *Châli*,

> Admiral de la Vallee, who seemed to be half asleep in his armchair, said in a voice which sounded like an old woman's:
>
> "I had a very singular little love adventure once; would you like to hear it?"

> He spoke from the depths of his great chair, with that everlasting dry, wrinkled smile on his lips, that smile *à la Voltaire*, which made people take him for a terrible skeptic. (Maupassant, 1909, p. 117)

And his "little love adventure" turns out to be the very tragic love of a child in the harem of an Indian Raja, finally punished with the execution of the child, Châli, and the confession that he has "never loved any woman but Châli".

Let us examine an example of the use of symbolic objects and spaces. Very often, the spaces are charged by Maupassant with human characteristics, bringing the reader closer to the perspective of a character or of an act or event, even when it comes to a character carrying out horrible actions or there is a case of awful events. Maupassant does not always succeed, and it is even likely that often, in many of his shorter stories, Maupassant simply wants to leave the reader on the threshold of a story that is nothing more than a far-fetched and shocking journalistic chronicle. I think that this is not the case in *Little Louise Roque* (*La petite Roque*). A postman discovers the corpse of a girl in the forest. It is suspected that the murderer is someone local, but they cannot find him. The mayor of the town is distressed: he raped and murdered the girl by a sensual impulse driven by her widowhood and his brutal character. Maupassant describes the fall of leaves in the grove, owned by the mayor, where the crime was committed:

> And the almost elusive whisper, the floating, incessant, sweet and sad murmur of this fall, seemed a moan, and those leaves still falling, seemed tears, great tears shed by the great sad trees that wept day and night over the end of the year, on the end of the warm dawns and soft twilight, on the end of the warm breezes and clear suns, and also perhaps on the crime they had seen committed under their shadow, on the child raped and killed at their feet. They wept in the silence of the deserted and empty grove, of the abandoned and dreaded grove, where alone, the soul, the little soul of the little dead girl, must wander.[58]

[58] My translation from the French original: "Et le murmure presque insaisissable, le murmure flottant, incessant, doux et triste de cette chute, semblait une plainte, et ces feuilles tombant toujours, semblaient des larmes, de grandes larmes versées par les grands arbres tristes qui pleuraient jour et nuit sur la fin de l'année, sur la fin des aurores tièdes et des doux crépuscules, sur la fin des brises chaudes et des clairs soleils, et aussi peutêtre sur le crime qu'ils avaient vu commettre sous leur ombre, sur l'enfant violée et tuée à leur pied. Ils pleuraient dans le silence du bois désert et vide, du bois abandonné et redouté, où devait errer, seule, l'âme, la petite âme de la petite morte." (*Œuvres complètes de Guy de Maupassant*, XVI.divu, Paris: Louis Conard, 1909, p. 33,

Significantly, the grove itself will be the object of a kind of symbolic self-castration, with a suicide attempt, when the mayor orders the grove to be cut down.

It is time to compare, from the outside, the literary procedures of both writers and to evaluate their different strategies to avoid moral idealism (in Bouveresse terms). As we know, James criticizes the lack of moral reflection in Maupassant's characters:

> M. de Maupassant has simply skipped the whole reflective part of his men and women -that reflective part which governs conduct and produces character. (James, 1919, p. 285)

Henry James shows that literary complexity through the deployment of possibilities in the moral reflection of the complex psychology of his characters, and also in the difficult balance between principles, affections, judgments, decisions, and actions that his characters face[59]. Maupassant does it in a very different way: through the role of instincts, of social condition, of the characters' motivations in stories that strike the reader because of their crudeness, their brutality, or their sarcasm. These stories are elaborated literarily in a more sophisticated style than it might at first seem, through the symbolic use of objects or of descriptions of nature, the management of narrative perspectival strategies (nested stories, for example), etc. In other words: James does not fall into "moral idealism" because he is able to express literarily the complexity, that is a high grade of indetermination which may be found, for example, in the open ending of their novels demanding that the reader reach his own conclusion regarding the complex moral shape of their characters. Maupassant avoids "moral idealism" literarily through a different kind of complexity: that of instinct, drive, desire, and their phantasms, but also of through their interaction with social determinations.

Basically, James sees Maupassant's moral anti-idealism, although he is torn between admiration for that mixture of impeccable licentiousness which is so French, and a brutality, a

https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:%C5%92uvres_compl%C3%A8tes_de_Guy_de_Maupassant,_XVI.djvu/43, accessed 30/05/2021). The passage has been misconstrued in the most common English translation (by Albert M.C Mac master B.A, A.E. Henderson, B.A., Mme. Quesada & Others).

[59] I have defended the role of possibilities in James literature in Rubio Marco, Salvador: "Imagination, Possibilities and Aspects in Literary Fiction", in Vaughan, C. & Vidmar, I. (eds.) *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, vol. 11, 2019, pp. 506-521, http://www.eurosa.org/wpcontent/uploads/ESA-Proc-11-2019-Rubio-Marco-2019.pdf (accessed 31/05/2021) and Rubio Marco, Salvador: "Aesthetic Values, Engaging Perspectives, and Possibilities in Literature", in Moura, V. & Vaughan, C. (eds.) *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, vol. 12, 2020, pp.122-152. http://www.eurosa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-Rubio_ESA.pdf (accessed 31/05/2021).

cynical streak, and pessimism that repel him. He says, concerning the short story *L'héritage (The Legacy)*: "The story is a model of narration, but it leaves our poor average humanity dangling like a beaten rag." (James, 1919, p. 291)

As shown before, Maupassant defends himself against the literary critics of his time by displaying a radical perceptivist subjectivism (internalist and relativist, by force at the end) that contradicts its own literary "communicability". Furthermore, beyond Maupassant's bad doctrine, there is an evident way to "make other men see their own particular illusion", following Maupassant's own definition of "illusion", and that way it could be called simply "literature" (or better, "good literature"). Because good literature is successful in providing a "perspective". Properly sharing the adventure of the characters involves, for Donnelly, "to grasp enough of their perspectives to see that their values, goals, knowledge, and so on have the right sort of structure to support their actions" (Donnelly, 2019, p. 19). Bouveresse insists on the difference between novels and mental experiments, and one crucial element of that difference is precisely the work on that ability to build a perspective, and the moral consequences of such a work. A good novel is, then, much more than a philosophical mental experiment. Another way to explain what makes good literature lies in underlying the intimate link between form and content. The fact that both Maupassant and James avoid moral idealism (even in two very different ways) is a good test to show how both writers are able to overcome the mere content by means of a specific elaboration of literary form. Even though, to speak of "mere content" implies already a certain degree of compromise with moral idealism as far as moral idealism is a kind of "contentism" that ignores that the actual resulting content cannot be anything other than a mixture of form and content. (And the philosophical problem takes on here a fractal appearance).

Finally, we are now in a good position to assess some conclusions attempting to validate Bouveresse's thesis alluded to previously by means of its application to the case of the James-Maupassant relationship, and, in turn, providing a better understanding of James's assessment of Maupassant from the view of Bouveresse's theoretical position.

Ultimately, those conclusions are intended to be:

1) that both the literature of James and Maupassant can be understood as forms of combat against moral idealism (in the sense proposed by Bouveresse-Musil);

2) that the success of the building of a "perspective" (Donnelly) through very different narrative strategies (in both James's and Maupassant's works) is the key to the functioning of texts as aesthetic experiences for the reader (rather than mere thought experiments); and
3) that the value of the moral knowledge of these works lies precisely in the peculiar link between narrative form and narrative content, which is at the heart of the literary way of building James's and Maupassant's literary styles in each case.

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European Society for Aesthetics

Viral Poetics in Manuel Joseph's Baisetioles

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ABSTRACT. Against the idea that poetry has no performative force, I argue in this paper that there is a viral poetics at play in some contemporary practices. I, therefore, reinterpret Austin's characterisation of poetry as a parasite in a positive way: rather than being an idle parasite, poetry functions as an active virus within our linguistic practices. Building on the French notion of *dispositif*, I illustrate my claim by giving an interpretation of Manuel Joseph's *Baisetioles*. This viral poetics leads me to characterise poetry as a performative *dispositif* that acts upon ordinary language and, through it, upon our forms of life.

1. Introduction: Austin's Parasites

> All this we are excluding from consideration (Austin 1975, 22)

Despite a genuine interest in importing speech act theory into literary studies, it seems that J. L. Austin's initial exclusion of poetic utterances from consideration has been a yet insurmountable obstacle to an ordinary language poetics.[61] Indeed, Austin considers utterances

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[61] According to Mary Louise Pratt, one of the appeals of speech-act theory to literary scholars is the possibility it offers 'of integrating literary discourse into the same basic model of language as all our other communicative activities.' (Pratt, 1977, 88) Sandy Petrey argues something similar by considering that 'The imperative to socialize that erases the dividing line between constative and performative also erases that between literary and performative.' (Petrey, 1990, 51) From a slightly different perspective, Stanley Fish considers that: 'What philosophical semantics and the philosophy of speech acts are telling us is that ordinary language is extraordinary because at its heart is precisely the realm of values, intentions, and purposes which is often assumed to be the exclusive property of literature.' (Fish, 1982, 108) Following Fish, Toril Moi considers there is nothing extraordinary to literary language: 'Ordinary language is certainly not the opposite of 'literary' language. (In my view, there is no such thing as 'literary language.') Nor is ordinary language the opposite of "extraordinary

in poems, on stage, or in soliloquy to be 'parasitic upon [their] normal use.' (Austin, 1975, 22) Following a certain trend in Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) reinstating the literary within an Austinian framework, my paper aims to reconfigure Austin's notion of parasite from a negative criticism (exclusion) to a positive evaluation (inclusion).[62] Against exclusion—which requires a sharp distinction between poetic and ordinary uses that is often (if not always) difficult to make—I argue that such uses are in fact revelatory of the potential for creativity in language and hence not limited to poetic utterances or forms of 'extraordinary' uses. Whereas Austin's notion of parasite gives a conservative picture of language—i.e. there are some linguistic institutions and parasitic uses feed upon them—I argue that one of the effects of so-called parasitic uses is precisely to reveal that such a conservative picture fails to describe how new meanings and new uses of language come into existence.[63] My paper thus aims to turn this conservative picture into a progressive one in which creative uses of language such as poetic utterances are of central importance. Michel Serres describes this creative action of the parasite as follows: 'People laugh, the parasite is expelled, he is made fun of, he is beaten, he cheats us; but he invents anew.' (Serres, 2007, 35) Following this inventive force of the parasite, I coin the shift from conservation (exclusion) to progression (inclusion) as one from *passive parasite* to *active virus*.

There are three steps to my argument: first, building on a remark from Wittgenstein's

language." The extraordinary is at home in the ordinary. (We share perfectly ordinary criteria for when to apply the concept.) There is nothing extraordinary about the extraordinary.' (Moi, 2017, 162)

[62] Cavell is the most famous to pursue such a programme to merge OLP with literary investigations, thus bringing philosophy and literature closer to one another, as the last sentence from *The Claim of Reason* suggests: 'Can philosophy become literature and still know itself?' (Cavell, 1979, 496) Further exploring the attunement between philosophy and poetry, Maximilian de Gaynesford argues that: 'An attuned approach, in which each takes the other as an opportunity to exercise itself, ought not to seem so alien to either poetry or philosophy. As a starting point, and only that, it is clear enough that appreciating poetry as such has intimately to do with what language is, what it does, and what it is for, just as philosophy as such has intimately to do with these same questions. On the one hand, these questions invoke a good deal of philosophy. On the other hand, abstract ingenuity and formal resourcefulness alone are rarely enough to answer them. Sensibility and receptivity to the varied uses of language are also called for, capacities that are sustained and developed by appreciating poetry. Building on this commonality, it ought to be possible to find mutually enhancing ways of appreciating poetry and doing philosophy, rather than simply using one to illustrate the other, or to ornament the other, or, worst of all, to pay the other elaborate and ultimately vacuous compliments.' (de Gaynesford, 2017, 11)

[63] In his introduction to Manuel Joseph's *Baisetioles*, Christophe Hanna argues: 'Lorsque je parle, ces conditions sont réunies, ou pas : si elles le sont, mon énoncé possèdera cette force performative (je suis sérieux en promettant, je fais une promesse et elle me contraindra), sinon (si je plaisante), il ne la possède pas. Tellement bien qu'à lire Austin, il semble que ce genre de conditions ne puisse émerger accidentellement, localement ou se constituer progressivement : elles ne peuvent être autre chose que là ou pas, que préexister aux actes de langage. Moyennant quoi la théorie d'Austin fait plutôt obstacle à l'idée que puissent se créer de nouvelles formes de performativité.' (Hanna, in Joseph, 2020, p. 15)

Philosophical Investigations, I consider the doing of language, what Austin calls the performative, in terms of *dispositif*, reading OLP through the lens of French philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard;[64] second, I relate this *dispositif* to Christophe Hanna's conception of 'viral poetics' in order to show, third, how poetry operates as a performative *dispositif* in Manuel Joseph's *Baisetioles*.

2. Doing and Dispositif

To shift from a *passive parasite* to an *active virus*, we need to grasp how change can occur in language, how invention operates in our linguistic practices. Although Austin's theory is rather conservative, this inventive dimension is crucial to Wittgenstein's philosophy who places invention at the heart of his philosophical method.[65] Remark 492 from his *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) epitomises this importance of invention in Wittgenstein's conception of language:

> To invent a language could mean to invent a device for a particular purpose on the basis of the laws of nature (or consistently with them); but it also has the other sense, analogous to that in which we speak of the invention of a game.
> Here I am saying something about the grammar of the word "language", by connecting it with the grammar of the word "invent". (Wittgenstein, 2009, PI 492)

According to Wittgenstein, there are two ways of considering invention in language: as a device following a purpose or as a game following a rule.[66] Rather than focusing on the details of

[64] The connection between OLP and French philosophy is often made through Jacques Derrida because of the Derrida-Searle debate that arose from Derrida's paper on Austin. Much has been said about this debate but Derrida's focus on the parasite seems to point out an interesting weakness of Austin's theory. However, the debate with Searle has proven to be much less productive. Raoul Moati and Jesús Navarro have both written book-length explorations of this debate. (Moati, 2014; Navarro, 2017)

[65] See for instance in the *Blue Book*: 'That is also why our method is not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance.' (Wittgenstein, 2008, BB, p. 28) This sentence epitomises the difference between Austin's and Wittgenstein's methods. While Austin seems to correspond to the first part of the sentence, 'enumer[ating] actual usages of words', Wittgenstein focuses on 'invent[ing] new ones.' In this opposition resides a different approach to poetic and creative uses of language: excluded from Austin, included in Wittgenstein. Rather than considering these views as contradictory, I would argue that they complement each other.

[66] Oskari Kuusela offers an analysis of these two senses of inventing a language: 'Consequently, we can spell out Wittgenstein's distinction in PI §492 as follows. The two senses of inventing a language, to which he refers, make

these two forms of invention, I want to investigate the word 'device' (or *Vorrichtung* in German) that Wittgenstein uses to enlighten two conceptions of *dispositif*. By reading this remark in an anachronical way, the notion of device can indeed be connected to the exploration of *dispositif* Foucault and Lyotard.[67] I believe that Wittgenstein's distinction between two forms of invention enlightens their two conceptions of *dispositif*, respectively highlighting a normative dimension and a poetic or creative one.

The notion of *dispositif* is generally related to Foucault who considers it as having 'a dominant strategic function.' (Foucault, 1980, 195) A *dispositif* consists in 'strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge.' (Foucault, 1980, 196) Foucault especially focuses on the repressive dimension of the *dispositif*, for instance in his analysis of the *panopticon* in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977). Insofar as it has a dominant strategic function, Foucault's *dispositif* can be understood as a device created for a specific purpose. This device is not necessarily a building (as in the case of the *panopticon*) or an object but can be a conceptual or linguistic device (as the structure of language reflects the structure of power relations). Foucault's *dispositif* therefore sheds a special light on Wittgenstein's first conception of invention: a device for a specific purpose (although Wittgenstein's notion of invention is not limited to a repressive function *à la* Foucault).

Foucault's emphasis on the repressive dimension however misses an important point regarding the creative or poetic potential of the *dispositif*. In contrast, Lyotard's conception of *dispositif pulsionnel* offers the space for such an exploration. As Stuart Sim argues, Lyotard's focus on the libidinal aspects of *dispositif* opens the space for creative freedom against Foucault's repressive strategy.[68] The libidinal dimension of Lyotard's *dispositif* counters the

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manifest two different aspects of the concept of language: (i) language as analogous to games and defined by arbitrary rules and (ii) language as analogous to instruments that serve particular external purposes, i.e. not arbitrary but determined, for instance, by their effects.' (Kuusela, 2006, 329) Joseph Medina relies on PI 492 to explore the necessity of inventing new language-games: 'These alternative contexts may not always be available; they may require inventing new language-games or radically transforming existing practices until they acquire a new face. Indeed Wittgenstein often talks about the invention of new language-games (e.g., PI §492) and of the possibility of replacing old games with new ones (e.g., PI §64). He emphasizes that language-games are constantly fluctuating and that this fluctuation allows for radical changes in which our practices can be twisted, bent, and rearranged beyond recognition. It is purely arbitrary to insist that these transformations always have to be understood as internal changes or reforms of the *same* practice. This insistence is just an arbitrary imposition of *a priori* constraints on our conceptualizations of the evolution of linguistic practices.' (Medina, 2004, 568–69)

[67] Device (and *Vorrichtung*) is indeed one of the translations of *dispositif* in English, although 'apparatus' is often preferred and 'dispositive' also exists. In this paper, I will keep the French *dispositif* for more clarity.

[68] 'Foucault certainly emphasises this repressive aspect of the phenomenon, and Lyotard is very aware of it too, hence his concern to draw our attention to the limitations that all dispositifs share. *Libidinal Economy* is an

power of control and becomes a transformer of energy, creating meanings or, in a Wittgensteinian interpretation, creating a game, creating rules and uses: 'What we have here is a linguistic dispositif, i.e. an arrangement that allows for *libido to be connected* [literally plugged into] *to language* (support, surface of inscription).'[69] (Lyotard, 1994, 121) Through its connection between libido and language, the *dispositif* transforms libidinal energy and produces 'effects of meaning.' In other words, there are two important aspects of the *dispositif* for Lyotard: first, as it is a linguistic *dispositif*, it connects libido and language against the rather common idea that language is alien to libidinal energy (the tension between the 'rationality' of language and the 'irrationality' of emotion). This connection produces meaning in the naming of affects. Second, the *dispositif* circumscribes a linguistic modality which transforms libidinal energy into linguistic energy and, in turn, into affects, emotions, etc. This transformation of libidinal energy into meanings produces what Lyotard calls 'intensities:' 'The "intensities" are what imports, not the meaning.' (Lyotard, 2020, chap. 7) Indeed, this producing device is an affirmative power that, however 'always disrupts [libidinal intensities] until dysfunction.' [70] (Lyotard, 1994, 160) The *dispositif* distributes libidinal intensities but, through this distribution, it also brings them to dysfunction, something of a parasitic disturbance.

In this sense, we can consider poetry as a linguistic *dispositif* that distributes libidinal intensities by bringing them to dysfunction, to the disruption of communication (parasite *qua* static), and that reveals the failure of meaning. Against the normativity of Foucault's *dispositif* (that represents the normativity of Austin's ordinary language), Lyotard's *dispositif* is a meaning-producing game. In this sense, it follows Wittgenstein's second form of invention in which inventing a language is analogous to the invention of a game. It is primarily in this second sense of *dispositif* that poetry can arise: a *dispositif qua* game opens a space of expression for creativity, a space for poetry to occupy. These two conceptions of *dispositif* reflect Austin's distinction between ordinary (normative) and parasitic (poetic) uses of language. However, the common term '*dispositif*' shows that both ordinary and parasitic uses

exasperated response to how we have allowed certain dispositifs to control our thought, with Lyotard repeatedly making the point that libidinal energy makes a mockery of all such pretensions to regulation. Given that any power the dispositif has is illusory, we have far more freedom within it than we tend to believe; freedom to construct oppositional little narratives, for example.' (Sim, 2011, 56)

[69] My translation: 'On a là un dispositif langagier, c'est-à-dire un agencement qui permet de *brancher la libido sur le langage* (support, surface d'inscription).'

[70] My translation: 'formation toute positive, affirmative, de distribution des intensités libidinales, mais les détraquant toujours jusqu'au dysfonctionnement.'

are doing something, both are performative. Reading these two conceptions of *dispositif* through Wittgenstein's remark reveals that they are two sides of a same process.

3. Hanna's Viruses

The move from meanings to intensities brings to the fore the interactional aspect of the *dispositif*. Christophe Hanna, a French theorist, and poet connects the *dispositif* to poetry through the notion of 'language-game,' thus pursuing a Wittgensteinian line of thought: 'The *dispositif* cannot be considered as a kind of proposition but as a kind of interaction, as a language-game implemented in a given form of life.' [71] (Hanna, 2010, 24) What is important here is the idea that *dispositifs qua* language games are implanted on certain contexts: they operate in relation to ordinary practices and are not separated from them nor in opposition to them. The idea of interaction suggests that parasitism is not a one-way matter.[72] The parasite needs a host concept to operate on, but this host concept is enhanced and transformed by the parasite. If following Serres, the parasite is an active force, the *dispositif* operates in the context it is implanted in rather than only passively feeding on it.

More than the image of the parasite who lives off the hospitality of others, and hence has no creative force (i.e. the parasite as idle), poetic *dispositifs* are best defined as viruses that operate on language and the world. Hanna defines the viral action of poetry as follows:

> **The viral action operates directly** in the space of communication considered as a set of symbolic subsystems in relation, capable of becoming target-zones. Each target-zone represents a **potential context** in which a viral language is **immediately performative** like a pure illocutionary act.[73] (Hanna, 2003, 22)

Hanna explicitly relates viral poetics to the notion of performative and Austin's speech act

[71] My translation: 'Le dispositif ne peut pas être envisagé comme une forme d'énoncé mais comme une forme d'interaction, un jeu de langage qui vient s'implanter dans une forme de vie donnée.'
[72] It is worth noting that French does not distinguish between host and guest, only using the word 'hôte'. In this context, parasite and parasited thus coalesce.
[73] Hanna's emphasis, my translation: '**L'action virale s'effectue directement** dans l'espace de la communication considéré comme un ensemble composite de sous-systèmes symboliques en relation, susceptibles de devenir des zones-cibles. Chaque zone-cible représente un **contexte potentiel** dans lequel un langage viral est **immédiatement performatif** tel un pur acte illocutoire.'

theory. There are three elements on which I want to focus: 1. 'direct action', 2. 'potential context', 3. 'immediately performative' and 'pure illocutionary act'.

1.) A viral action is direct in the sense that it operates without mediation of any kind, it operates immediately in the space of communication because it is made of language and operates within language. This is what Wittgenstein already suggests when he says: 'Do not forget that a poem, although it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information.' (Wittgenstein, 1981, Z 160) The language of poetry is not ontologically different from the language of information we use in our everyday lives. Poetry has a direct viral action because it cannot be, at least at first glance, distinguished from the language of information.
2.) The space of communication is a set of symbolic subsets and the viral action can operate on each of these. These symbolic subsets, therefore, become potential contexts for the action of poetry, potentials cells for the virus to infect. In this sense, language appears as a set of potential contexts for viral action. Viral language requires these contexts and cannot be self-sufficient: 'In principle, a virus can therefore not be an autonomous and self-sufficient autotelic form; the virus engages with its context, transforms it by adapting to it structurally. The action of a virus is fundamentally a transformation by addition.'[74] (Hanna, 2003, 23) Viral language operates on its context and transforms it. Against the idea that poetry is isolated from the world, viral poetics suggests that it must be at its heart. Against the idea that poetry is *subtractive*, i.e., that it removes the subject from the mundane and that, in Austin's words, it belongs to the '*etiolations* of language,' the action of the virus is an *additive* function, in Serres's words, 'it invents something new.' The 'new' is therefore at the heart of language as language precisely needs this capacity to evolve and adapt to new situations.

[74] My translation: 'Par principe, donc, un virus ne saurait être une forme autonome-autosuffisante, autotélique ; le virus embraye sur son contexte, il le transforme en s'y adaptant structurellement. Fondamentalement l'action d'un virus est une transformation par addition.'

3.) In its doing, viral language is immediately performative, it is directly and immediately in action. But in what sense is it an illocutionary act? According to Austin's theory, an illocutionary act is conventional, and it seems that it is not the case for viral language. However, because viral language operates on the space of communication *qua* symbolic system, it operates directly on the conventions that uphold illocutionary acts. In this sense, the illocutionary force of viral language is that of sabotage: 'P'3 [virus] is therefore nothing else than a process of sabotage of the symbolic systems of a society.'[75] (Hanna, 2003, 25)

Hanna, therefore, considers the poetic *dispositif* as an *active virus* rather than a *passive parasite*. It transforms the symbolic systems of society by adding new layers of meaning, new 'intensities.' Operating directly within the space of communication, a poetic *dispositif* is therefore immediately performative. Manuel Joseph's *Baisetioles* is a perfect illustration of how a poetic *dispositif* operates on the space of communication in a viral way, i.e. by implanting itself on it.

4. Joseph's Baisetioles

Language is a virus from outer space (William S. Burroughs)

Les Baisetioles contains so many elements that my analysis will necessarily be restricted to a few specific points: I will first focus on explaining the title of the poem and then take a closer look at two pages at about the middle of the book.[76]

The title *Les Baisetioles* plays on the word *bestioles* (bugs) and *baiser* (to screw) and suggests that there are not only some bugs that come to disrupt (to screw with) the space of communication, thus following Austin's and Hanna's metaphorical line of parasites and viruses, but also that this space itself is screwing with us, bugging our minds; the context in

[75] My translation: 'P'3 [virus] n'est donc rien d'autre qu'un processus de sabotage des systèmes symboliques d'une société.'
[76] Among the many aspects that I must unfortunately overlook are the references to TV shows, the use of text message language, works of contemporary art, and many more.

which we come to encounter language frames and restrains our possibilities of thinking. These two interpretations reflect the two conceptions of *dispositif*: the normativity of language constrains our thoughts while its poetic capacities disrupt this normativity. Joseph's reference to *baiser* further connects to Lyotard's notion of *dispositif pulsionnel* in which libido connects to language. In *Baisetioles*, Joseph plays with the performativity of language, more specifically with the performativity of mediatic language, which reflects Wittgenstein's reference to the language of information. As Hanna writes in his preface to Joseph's work: 'They are empty, impersonal, and tautological [ideological] statements, threadbare clichés, reasons without any logical force. However, when uttered in the press at the right moment, they seem to possess a strong performative power.'[77] Like Austin's analysis of utterances that are performed only in specific contexts (such as 'I do' in a wedding ceremony), mediatic language seems to be empty outside of the mediatic space. All these sentences are bugs that come back into the mediatic space, parasites that however possess a performative force when rightly uttered. It is not only poetic language but the whole of language that is '*in a peculiar way* hollow or void.' Against Austin's view that parasitic uses of language have no performative force, Joseph questions this hollowness of utterances. To what extent would the mediatic stage not be a stage like any other? *Les Baisetioles* therefore begins on a stage, more specifically at Sting's concert at Paris Bataclan one year after the 2015 terrorist attack.

My analysis focuses on two pages at about the middle of the book (Joseph, 2020, 54–55). We are at Sting's concert, people are laughing, drinking, etc. Joseph investigates the use of the word barbarism (*barbarie*) and the idiom 'art is a bulwark against barbarism' (*l'art est un rempart contre la barbarie*). This idiom is one of the abovementioned empty clichés that nevertheless has a performative force on the mediatic stage. This cliché is recurrently used to show the supposed superiority of culture over barbarism or, in other words, of us over them. Joseph considers this cliché to be problematic in a least four ways.

1.) The mediatic use of barbarism never mentions the barrel organ (*orgue de barbarie*) although it is one of the uses of the word in French. In this context,

[77] My translation: 'Il s'agit d'énoncés [idéologiques] creux, impersonnels, tautologiques, de poncifs usés jusqu'à la corde, de raisons sans aucune force logique. Pourtant, proférés dans la presse au bon moment, ils semblent posséder un fort pouvoir performatif.' (Joseph, 2020, 14)

barbarism is part of culture rather than opposed to it. This musical instrument, at least through its name, weakens the opposition between barbarism and culture.

2.) Following the first point, mediatic language restrains the scope of barbarism: 'there is no other word in barbarism than arab' (*il n'y a pas d'autre mot dans barbare qu'arabe*). Playing with the letters, mediatic language uses barbarian (*barbare*) as a quasi-anagram (and hence synonym) for Arab (*arabe*). Mediatic language is performatively doing something that it cannot say. It therefore excludes some uses of language (to avoid positive evaluations) and imposes specific meanings (to impose negative evaluations).

3.) One of the ways mediatic language operates is by imposing a specific format which Joseph calls '#élément formant#.' The formatting dimension of such an element is further reinforced by framing it with ##. By following such a format, mediatic language—and Sting on stage represents such mediatic language—is not using the creative powers of language but submitting to a certain frame of thought that prevents invention.

4.) One of these forming elements is the idiom 'art is a bulwark against barbarism.' However, if barbarism is part of culture (following point 1) and if art is submitted to a frame of thought (following point 3), how can art be a bulwark against barbarism? By blurring the frontiers between culture and barbarism, Joseph breaks down the performative force of this idiom. Culture as suggested by mediatic language is less a bulwark against barbarism than a form of propaganda against the other (us against them), something that Montaigne already suggested in his essay 'On Cannibals': 'we all call barbarous anything that is contrary to our own habits.' (Montaigne, 1993, 108)

Joseph, therefore, shows how the performative force of the empty statement 'art is a bulwark against barbarism' is purely conventional and conveys problematic prejudices. Sting on stage is therefore not a bulwark against barbarism, but an empty statement of propaganda aiming at performative force in the mediatic space, The Police on stage. This performative force of empty statements surprises Joseph: 'Surprise to see how in such a context the words [or lyrics]/ can

acquire/ another force carry a meaning we didn't see.' (Joseph, 2020, 55). By bringing the reader's attention to the emptiness of mediatic language, Joseph aims to generate a similar surprise in his readers.

As a performative and viral *dispositif*, poetry subverts and disrupts mediatic uses of language. This subversion occurs because the language of poetry is not ontologically distinct from ordinary language (the language of information). It is only because it is at first glance unrecognisable as a virus, as a *baisetiole*, that poetry has a subversive force. Poetry acts as a virus within our uses of language, but rather than a dangerous virus, it aims to warn us against the performative emptiness of the mediatic stage and to incite us to regain and reinvest this stage in order to make sense of the world. What poetic uses of language teach us is that the 'new' is at the heart of language. Against the repetition of mediatic language and its formatting, poetry alters such formatting to show the linguistic potential for invention. In this sense, poetry *qua active virus* is the antithesis of the *passive parasite*. Joseph inverts Austin's evaluation: mediatic (ordinary) language is a parasite that feeds on empty idioms, endlessly reproducing clichés, while poetic language disrupts this picture by actively deconstructing mediatic propaganda while poetic language is a disruptive and subversive force revealing spaces for invention within language. Rephrasing William Burroughs's famous sentence, poetry is a virus from outer space that operates within the space of language but outside the mediatic space which restrains language. The mediatic space would be language qua Foucault's repressive and normative dispositif whereas poetry operates as a performative *dispositif* in Lyotard's sense of creating new intensities.

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European Society for Aesthetics

Virus as Metaphor: The Art World Under Pandemia

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ABSTRACT. This paper addresses the role of the virus as metaphor in art, culture, and society, drawing on both historical definitions and contemporary philosophical and aesthetic interpretations of metaphor in general and visual metaphor in particular. The introductory discussion of illness (virus) as metaphor (Sontag) is followed by a brief history of metaphor theory from aesthetics and rhetoric to contemporary cognitive theory. This is followed by a chapter that considers metaphorical thinking in the context of the art world. Using the conceptualization of illness as metaphor, we examine how the metaphor of a particular illness (characterized by the metaphor of illness as war) is used in the visual arts. We are particularly interested in how viral metaphor shapes the art world at the time of the coronavirus pandemic. The treatment of examples of visual metaphors in art (metaphorizing the experience of quarantine and other consequences of the virus) through aesthetic concepts of the familiar and the strange, is accompanied by a question about the rhetoric of society and the aesthetics of politics (Laclau and Rancière on metaphor/metonymy). The discussion concludes with a reflection on what can be considered not only in the field of artistic metaphorics of the virus but in the broader field of discourse on art, aesthetics, and society.

1. Introduction

Starting from the conceptualization of illness as metaphor, we will try to show how the metaphor of particular illnesses (which is also characterized by the metaphor of illness as war) is used in the visual arts. In her first work on illness as metaphor, Susan Sontag explicitly writes

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that "illness is *not* a metaphor" (Sontag, 1978, p. 3), and in the introduction to the second work she points out that she understands metaphor in the sense that comes from Aristotle's *Poetics* (*cf*. Sontag, 1989, p. 5). Before turning to these insights of Sontag, from which one can draw significant parallels to the current pandemic situation (we will be particularly interested in the position of art as an important producer of metaphors), let us look at Aristotle's general definition of metaphor which is given as the first known systematic definition with far-reaching historical implications.

2. Brief History of Metaphor: From Poetics and Rhetoric to Contemporary Cognitive Theory

According to Aristotle, metaphor belongs to both rhetoric and poetics. The well-known definition of metaphor from *Poetics* is as follows:

> Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy (Aristotle,1457 b 6–9).

This definition also contains a certain typology of metaphor, which will in later rhetoric becomes the basis for the decision that metaphor is only a figure related to the fourth term in Aristotle's list (transfer of meaning by analogy), which alone refers explicitly to resemblance. On the trail of this classification level of definition, Ricoeur asks us an interesting question "should we not say that metaphor destroys an order only to invent a new one /…/?" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 24). Max Black's integration of model and metaphor (an epistemological concept and a poetic concept) allows us to exploit thoroughly this idea, which is completely opposed to any reduction of metaphor to a mere "ornament" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 24).

Aristotle's definition is not the only classical definition, like the ancient Roman rhetorics Cicero and Quintilian contributed a slightly different, narrower conception of metaphor as a condensed simile, now known as the comparative theory of metaphor (a special form of substitution theory), which, along with Aristotle's conception, is the subject of critical debate within modern and contemporary theories (see, for e.g., Addison, 1993). The critical

contribution of analytic philosophy of language and cognitive linguistics, especially the proponents of so-called figurative (metaphorical) monism (metaphoricity is an essential feature of language; the main proponents include Richards, Black and Lakoff), thus also promises to consider extending the treatment of metaphor from the realm of verbal to visual language. Richards' view (1936) that metaphor is a matter of thought, not just language, directs research into the realm of conceptual metaphors. Furthermore, Lakoff (1993) points out that metaphor is essentially conceptual rather than linguistic in nature; the author also highlights the challenges that his theory of metaphor "is especially interesting for the challenge it brings to other disciplines" (Lakoff, 1993, p. 249). From here, it is only a step to efforts to systematically theorize the manifestation of metaphor in visual form or through visual (artistic) media.

This discussion attempts to round out the historical definitions of metaphor with current insights that, among other things, allow a transition into the research field of visual metaphor by attempting to go beyond the classical definitions – a modern theory of metaphor attempts to go beyond analogy or resemblance. Visual metaphor is generally understood as open (Black, Carroll) and generative (Lakoff, *et al*.), able to consider different domains simultaneously (conceptual mapping according to Lakoff), which also supports the so-called interactive understanding of metaphor (Black). Following the contemporary cognitive view of metaphorical thinking, the structure of visual metaphor is also conceptual (Forceville), which, following linguistic metaphor, means a kind of visual surplus expressed only in visual form. Otherwise, the treatment of the concept of visual metaphor is necessarily pluralistic and may contain contradictory claims in which the historical view of metaphor as figurative linguistic expression still plays an important role.

This is followed by a chapter in which metaphorical thinking is considered in the context of the art world. We understand the art world more broadly as Danto formulates it in his famous article 'The Artworld' (1964) and Dickie develops into an institutional theory of art. While they are interested in the art system as general and abstract, we are concerned with its integration into the broader socio-political and cultural-historical context. For further consideration, we proceed from the tradition of continental philosophy and its assumption that a philosophical argument cannot be separated from its social context. In mentioning Danto, we should also mention his systematic treatment of metaphor and its role in art in his work *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, where the concept of transfiguration contains the

reference to metaphor as essential in art (see Danto, 1981, pp. 165–208).

Among the most important findings of recent studies is the definition of metaphor as primarily conceptual, not only verbal but also visual. Moreover, modern metaphor goes beyond its validity in analogy and thus dissolves the laws of representation. Metaphor creates a kind of aesthetic relationship between two completely different realms – especially in experimental poetic, artistic contexts.

3. The Art World Under Pandemia and the Rhetorics of Society

We are particularly interested in how the viral metaphor shapes the art world at the time of the coronavirus pandemic. The reality of the biological virus has shaken the foundations of the world order by demanding social distancing and isolation. Measures derived from scientific discourse are necessary to stop a pandemic, but behind these measures lies an existential fear that affects everyone in the face of current social insecurity, accompanied by feelings of groundlessness and futility. What follows is a brief analysis of an exemplary online exhibition under quarantine conditions, which can also be defined as a dispositif of information and communication technologies or a contemporary biopolitical mechanism of knowledge and power that allows technological virtuality to invade our everyday life in the form of an online exhibition. Nevertheless, within this dispositif, alongside neoliberally tailored modes of subjectivation, certain practices of freedom, alternative self-fashioning and social connection are also possible.

Our example was conceived by the Slovenian Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, MG+MSUM Ljubljana, which organized an online exhibition entitled *Viral Self-Portraits* in May 2020. [79] These portraits are not artistic representations of the disease or actual self-portraits, but rather a multi-dimensional artistic exploration of the ways in which the coronavirus is associated with various images/metaphors that help shape contemporary subjectivities, focusing on our understanding and experience of the pandemic. The main focus is on the personal and social consequences, as the organization of the exhibition into sets (Faces, Masks, Political Landscape, New Public Spaces, Intimate Relationships,

[79] For more information see <ONLINE EXHIBITION | Viral Self-Portraits - MG+MSUM (mg-lj.si)>.

Everyday Things, Memory, Waiting) makes clear. The exhibition as a whole showed that the disease manifests itself as an "epidemic of meaning and labelling" (Treichler in Fink, 2010, p. 416).

2.1. Viral Visual Metaphors

Charles Forceville has provided a useful theoretical framework for the analysis of visual or pictorial metaphors (see Forceville, 1996). This occurs when a particular visual element (*frame*) is compared to other visual elements (*focus*) that fall into a different category or framework of meaning. Concrete objects are often used in visual metaphors to represent more complex ideas. To figure out what the object used represents, we need to connect it meaningfully to a more complex abstract idea. To understand visual metaphors, it is important to know the pictorial context, the aesthetics, the culture, the genre of the artwork, and the images or symbols the work contains. According to Forceville, we can find examples of different types of montage in a surrealist painting, among other works (Forceville, 1988; Forceville, 1996, p. 59). Many contemporary collage artworks are also in the spirit of surrealism, as the reference online exhibition also proves. Particularly appropriate collage techniques and photo and video editing have been tried out for the visual metaphorization of the experience of quarantine and other consequences of a pandemic, operating on the principles of hybridization, perverted contextualization, integration, pictorial examples, or juxtaposition of two or more heterogeneous (physically similar) elements in the pictorial field (so-called techno-images).

In hybrid metaphors, for example, a phenomenon represented as a single object or figure consists of two elements, usually understood as two distinct domains rather than as a whole. By visually merging the two domains (which contain metaphorical equivalents) into a single whole, the effect of hybridity is achieved (for example, between a human and an animal. Contextual metaphors are found in a situation where a phenomenon is understood as something else because of the visual context in which it is presented. In a pictorial example or comparison, one phenomenon or object is juxtaposed with another, emphasizing the (physical) similarity between the two objects. In an integrated metaphor, on the other hand, a phenomenon that we see as a single object or figure is presented as similar to another object or figure, without the

need for contextual cues. Such metaphors can be seen, for example, in the form itself, where the context is reduced to the form of the product and acts as a whole with the target domain in terms of fit.

2.2. The Familiar/Strange: Back to Aristotle and Forward Beyond Analogy

Aesthetic and rhetorical figures are especially topical as labels when a phenomenon has no firm basis in reality, as is the case with political rhetoric at the time of the current pandemic. Diseases are perceived not only as more or less fatal but also as dehumanizing; their horror stems from the appearance of a mutation of man into an animal; and *vice versa*, with which we are associated, for example, by Maja Smrekar, including works from the exhibition *Viral Self-Portraits* (hybridization of woman and dog). Even more frightening than a certain disfigurement, hybridization, metamorphosis, etc., however, is that the body/face reflects the progressive dissolution of personality (e.g., in the works of the artists Albina Mohrjakova and Jule Flierl). Illness as a metaphor of war is very convenient for constructing the differences between "us" and "others": such otherness is addressed, for example, in the works of the duo Nora Chipaumire and Ari Marcopoulos (they thematize the African continent as the Other), etc. This line can be followed up to dystopian visions on the one hand and interventions in public space on the other. The specific imaginary that surrounds viruses is a particular challenge for artists and helps us to illuminate certain aesthetic concepts, especially the familiar/strange conceptual pair.

Already in *Poetics*, when Aristotle was dealing with metaphor, he contrasted the literal and the transferred meaning: the prevalent in ordinary language with the transferred, figurative, metaphorical, unfamiliar, or foreign one; he contrasted a current, common word (i.e., it is sufficiently common and as such expresses a literal meaning) with a foreign word used by people in a foreign country (the same word can be both current and strange, but not to the same people).

Ricoeur in his work on metaphor draws particular attention to the (four) main features of Aristotle's definition of metaphor (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 19): one of the characteristics is that "*metaphor is the transposition of a name* that Aristotle calls 'alien' (*alloitros*), that is, 'a name that belongs to something else'" (*cf.* Aristotle, 1457 b 7), "the alien name" (*cf.* Aristotle, 1457

b 31). "This term is opposed to 'ordinary,' 'current,' /…/, which is defined by Aristotle as 'used by everybody,' 'in general use in a country'" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 19) (*cf.* Aristotle, 1457 b 3). Metaphor is accordingly defined in terms of deviation (*cf.* Aristotle 1458 a 23; 1458 b 3); the use of metaphor is thus "close to the use of strange, ornamental, coined, lengthened, and shortened terms" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 19). Ricoeur argues that

> in these characteristics of opposition or deviation and kinship are the seeds of important developments regarding rhetoric and metaphor: (1) First, the choice of ordinary usage as point of reference foreshadows a general theory of 'deviations'. /…/ Hence all the other usages (rare words, neologisms, etc.) that metaphor approximates are themselves also deviations in relation to ordinary usage". (2) Beside the negative idea of deviation, the word *allatrios* implies a positive idea, that of *borrowing* (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 19).

Ricoeur further wonders, (3) if one must say "that ordinary usage has to be 'proper', in the sense of primitive, original, native, in order for there to be deviation and borrowing" (*ibid.*, p. 20). This questioning he sees as a step that leads to the eventually customary opposition between *figurative* and *proper* (later rhetoric takes this step, but for Ricoeur, there is no evidence that Aristotle took it). (4) Another, contingent development of the notion of "alien" usage is, according to Ricoeur, represented by the idea of *substitution* (an *interaction* theory is readily contrasted with the substitution theory by English-language authors). "Thus, the idea of substitution appears to be bound up firmly with that of borrowing; but the former does not proceed from the later by necessity, since it admits of exceptions" (*ibid*., p. 21). Ricoeur concludes that the Aristotelian idea of alien (*allotrios*) tends to assimilate three distinct ideas: the *idea of deviation* from ordinary usage; the idea of borrowing from an original domain; and the idea of substitution for an absent but available ordinary word (*cf*. Ricoeur, 2004, p. 21). The rejection of the consequences of the treatment of metaphor in Aristotle and in classical rhetoric will follow the rejection of the concept of substitution that drives the development of the theory and artistic applications of metaphor beyond analogy.

This common/alien or strange opposition Aristotle is distinct from the strange in the sense of the other, to which the transference of the metaphor refers. However, the moment of metaphorical transference to something other or new maintains the current shaking of the polarity of familiar and strange, common and uncommon, and alike. On this point, we can

agree with the statement that metaphor does not so much reflect existing similarities as creates them (Black, Forceville). In terms of the emphasis on moral judgements associated with illness, Sontag shows that aesthetic judgements about the beautiful/ugly, the clean/unclean, the familiar/alien, or uncanny are also associated with (we will return to this below).

2.2. Metaphor/Metonymy: From a Poetics of the Visual Arts to a Rhetoric of Society and an Aesthetics of Politics

Thus, in addition to the aesthetic and the broader philosophical (ontological) dimensions of metaphor, we are also interested in its political dimension. In defining the latter, we refer to Ernesto Laclau, who draws on modern arguments, i.e., binaristic position of structural linguistics, which is extremely inclined to simplify the complicated table of tropes, to the point where only metaphor and metonymy are in play. The coupling of them has been linked with the name of Roman Jakobson, who has connected this properly tropological (poetic) and rhetorical duality with a more fundamental polarity that concerns the very functioning of language and not just its figurative use. From now on, "metaphor and metonymy do not merely define figures and tropes; they define general processes of language" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 206). According to Jakobson poetic forms show a predominance sometimes of metonymy, as in realism, and sometimes of metaphor, as with romanticism and symbolism. Polarity is also so general that it finds a parallel in non-linguistic sign systems. In painting, one can speak of metonymy in connection with cubism, of metaphor with surrealism, etc. (see Jakobson, 1978) "In rhetoric or poetics, the act of establishing links where there are none /…/ is referred to as making a figure; and it is a figure that is needed in order to open up such a common world" (Benčin, 2017, p. 60). Jakobson pointed out that metonymy and metaphor can be extended beyond the realm of rhetoric or poetics to broader theoretical uses. In political philosophy, these categories have recently been explored by Laclau, according to whom "[r]hetoric, as dimension of signification, has no limits in its field of operation. It is coterminous with the very structure of objectivity" (Laclau, 2014, p. 65). He explains politics through rhetorics and even calls the rhetorical tropes, i.e., metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc., "ontological categories" for describing objectivity as such (*cf*. Laclau in Šumič-Riha, 2011, p. 89). He presents both metaphor and metonymy as two ways of connecting the heterogeneous elements that structure

the political field. Metonymic or horizontal integration, based on the contingency of proximity, goes beyond metaphorical, vertical, or hierarchical connection that disguises its contingency and leads to the hegemony of one of its actors. Thus, he defines political hegemony as a movement from metonymy to metaphor (Laclau, 2014, p. 75). Subversive political movements that resist hegemony initially establish a metonymic sequence, but one of their actors re-establishes hegemony. On this basis, Laclau sees the possibility of emancipatory politics "at the point at which metaphor and metonymy cross each other and limit each other's effects" (Laclau, 2014, p. 88). If we follow Šumič-Riha, we find in the footsteps of Laclau's thought the important premise that "only metaphor, by providing a new master signifier, is capable of rendering a given situation legible /… [by]/ the crossing the bar that separates two incommensurable orders: the symbolic order and the order of the real" (Šumič-Riha, 2011, p. 93). One might add that this is no longer an analogical metaphor, but a contemporary one that combines heterogeneous or incompatible elements.

At this point we can refer to the aesthetics and politics of Jacques Rancière: His wager on both implies that the task of artistic and political subjectivation is to demonstrate the groundlessness of any order, any closure, and thus to establish a metonymy that subverts metaphor. In *Disagreement*, Rancière analyzes a typical statement from a position of power that establishes a social field by introducing a division between those who understand and command and those who do not and must obey: "It's not up to you to understand; all you have to do is obey" (Rancière, 1999, p. 45). In doing so, he understands the establishment of a common language as an aesthetic or the metaphorical moment of political subjectivation – political argumentation requires an "aesthetic languages", "opening up the world where argument can be received and have an impact" (Rancière, 1999, p. 56). "Aesthetics" is the name of a capacity that "allows separate regimes of expression to be pooled" (Rancière, 1999, p. 57) and that, in a world of inequality, allows one to act on the assumption of *de facto* equality, that is, on the basis of the metaphorical "*as if*" (Rancière, 1999, p. 58). "Politics occurs wherever a community with the capacity to argue and to make metaphors is likely, at any time and through anyone's intervention, to crop up" (Rancière, 1999, p. 60).

With the help of rhetorical figures metaphor and metonymy, we can get a different view of Rancière's notion of equality in both the political and aesthetical domains. "Rancière's aesthetics of politics presents a different dialectics of metaphor and metonymy, in which both

figures intensify rather than limit their mutual effects" (Benčin, 2017, p. 62).

4. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, Sontag shows that aesthetic judgments about the beautiful/ugly, the clean/unclean, the familiar/alien, or the *uncanny* are also linked to moral judgments that have to do with illness. Particularly revealing is the discovery of connections between individual diseases and foreignness, rooted in the archaic notion of wrong as non-us, foreign, or alien (even impure, according to the terminology of Mary Douglas; alien, exotic places as sources of important diseases, etc.). Moral laxity and political deviance are common signs of foreignness; further foreign associates disease with sinners and the poor. From here it is only a step toward racial stereotypes associated with a particular disease (an example of speculation about the geographical origin of AIDS). Authoritarian political ideologies have a strong interest in spreading fear of foreigners, for which real diseases lend themselves (epidemic diseases usually provoke a ban on foreigners and immigrants entering the country). Illness as a war metaphor is very convenient for constructing differences between "us" and "others". But epidemic disease, in particular, is potentially everyone's disease, with others from the at-risk groups of the homeless and refugees being particularly vulnerable. The current viral disease thus directly or indirectly affects everyone and is a marker of individual and societal vulnerability. The works in the exhibition mentioned here also address this circumstance in a particular way with their multidimensional metaphors, often driven by bold experimentation with media and form. By loosening and suspending the standardized laws of representation, artistic metaphor strives to create a new relationship between two more or less distinct domains, which in our observed case refers to the phenomenon of a virus or its effects in society. In order to visually metaphorize the experience of quarantine and other consequences of a pandemic, following the principles of hybridization, perverted contextualization, integration, pictorial similes or juxtaposition of two or more heterogeneous (physically similar) elements in the visual field, etc. (Forceville), particularly appropriate collage techniques and photographic and video montages are explored. The engagement with examples of visual metaphor in art (metaphorizing the experience of quarantine and other consequences of the virus) through aesthetic concepts of the familiar and the strange, which lead us to address the rhetorical and

political aspects of metaphor (Laclau, Rancière), should be accompanied by the critique of contemporary capitalism with a call for solidarity (Žižek) and the question of the possibility of a new ethics and politics of care (Krasny). To do this, we should leave the world of art or art institutions and take to the streets, in the midst of protests against repressive authoritarian politics, where art and it's metaphorical/metonymic language/gestures are also among the actors.

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European Society for Aesthetics

Johann Georg Sulzer – A Forgotten Father of Environmental Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT. The main topic of the paper will be an introduction and analysis of Johann Georg Sulzer's views as described in his *Dialogues on the Beauty of Nature* (*Unterredungen über die Schönheit der Natur,* 1750), situating it within the body of Sulzer's work, and highlight the theme of the aesthetic appreciation of nature which appears, albeit in a variety of contexts, throughout Sulzer's works. From today's perspective, Sulzer's contribution is intriguing when considered in relation to the ideas of Enlightenment natural philosophy but also because of similarities between Sulzer's approach, based on the knowledge of environmental sciences, and Carlson's environmental aesthetics.

1. Introduction

Johann Georg Sulzer, the author of *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (1771–1774), became a founding figure in aesthetics and the general theory of the fine arts in the Age of Enlightenment. Although he is usually cited in relation to his *Allgemeine Theorie*, he also wrote the nearly forgotten *Dialogues on the Beauty of Nature*, *Unterredungen über die Schönheit der Natur*, published in 1750 – the same year as Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*.

In *Unterredungen*, Sulzer argues the necessity of an aesthetics of nature, and he recounts the experience he had gained by that time as a scientist and admirer of nature's beauty. Drawing on certain themes from his early work, *Versuch einiger Moralischen Betrachtungen*

[80] Email: stibral@fss.muni.cz. This article is one of the outputs of the project Sustainable and Fairer Society: Approaches of the Humanities and Social Sciences (MUNI/A/1377/2020) supported by the Grant Agency of Masaryk University, Czech Republic. Translated by K. Prajznerová, revisited by Jonathan M. Webber.

über die Werke der Natur (1745),[81] he develops his argumentation on why it is essential to pay attention to nature's aesthetic qualities and what forms the foundations of nature's beauty.

However, unlike, for instance, Burke or Kant, Sulzer does not build his arguments on the subjective experience of nature, and he does not stray from traditional ideas linking beauty with symmetry or usefulness. Instead, Sulzer tries to build on the knowledge of the sciences. According to him, it is this type of knowledge that leads to a higher and "true" appreciation of nature's beauty. Such a view makes Sulzer an interesting predecessor to Carlson's environmental aesthetics. But because Sulzer's *Unterredungen* has been mostly forgotten today, his contribution in this area has been left out of the discourse in the 20th century. Even in studies devoted to Sulzer's work, there are almost no references to his *Unterredungen*.[82]

The primary aim of this article is to (re)introduce Sulzer's *Unterredungen*, situating it within the body of his work, and to analyze and highlight the aesthetics-of-nature theme which appears, albeit in a variety of contexts, throughout Sulzer's writings. Additionally, from today's perspective, his contribution is intriguing when considered in relation to the ideas of Enlightenment natural philosophy. A secondary aim of the article is to point out certain similarities between Sulzer's argumentation and the argumentation of Carlson's environmental aesthetics – and to draw attention to the potential problems resulting from relying on an approach which bases aesthetic appreciation of nature on knowledge of the sciences.

2. Aesthetic Aspects of Nature in Sulzer´s *Dialogues on the Beauty of Nature*

As a whole, Sulzer's *Unterredungen* is a kind of pedagogical introduction to admiring nature. It is written as a dialogue in which one friend, Eukrates, tries to turn the other friend, Charites, into a lover and admirer of nature (Sulzer, 1971, p. 8)[83]. At the very beginning, Sulzer declares the fundamental importance of our perception (*Empfindungen*) of nature, especially of "free" nature (Ibid., p. 10) – even though, as the description of the surroundings suggests, the dialogue

[81] And also focusing on nature and the mountains which were at that time becoming a subject of aesthetic interest (Sulzer, 1743, 1746).
[82] See the extensive co-authored monograph (Grunert, F., Stiening, G., 2011). (But Tumarkin at least occasionally deals with Sulzer's aesthetics of nature, Tumarkin, 1933).
[83] I am citing this new modern edition which is a reprint of the second edition of Sulzer's work from 1770. Nevertheless, this second edition differs from the first one practically just by a slight shift in the typesetting template. I prefer to use the original German text before the English translation (Sulzer, 2005), based also on the 1770 reissue of these work.

takes place in a cultural landscape. Moreover, the dialogue begins by Eukrates describing the beauty of nature as a painting (*Gemälde*).[84] What is being appreciated is the variety and variability of the colors, the forms, and the light – it is not, however, only the harmony and beauty of the infinite multiplicity of colors and shapes – it is also their ordering, and the order as a whole (*die Ganze Anornung*) (Ibid., p. 9). Therefore, when I speak of Sulzer's work as anticipating, in certain respects, for example, Hepburn (1963, 1966) or Carlson (e.g., 1976, 1979, 2002), this assertion does not pertain to their efforts to appreciate nature as something that is not like a piece of visual art.

In this, let us say, visible form, Sulzer appreciates especially the type of nature that is in what we might call the classicizing, arcadian, style – free of extremes, with a somewhat rolling terrain, and with wide views into a lovely and diverse cultural landscape (Sulzer, 1971, pp. 3, 17). This landscape resembles ancient groves or caves where, as Sulzer observes, "nymphs might live" (p. 18).[85] At other times the landscape is composed like a park (the only concrete example that is mentioned are the Sanssouci gardens in Potsdam (Ibid., p. 17)). As in Rousseau's work, nature here stands against the city – "the smoke of the city" (Ibid., p. 33)[86] is explicitly described. In other passages, Sulzer refers to those who live in large cities and at courts, and do not see nature's beauty (Ibid. p. 73). Sulzer perceives in nature primarily kindness (*e Mildigkeit der Natur*, *milde Natur*, e.g., Ibid. p. 95). And even though, as an aside, he mentions that nature may have also somewhat turbulent aspects, as for instance in the rapids of a stream, Sulzer keeps returning to nature in a more stable, calmer form (Ibid., p. 10-12). This is because our spirit should also be calm and quiet to perceive nature's beauty. Our mind is usually occupied with various worries, such as politics, filling the mind with unease, which is not only unpleasant but also blinds us to nature's beauty.

To truly enjoy nature's most beautiful image (*das sanfteste Bild der Schönheit*), our soul should be free (*freye Seele*), and our spirit should be like the spirit of an innocent child. Sulzer gives the example of rough waters which reflect neither the landscape nor the heavens.

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[84] Sulzer, 1971, p. 8, see also his comparison of the landscape to a painting on p. 19.

[85] At one point, Sulzer compares the landscape with Thessaly. However, while this is the case in this particular work, Sulzer clearly appreciated a broader range of elements constituting landscape beauty as can be seen, for example, in his travelogues (Sulzer, 1743, 1746**,** 1780). It should be acknowledged, though, that in the travelogue, Sulzer does not mention his appreciation of nature's beauty on every page.

[86] Rousseau's first *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (*Discours sur les sciences et les arts*) was also published in 1750. Sommer believes that Sulzer was who made "Rousseau's true spirit" comprehensible to the German people (Sommer, 1892, p. 196).

Only calm waters create "a beautiful painting". In this way, pure images of nature are "painted" only on quiet souls (Ibid. s. 12).

Despite his fascination with scenic beauty – or, as Carlson would say, his appreciation of nature through the *landscape model* (Carlson, 1979) – Sulzer's aesthetic appreciation of nature is not limited merely to its visual qualities. It also involves experiencing nature with all the senses – in other words, the "traditionally" (in environmental aesthetics) cited difference between perceiving nature and perceiving works of art. However, Sulzer does not dwell much on the involvement of the other senses. He places more importance on other aspects.

When we appreciate a painting, we do not simply assess the colors – we assess, as well, the skilful selection and interconnection of all the parts, and the relation of the proportions of each part to the whole. And it is the same when we appreciate nature, which offers myriad of beautiful and harmonious shapes. And each harmonious connection of the parts, of the proportions, and the perspectives, as well as of the individual organisms (Sulzer, 1971, pp. 16-17) is according to some special rules. And so the higher kinds of beauty arise from "proportions, harmony, order, and wisdom" (Ibid., p. 99).

For Sulzer, nature is primarily a work of the Creator. The beauty that attracts us to nature – these are "the rays of the expression of the original beauty". The beauty that we experience through perceiving color, light, and shadow, and the forms of nature that can be perceived by our senses is only the lower level of beauty. Our goal is to discover the hidden, deeper level of beauty – and this must be discovered by our spirit. (Ibid., pp. 14-15).

Even though Sulzer talks mainly about a lower and a higher type of beauty in general, at one point he divides beauty into three levels (Ibid., p. 99), or three kinds of recipients. The first kind are the lowest, or shallowest, recipients who perceive only the simple or sensual types of beauty and enjoy only things that are novel, unexpected, and wonderful.

The second kind are deeper recipients who especially enjoy the type of beauty that springs from proportion and order (*aus der Proportion und Ordnung*). But for the third, the deepest kind of recipients, the most limitless joy flows from examining the hidden art and wisdom of nature (*verborgene Kunst und Weisheit*) (Ibid., pp. 99-100).[87]

However, these second and third levels of beauty often merge or overlap in Sulzer's

[87] These three levels of beauty may, in part, be an early formulation of Sulzer's later triad, a three-point scale distinguishing the concepts of *Stoff-Form-Harmonie.*

work – examining the hidden art and wisdom leads to discovering order and proportional relations, and vice versa. The essential type of nature, then, is primarily the so-called "hidden" nature – the source of our joy in perceiving the relationships between the parts and the proportions of the parts in relation to the whole, and in reflecting on the rules of Creation which we as observers discover (Ibid. p. 16).

Even though in his later, more important, works Sulzer deals primarily with the fine arts, in *Unterredungen* he considers the main source of beauty to be nature – after all, nature is God's work. In this respect, Sulzer refers to Hutcheson and his division of beauty into two types: absolute beauty, which lies in nature, and relative beauty, which lies in art (Ibid., p. 23). When, in *Unterredungen*, Charites tries to argue that, for instance, a statue made by a skilful master is more inventive and better proportioned than plants or animals, Eukrates points out that artists, too, take all the proportions from nature. Human art is only an infinitely tiny part of nature. There is nothing in works of art that is not already present in nature (Ibid., p. 24-26).

Nature, in essence, is absolutely harmonious (*vollkommen harmonisch*), and all forms are interconnected (*einaner verbunden*) (Ibid., p. 26). It seems as quite a common idea, but, surprisingly, Sulzer understands this interconnection of forms mostly taxonomically, cladistically, and hierarchically.

He does not so much analyze the individual structural and formal aspects of animal or plant anatomy (that would be an outer level). Rather, he focuses on the integration of the individual species into the system (from which the outer anatomical differences are derived) – in other words, on the integration of the individual species into the hidden, and deeper, harmony. Sulzer begins his discussion of this ordering within the *hidden* nature mainly by highlighting the ingenious organization of this type of nature into classes or families each of which has its own particular, yet always harmonious, proportions and sizes. Each class or family has its own characteristics, its particular place of occurrence, and its special way of life. These related families form small *republics*, and they together then form one large state or even a *monarchy* (Ibid., p. 19-22). When using the term republic in connection with organisms (*die Pflanzen-Republik*), Sulzer refers to the Swiss natural scientist and poet Albrecht Haller, a well-known author of the poetic composition *Alpen* (1732).

In this context, Sulzer offers more detailed examples of various species of gentians, and also of various species of animals (Ibid., pp. 20-21). He does not borrow quite all of the

taxonomical groups from Linné's *Systema naturae*,[88] and so his use of terms referring to political structures is directed toward highlighting the unified laws within each small state, each republic, and each kingdom. Within the "monarchy" of plants, the same laws apply to oaks as to grasses or tulips. For instance, all plants have the same basic parts, whether it be a hyssop or a cedar of Lebanon. And it is the same for animals, etc. (e.g., Ibid., pp. 55-56).

Each of the three main parts – state, republic, and kingdom – of nature (today we distinguish six kingdoms) is then further divided into other sub-groups. Each sub-group has additional specific rules, its particular types of transformation of the basic patterns, and its own special organization of relationships and setting of proportions (Ibid., p. 23). What richness of not only forms but also rules and transformations of the rules!

However, the relationships between individual taxa, "states", and families of the infinite monarchy (*eine unermessliche Monarchie*) are, of course, not only hierarchical – they are interconnected and infinitely varied. Each animal and plant has its own needs and its own tendencies. Here Sulzer points to (what we would in modern terms call) diverse food chains as well as the particular specializations and strategies of aquatic animals. These specializations and strategies then influence the animals' morphology, the proportions of their bodies – for instance depending on whether they hunt for food above or underwater, and how they move in water (Ibid., pp. 57-59). In these passages, Sulzer refers to the study of taxonomy, which was flourishing at the time. But he draws also on the study of the structural elements of plant and animal organisms, which was soon to develop into classical morphology, and on the paradigmatic and comparative study of body planes, which would fascinate upcoming generations of natural scientists – much like issues regarding development in terms of ontogenesis and species evolution. Sulzer's thoughts on the interconnections of the species and on the species' varied relations with the environment then foreshadow the biological discipline of ecology.

Simultaneously, the differences separating one species from another are practically unnoticeable. Everything forms a harmonious whole (Ibid., p. 26). This whole is hierarchical because everything is organized into one long continual chain. We find here the popular and very traditional idea of *scala naturae*, an idea that was widely shared in Sulzer's time. Sulzer's

[88] Sulzer borrows from Linné only classes, and does not write about kingdoms, orders and genera. At the same time, Linné did not use the term family. But this term had been used since the Seventeenth century – *famille* was used as a French equivalent of the Latin *ordo*.

influences, such as Leibniz, often mention this idea. The beauty of creation is based, among other things, on this so-called Chain, or Ladder (*Kette*) of Creation (see Lovejoy, 1960), from the simplest creatures to the most complex ones – from inanimate earth to plants, and up to animals and humans, in a totally uninterrupted, continual line, with almost invisible steps from one species to another, from the lowest to the highest (Sulzer, 1971, pp. 26-27, 75, 87, 133). Humans, and the human body, are at the top – humans are the highest and also most beautiful (Ibid. p. 25).[89] All species fit together, build on one another, and not a single species may be taken out. If even one single species were to be taken out, all of nature would eventually die out (Ibid., p. 95).

However, such insights, like those regarding proper proportions, will not be obvious to everyone who observes nature. Those who want to see and experience higher joy from nature's beauty must have knowledge and must be taught, especially about the sciences (*Unterredungen* has been quoted by many more natural scientists than artists or philosophers). One's understanding of proper proportions and one's knowledge of nature is then applied also when perceiving works of art – those who do not know what the beautiful proportions of the human body are do not experience joy from the most beautiful of statues, either. (But Sulzer does not specify here WHAT such beautiful and proper proportions are) (Ibid., pp. 31-32).[90] Amazement at the beauty and ordering of nature can lead all the way to religious ecstasy – nature is holy, a sanctuary.

It is not only the ordering of the individual species into *Scala naturae* that is beautiful and admirable about nature, and that inspires thoughts about the relationship between nature's beauty and human art. Nature's beauty lies also in the inner workings of each species; or in other words, their *design*. In this, too, nature is, primarily, a model for art. In fact, art and technology are nothing else but imitations of nature (Ibid., pp. 38-40). Sulzer here elaborates on and then compares works of nature with works of technology. For him, organisms are, at a certain level, machines that significantly surpass the works of human art. He talks in this context about the famous Vaucanson's duck (Ibid., p. 39-40).

In Sulzer's times, the metaphor of an organism as a mechanism was one of the basic approaches to thinking about live bodies. However, it must be said that Sulzer does not use this

[89] Compare with *Allgemeine Theorie*, the term *Natur* (Sulzer, 1994, p. 508).
[90] Sulzer does not respect Haller, the botanist, any less than Haller, the poet.

metaphor altogether consistently. Actually, we could say that in Sulzer's work, there appear echoes of contemporary debates about and disagreements between mechanicism and vitalism. On the one hand, Sulzer at times talks about animals as machines. For instance, at one point, animals are for him something like chemical machines in which nature cooks and mixes everything, *herself* (Ibid., p. 96). At another point, he observes that a plant is, undoubtedly, a beautiful machine (Ibid., p. 45). He also writes about all organisms as machines in his later work, *Theorie der angenehmen und unganehmen Empfindungen* (Sulzer 1762, p. 74).

On the other hand, in other passages Sulzer directly contradicts Descartes, mentioning him by name and asserting that, in fact, animals are not mere machines. A real duck is alive, Sulzer says, while Vaucanson's duck is, like all machines, dead. To move, machines need power coming in from outside, while live animals and plants do not. Machines cannot repair themselves, while organisms have the ability to heal, and so on (Sulzer, 1971, p. 42).

Sulzer then offers an idea which is, to a certain degree, a compromise solution, and which is, actually, one of the central themes in Leibniz's *Monadology* (*La Monadologie*, 1714, even though Sulzer does not cite Leibniz here). While human machines can be disassembled into parts that cannot be further divided, with organisms, it is different. The view through the microscope had shown that each organism-mechanism is composed of other mechanisms, and those of other mechanisms, etc. Of course, such fascinating ordering inspires further feelings of beauty and strong emotion (Ibid., pp. 44-49).

Not only does the microscope reveal the microcosm, the telescope shows us the amazing order of the macrocosm. And so we find here a comparison of the works of nature and art which is similar to the comparison offered in Hepburn's ground-breaking article (Hepburn, 1963, 1966). As Hepburn suggested, in nature, we experience aesthetic appreciation also when we change the scale – and this view, too, broadens our experience of nature; in contrast, a view into the microstructure of the painter's canvas does not.

In other respects, quite logically following on the idea of nature's ideal order, Sulzer retains (the basically Aristotelian) idea of nature's complete purposefulness. Everything is built purposefully within each part, and, viewed from outside, these parts together then create a beautiful form (*schöne Gestalt*).

Of course, the whole is not comprised by only animate organisms, but also by so-called inanimate elements – water, fire, soil, minerals – everything forming a wisely ordered and,

mainly, interconnected whole (Sulzer, 1971, p. 62, see also pp. 95-100). And not just at the level of Earth, but also within the position of Earth among the other planets. Additionally, Earth has a thoroughly balanced climate and temperature conditions, and even a small deviation could kill everything that is alive (Ibid., pp. 62-65).

Sulzer's work often emphasizes the whole, and in this, we can perhaps see a parallel with a much later text by Hepburn (1966), which also examines in some detail the common theme of feeling the unity of nature. This feeling includes a broad scale of aesthetic experiences in nature understood as unity, up to the ideal of oneness with nature (Sulzer, 1971, pp. 199–203).

Everything is so well ordered that we even cannot conceive of a different kind of order (Ibid., p. 76). This harmony or perfection is not only in the whole, it is also in each part (Ibid., p. 89). Everything is perfect and presents the best variant – as Hans Wili (1945, p. 12) pointed out, we can see here the influence of Leibniz's pre-stabilized harmony.

A certain theoretical problem is presented by dysmorphology, that is, by monsters, to whom natural scientists had paid much attention since the Renaissance and who, like venomous animals and poisonous plants, would be counter-examples of the general harmony. However, according to Sulzer, monsters develop in only totally minimal numbers, and venomous animals have their place in nature. Moreover, these animals always have warning coloration; today we would say that they are aposematic. (Sulzer, 1971, pp. 89-91).

Nature influences us also by being always novel and unexpected. In fact, we are constantly astonished by it. Let us look at how many interesting elements there are in the mineral world – such amazing minerals, luminescent substances, or fossils found in the highest mountains. And how much more there is in the plant world,[91] and the animal world[92] (Ibid., pp. 118-122).

In the conclusion of the dialogue in *Unterredungen*, Sulzer summarizes or lists the reasons to admire nature. While nature and nature's beauty inspire our imagination,[93] observing nature elevates also our spirit (p. 131, 132) and leads us to the Creator. Experiencing "the

[91] At more length, Sulzer here deals with plant propagation and sexuality, with interesting ways of seed transfer, and with exotic plants (1971, pp. 106-111).
[92] In particular, Sulzer discusses corals, the amazing transformations and social life of insects, as well as beaver communities and constructions (Ibid., pp. 111-124).
[93] "meine Einbildungskraft davon ganz erhitzt war," Ibid., pp. 125, compare with Addison's *Pleasures of Imagination* (1712) – nature always offering something novel and unexpected, more than art (Addison, 1976).

beauty of nature [is] the quickest and surest way to persuade people of the existence of the highest being" (*hoehern Wesens*, p. 129). We find a similar motif in other texts that deal with nature's beauty, for instance in Shaftesbury's *The Moralists* (1709). As Sulzer, referring to Plato's recommendation, puts it, nature educates the spirit, and humans should not turn away from it (1971, p. 132). By studying nature, we try to understand the intentions of the Ruler of the world, nature can also heal the spirit and teach the heart. And when we observe the order of nature, our moral sense develops (*Moralische Geschmack*). Nature offers both pleasure and learning, and we should send our children to the school of nature (Ibid., p. 133-140).

3. The Aesthetics of Nature in Sulzer's Later Works – Between Landscape Painting and the Picturesque

In his later writings, Sulzer focuses on issues other than nature's beauty, but this theme continues to appear from time to time. In Sulzer's main, and best-known, work, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, an extensive dictionary of terms from the fields of fine arts and aesthetics, there are several entries that deal with aesthetic appreciation of nature and with nature in relation to art – even though most of the entries in this dictionary, of course, concentrate on art as such. Nevertheless, the entry *Nature* is interesting in itself. At the very beginning, Sulzer properly points out the various meanings of this term, some of which are so broad in certain respects that, essentially, nature is seen as encompassing human works, and works of art thus also are works of nature (Sulzer, 1994, III, p. 507). In the narrower definitions, too, "the theory of art is nothing but a system of rules that have been obtained through exact observation of the ways/methods of nature" (Ibid., p. 507). And Sulzer repeats here his view of nature as a teacher of the artist and as a source of highest wisdom. For the artist, nature is a reservoir, a magazine of subject matter It is a source of not only an infinite multitude of outer forms, but also of the deeper rules and principles according to which the outer forms are made. A work of art then does not need to be a direct imitation of some place, object, or phenomenon that we can perceive by our senses. In a work of art, nature can also be portrayed through the artist's creative power and imagination – specifically for poets, it is through their

Dichtungskraft.[94]

Other entries in the *Allgemeine Theorie* are related to aesthetic appreciation of nature, too – for instance, *Garden design* (*Gartenkunst*), which, according to Sulzer, should be included among fine arts together with architecture (Ibid., II, p. 229). Here, again, nature is seen as the most perfect of gardeners. The entry *Landscape* (*Landschaft*) also expresses Sulzer's belief that almost everyone enjoys beautiful views (*Wohlgefallen an schönen Aussichten*). Sulzer again emphasizes the huge, even infinite variety of colors and forms that landscapes offer to our senses (Ibid. III, pp. 145-154).[95] Nevertheless, it is clear that for Sulzer, landscape is not in any way an exclusive or dominant form of encountering nature, and neither is it an invalid form of such encountering (as Carlson was to criticize later). As he did in his *Unterredungen*, Sulzer here avoids any thematization of the difference of the perceived whole, the issue of nature's unity or disunity, and the relation to the whole. This is because Sulzer's primary focus is on the painted landscape. As was common at the time, Sulzer (citing Hagedorn) distinguishes two types of landscape, the heroic and the pastoral. But Sulzer also adds another distinction which was not so usual back then, between the closed (*gesperrten*) and the open landscape – with the open landscape offering views into the far distance (Ibid., III, p. 152).

As could be expected at the time, nature and natural motifs are integrated also in the aesthetic category of *The Sublime* (*Erhabene*). Even though in this entry Sulzer mainly deals with the sublime in art, he also refers to experiencing the sublime when encountering high mountains, such as when "we cannot look at the majesty of the Alps without admiration," (Ibid., II, p. 97) and he quotes several times Albrecht Haller's "Alpine" verses. But interestingly, when it comes to the entry *Beauty*, even though Sulzer begins by mentioning the human body as the pinnacle of beauty, the rest of the description of this term does not include many references to nature in the sense of the landscape or living organisms (Ibid., IV, p. 354). The dictionary does not include the term *Picturesque,* the aesthetic term, which is, especially in British theory, connected with aesthetic appreciation of nature, was not yet theoretically much reflected on in Sulzer's times, even though Sulzer's *Allgemeine* does refer to some of Gilpin's works.

[94] Already in the entry *Natürlichkeit* (Sulzer, 1994, III, p. 511).
[95] We could borrow Martin Seel's words to say here that "encountering nature as landscape is a totality … of possibilities" (Seel, 1991, p. 220).

But this changed in 1793 when Sulzer attempted to more closely define the meaning of the *Picturesque* in the German-speaking cultural sphere. He did so just one year after the publication of Gilpin's *Three Essays* and one year before the publication of Uvedale Price's *An Essay on the Picturesque* and Richard Payne Knight's poem *Landscape*, which started the well-known "picturesque controversy." In his *Über Pittoreske in der Malerei*, published in *Charaktere der vornehmsten Dichter aller Nationen*, (Sulzer, 1793, pp. 31–40) Sulzer explicitly deals with the painter's view of nature and with the influence of visual art on our aesthetic preferences regarding nature. In addition to pastoral terrains and gardens and also the Alps, that he had written about until then, in this work Sulzer includes another type of nature – *the picturesque*. Sulzer defines this term as it was employed at the time in British theory and practice. He considers *Malerisch* to be synonymous with *Pittoresk* and uses *Malerisch* in much of the text.[96] Like Gilpin, Sulzer mainly works with the phrase "picturesque beauty," *malerische Schönheit*. According to Sulzer, picturesque beauty is a purely visual kind of beauty. An object is called picturesque if it has qualities that are affecting for the person who understands beauty (*auf eine angenehme Weise berührt*). The more other sources of enjoyment are added, the less we can speak of picturesque beauty in the exact sense of the term (Ibid., p. 34). In this way, while many objects, such as rugged rocks, wild caves, or ruins of old walls, may be considered to be something inferior, they are, actually, liked by painters. This is because painters are sensitive to the influence of light and shadow, and of the volumes and forms that these objects and scenes offer. The painter's approach changes our perspective, and we no longer look at the ruin of the old wall only "with the eye to the economy" (*mit einem ökonomischen Auge*), but also "with the eye to the picturesque" (*mit einem malerischen Auge*) (Ibid., p. 35). Interestingly, like British theoreticians of the picturesque, Sulzer points out the phenomenon of movement or the dynamics of the changing view. Objects that do not seem picturesque can become so when viewed from a different perspective or at a different time, due to the change in the lighting from the sun or the moon. Nevertheless, Sulzer still sees the picturesque primarily in works of art – in these works, picturesque beauty is more strongly pronounced and more easily perceived. But even in nature, picturesque beauty can stir our emotions (Ibid., pp. 37-38).

[96] Even though Sulzer put *Pittoresk* in the title, in much of the body of the text he then used *Malerisch*.

4. Conclusion (and the Problem of Seeing of Nature through the Natural Sciences)

In comparison with Burke's, or also Kant's, work, Sulzer's conception of the aesthetic experience of nature thus represents a rather traditional approach based on deriving nature's beauty from the Creator, believing in nature's objective beauty, and basing aesthetic qualities on such order and on proportions. Despite such a traditional approach, however, Sulzer's views have remained a striking example of a strong interplay between natural philosophy and philosophical aesthetics, a kind of interplay to which many of today's natural scientists and aestheticians may subscribe. But Sulzer's approach, as described in his *Unterredungen*, is unique in that this interplay does not involve only one field drawing inspiration from the other or using it as a supply of examples. In Sulzer's conceptualization, it is a serious attempt at a *true interconnection* of natural philosophy and philosophical aesthetics, and no other thinker since Sulzer's times has accomplished such a degree of interconnection of the two fields. Therefore, regardless of all the references to traditional order, form, mathematization, symmetry, and proportionality, for Sulzer, nature's beauty is based primarily on the beauty of the inner, hidden order – especially on the hierarchical organization of nature in the form of *scala naturae*, a kind of pyramid of the individual organisms, their species, and classes, but also in the form of laws regarding their relationships and regarding the transformation of the forms in different environments.

In Sulzer's work, there appear themes that we find later in the writings of Hepburn, such as the possibility to change the scale toward the microcosm as well as the macrocosm, the repetition of certain structures, the involvement of more than one sense, and the feeling of unity (at various levels). Most significantly, however, in Sulzer's work, there appears a theme that is essential, for example, for Aldo Leopold (1949, 1991) or Allen Carlson (1976, 1978, etc.): for aesthetic appreciation of nature, the hidden principles, connections, relationships, rules, and laws are more important than the forms and colors that can be perceived by the senses. And these hidden laws can be communicated to us mainly through the natural sciences. For Carlson, it is the sciences that should replace the influence of the fine arts in our aesthetic appreciation of nature so that we may perceive nature as nature, not as art. Much has been written on this topic and the argument between cognitivists and non-cognitivist has certainly been interesting

(in a broader context, it did not concern only the sciences, of course).

In this respect, Sulzer's work poses an interesting theoretical question to Carlson and others who want to base our aesthetic experience on knowledge of the sciences: What if this knowledge proves to be wrong in its fundamental theoretical underpinnings, in its *paradigm*? What if, somewhere in a lab corner or out in the field, there is now working away a new, as yet unrecognized, Linné or Darwin who is going to radically shift our existing paradigm (which is, it needs to be said, rather falling apart)?

At a minimum, we live today in a nature that is much changed, and in a paradigm of biology and other sciences that is much different from that in which Sulzer lived. We no longer work with a kind of hierarchical order of all objects and beings in nature, and the idea of the amazing Great Chain of Being has long been surpassed. Not only because of the impact of humans but also in the course of evolution, billions of species have died out without the world completely collapsing. The final disappearance of life will probably not happen very soon, maybe humans will disappear but not life, and certainly not because of "taking out" one species – that has been verified by, sadly, the loss of thousands of species. Nature is not quite so perfect as was traditionally believed. Clearly, the paradigm of biology today is different, and our view of nature is always influenced in part by today's science, whether or not it is also influenced by our aesthetic appreciation of nature. But does this mean that because Sulzer saw nature through the lens of an "incorrect" paradigm, he could not have appreciated nature's beauty "fully"?

Therefore, Sulzer can be considered an important predecessor of the cognitivist branch of environmental aesthetics. However, thanks to being grounded in a significantly older paradigm, he shows that attempts to base aesthetic appreciation of nature on biology or the sciences, in general, may be somewhat problematic – none of which detracts from his *Unterredungen* being a highly interesting and inspiring work. After all, as is clear from the extensive discussions on environmental aesthetics, the cognitivist approach has its legitimate place in the discourse.

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European Society for Aesthetics

Using Philosophy of Technology to Talk about Art

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I will demonstrate how methods drawn from the philosophy of technology can be used to speak meaningfully about the 'cognitive functions' of artworks: that is, how artworks mean things. In particular, I argue that the idea of affordances (drawn from philosophy of technology and, ultimately, psychology) can be used to cash out the claim that artworks possess cognitive functions. In doing so, it is built upon two foundational claims. First, that philosophy of technology and philosophy of art share a number of foundational questions and concerns. Second, that there is analytical utility in sharing the hitherto domain-specific methods and schemas that have been developed to address those questions and concerns.

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that philosophy of technology and philosophy of art are both materially-oriented disciplines, there is remarkably little overlap between the two subfields—at least within philosophy proper. This should strike us as strange. There are few principled reasons as to why philosophers of technology and philosophers of art should have so little to do with one another. After all, philosophers of technology and philosophy of art share a number of foundational questions: questions about how and why material objects look the way they do; the ways in which meaning is expressed and/or communicated by those objects; the functions they fulfil and their appropriateness for those functions; the ways in which they both influence and are influenced by the cultures in which they are embedded. Even in domains (such as ethics and philosophy of design) where there exists a prima facie obvious connection between art and technology, the terrain lies largely untilled.

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The unwillingness to speak across the aisle strikes me as a problem. Both philosophy of technology and philosophy of art have developed extremely powerful and precise analytical methods and conceptual schemas to help address, and in some cases dissolve, the various problems around which the two respective subfields are oriented. Unfortunately, many of these methods and schemas remain within their respective silos; they are simply not accessible to scholars working outside of those narrow fields. This is where the problem lies. Given the wealth of foundational problems and concerns that is shared between the two disciplines, I think that there is obvious utility in sharing the methods and schemas that have been developed to address those self-same problems and concerns. Unfortunately, this kind of disciplinary cross-pollination is very rare in practice.

Given that observation, in this paper I will explore one example wherein methods from the philosophy of technology can be used to address an open problem within the philosophy of art: in this case, how to speak about the cognitive functions—the meanings—of artworks.

2. Cognitive Functions

Speaking broadly, aesthetic cognitivism refers to a cluster of positions that all hinge upon the assumption that art can, as Gordon Graham claims, "at its best" constitute a form of understanding, and is thus deserving of the "same evaluative status as science" (1996, p. 1). Or, per Nelson Goodman, "the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding" (1978, p. 102).

More specifically, Christoph Baumberger identifies aesthetic cognitivism as the confluence of two claims: the epistemic claim that "artworks have cognitive functions", and the aesthetic claim that "cognitive functions of artworks partly determine their artistic value" (2013, p. 41). Per the epistemic claim, aesthetic cognitivists claim that artworks possess cognitive functions, and that these cognitive functions can teach audiences about a given state of affairs in a substantive, non-trivial way. This does not imply that artworks must possess cognitive functions, of course; only that artworks are capable of having cognitive functions. Moreover, and per the aesthetic claim, these functions partially determine the aesthetic worth of those artworks. They are among the plurality of artistic values that we properly invoke when

making assessments of beauty. Out of these two criteria, the epistemic and the aesthetic, it is the first that is the object of our attention here.

So, how can artworks have cognitive functions? There are two prevailing models in the cognitivist literature: one that argues that artworks instantiate propositional, philosophical knowledge, and one that argues that artworks instantiate phenomenal, experiential knowledge. With respect to the former, scholars such as Noël Carroll (2002) and Catherine Elgin (2007) argue that the contents of artworks should be understood as analogous to thought experiments. The appeal of this approach is obvious: philosophers and scientists regularly employ fictions and metaphors—philosophical zombies, brains in vats, cats in boxes—in order to point to propositional facts about the world. Artworks perform a similar task, so proponents of this view claim, in that they also use falsehoods to gesture meaningfully towards true claims. Thus artworks facilitate the generation of propositional facts both novel and true.

However, there are problems with this position. As John Gibson observes, there is a clear difference between thought experiments and artworks is that thought experiments are accompanied by an explanatory apparatus that expresses the propositional facts, instead of the facts being expressed by the thought experiment itself. Given that, does it make sense to say that the thought experiment actually instantiates truth claims? This is not at all clear. Indeed, I think it's entirely plausible to say that, contrary to Carroll and Elgin, truth claims are not a feature of thought experiments at all. While artworks and thought experiments might indeed be relevantly similar, if truth claims associated with a given thought experiment actually reside in the explanatory apparatus that accompanies that experiment, it's not at all clear how artworks or thought experiments can themselves contain or instantiate propositional truth claims.

Meanwhile, with respect to the experiential approach, Dorothy Walsh (1969) and Alex Burri (2007), among others, have argued that works of art offer experiential knowledge rather than propositional knowledge: what it would be like to be in a war zone, or have an affair in 19th century France or fight a dragon. It's a tempting thought, and one which gels nicely with a lot of common bromides about the virtues of art (and of literature in particular): that engaging meaningfully with artworks leaves us better equipped to take stock of other minds because we're able to somehow experience what they experienced.

Unfortunately, I do not think that this is a viable option either. While there is a wealth of evidence that suggests some fruitful link between exposure to the arts and development of

certain interpersonal capacities like empathy,[98] experiences expressed by artworks are obviously not sufficiently granular to actually afford an audience the phenomenal experience represented. For example, while I've read a number of books set in war zones, I am not so delusional as to think that this means I have experience of being in a war zone. Instead, and at best, a book set in a war zone offers me an opportunity to examine what I might be like in a war zone, in light of another's testimony—although there obviously is no way to test this counterfactual. Any experiential knowledge I might thereby acquire is about myself, rather than the phenomenon in question.

3. Knowledge Performances

These views have non-trivial problems. In response, I outline a model of the cognitive functions of artworks that is not premised upon its capacity to share propositional or phenomenal knowledge and is instead grounded in a theory of knowledge capable of accounting for non-propositional performances. To this end, I endorse the theory of knowledge developed by neo-pragmatist philosopher of technology Barry Allen: that knowledge is a "form of success, a superlative performance". When I say that knowledge is 'performative' rather than propositional or experiential, I am not being metaphorical. Knowledge, Allen claims, is not simply something you possess but is instead something you do. Merely possessing a fact does say anything about the knowledge you have; instead, you can only demonstrate your knowledge by employing that fact as part of some kind of performance—and in particular, a 'superlative' performance.

Allen, in both *Knowledge and Civilization* (2005) and *Artifice and Design* (2008) argues that knowledge, properly understood, is a species of superlative performance. A 'performance', as I take Allen to mean it, is 'an intentioned activity with an intended outcome', with intentional action glossed as a confluence of beliefs, desires, and intentions (Malle and Knobe, 1997, p. 105). Under this gloss, most actions that human beings voluntarily do constitute performances of one kind or another. Catching a train, tying your shoelaces, or eating a hamburger are all kinds of performances, as all of which are kinds of intentional action that

[98] For a small selection of the scholarship in this field, refer to (Mar et al., 2006), (Mar and Oatley, 2008), (Djikic et al., 2009), (Kidd and Castano, 2013), (Bal and Veltkamp, 2013), and (Vezzali et al., 2015).

have given outcomes in mind. Consequently, performance itself is an unremarkable phenomenon. To call something a performance is simply to situate it within the broader context of intelligible human action.

Knowledge, Allen argues, is also a performance. However, it is a performance of a special kind in that, he says, it must be 'superlative'. Stating that a performance is superlative is not to imply that that performance merely meets whatever constitutes the success criteria for that specific performance. Succeeding in catching a train, or tying one's shoelaces, or eating a hamburger is, in most cases, a pretty unremarkable achievement. These kinds of successes, assuming that you have the normal, everyday capacities that most people possess, are merely habitual or reliable. Instead, a superlative performance is a successful performance that is also exemplary, because it meets its success criteria in some remarkable or novel way. These performances, for both Allen and myself, are knowledge. Facts may be true or false, but it is in knowing how to wield those facts (or physical tools, or experiences, or concepts, or whatever else you might be employing in the given case) with discretion, with acumen, with mastery. Moreover, because they are performed, knowledge is available to perception: they are the proof in the pudding; they are where rubber hits the road.

The achievement, the accomplishment, is what distinguishes knowledge, making it different from belief, opinion, error, and so on. Knowledge is neither metaphysically 'real', being an artifact with no reality apart from us, nor merely nominal, since it depends on effectiveness, and not just conventions of discourse. What distinguishes knowing is not where it comes from but the performance it achieves (Allen, 2005, p. 25).

Allen's insight is, I think, profound: it radically reframes and corrects how we should properly conceptualise knowledge. In addition, Allen's theory of knowledge also gives us the foundation from which to develop a richer picture of how artworks can possess cognitive functions. We can do this by expanding upon Allen's performative theory of knowledge with the notion of 'affordances', particularly as affordances are employed by philosophers of technology.

4. Artwork Affordances

Philosophers of technology use 'affordances' to capture the ways in which a given tool

increases our capacities in some way, or makes a desired outcome possible or easier to realise. Swimming goggles afford us the ability to better see underwater. Paintbrushes afford us the ability to precisely apply paint. Rockets afford travelling to the moon. Affordances, in short, provide a means of conceptualising what different technologies do for us.

Affordances give us a way of unpacking how different technologies can facilitate superlative performances. By virtue of offering affordances, technology makes certain kinds of performances possible. Affordances also give us a way to speak about the cognitive functions of technology, without forcing us to get bogged down in questions of meaning or content (whether propositional, phenomenological or otherwise). That is, the cognitive function of a given piece of technology lies not in the propositional or phenomenological knowledge that it somehow instantiates, but rather in what it can teach us via the performances that that technology can afford. Consider, for instance, a telescope. The power of a telescope lies in what it allows us to do: namely, letting us see very far away. In doing so, the telescope gives us access to parts of the universe that are inaccessible by the naked eye, affording us the opportunity to make new and better descriptions of the universe. The experiences afforded by the telescope fully comprise the didactic or pedagogic potential—that is, the cognitive functions—of the telescope; the affordances provided and the cognitive functions are one and the same.

So, what does this mean for artworks? They too are a kind of technology, despite a number of claims to the contrary. They are, after all, the products of human intention in the same way that other tools are the products of human intention: they are, after all, designed and created for a given purpose. Does this imply that artworks can provide affordances? I think yes. In the event that artworks possess cognitive functions, we can and should also expect them to provide affordances. In short, they should do things for us, in that they should increase our performative capacities in some significant, identifiable, and measurable way.

With all that in mind, does the claim that artworks constitute a class of technology imply that artworks can provide affordances? I think yes. In the event that artworks possess cognitive functions—if they are indeed "active and competent players in the field of knowledge", to quote John Gibson—we can and should also expect them to provide affordances. They should, in short, do things for us in some significant, identifiable, and measurable way. It is in offering affordances that artworks have the capacity to teach us. Furthermore, in increasing our

performative capacities in some significant, identifiable, and measurable way, the affordances offered by artworks should be empirically available in exactly the way that any performance (catching a bus, eating a hamburger, defending heliocentrism in light of your empirical observations) is empirically available.

This method, then, offers a means by which we can take stock of the cognitive functions of artworks without committing ourselves to either the propositional nor the phenomenal approaches within cognitivism (along with their concomitant flaws). Furthermore, it has the benefit of being empirically rich: if artworks possess cognitive functions as outlined, the presence of these cognitive functions should be straightforwardly available to sense and intuition.

5. Cubism: A Case Study

While I'm still working through the ramifications of this claim, let's look at one possible example. From the time of Giotto until the end of the 19th century, a single perspective—otherwise called 'Renaissance pictorial perspective'—was the norm in Western art. In single perspective a painting of a given scene or object was painted from one position: an attempt to communicate, with fidelity, how the depicted scene appeared (or would have appeared, anyway) from a single point in space. Consequently, and "in anticipation of Descartes", Pau Pedragosa writes, single perspective "concerned itself with our perspective on the things that surround us in concrete situations". In doing so, Renaissance pictorial perspective "presents both objectified space and the subject that effects this objectification: it fixes both the observer and that which is observed" (Pedragosa, 2014, p. 748).

By the end of the 19th century, however, these perspectival norms were being actively corroded. As early as the 1880s, work by Impressionists and Post-Impressionists such as Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Paul Cézanne had begun to play with perspective in interesting ways. By 1910, these Renaissance norms were in tatters. Movements such as Cubism sought to free art from the tyranny of single perspective, permitting instead paintings a sculpture that captured scenes and objects from multiple perspectives, all at the same time. As the Cubist painter Jean Metzinger wrote in 1911:

> Already they have uprooted the prejudice that commanded the painter to remain motionless in front of the object, at a fixed distance from it, and to catch on the canvas no more than a retinal photograph more or less modified by 'personal feeling'. They have allowed themselves to move round the object, in order to give, under the control of intelligence, a concrete representation of it, made up of several successive aspects. Formerly a picture took possession of space, now it reigns also in time (quoted in Frye, 1966, p. 66–67).

It is hard to overstate the influence of this development. While it might seem quite modest now, the notion that an artist could even try to capture an image from multiple perspectives within the same piece of art was at the time seen as radically novel; a sharp repudiation of the last 700 years of Western art. However, this is not all that Cubism offers. Indeed, I claim, Cubist multiperspective also offers a very specific affordance: the opportunity to experience and adopt what Husserl called the 'phenomenological epoché'.

Usually translated as 'bracketing', epoché is the method by which a person can consciously escape the 'natural attitude' of everyday experience and instead begin to analyse the granular parts of that experience. Husserl argues that, rather than being a thing given to us, whole and seamless, subjective experience is an ongoing action whereby we integrate a "continuity of changing perceptions" via a process of "synthetical consciousness" (Husserl, 1983, p. 86). We do not passively receive a veridical impression of the world via our eyes and other sense organs, but instead, we construct a picture of the world from the riot of sense impressions at our disposal. Adopting epoché makes that process of synthetical consciousness clear to us. Now let us compare that account with what the Cubists themselves thought they were doing:

> We never, in fact, see an object in all its dimensions at once. Therefore, what has to be done is to fill in a gap in our seeing. Conception gives us the means. Conception makes us aware of the object in all its forms […] When I think of a book, I do not perceive it in any particular dimension but in all of them at once. And so, if the painter succeeds in rendering the object in all its dimensions, he achieves a work of method which is of a higher order than one painted according to the visual dimensions only (quoted in Frye, 1966, p. 95).

Remarkably, and in spite of no obvious personal or causal connection with the early

phenomenologists, Cubists were clearly engaging with the self-same concerns.[99] They too were struggling with the idea that consciousness is not a fluid thing, but is instead cobbled together in fits and starts via some process of perceptual integration. They were, in short, adopting epoché. Moreover, what makes Cubist art 'Cubist' is an attempt to communicate these facts. When we look at a work of Cubist art—say Metzinger's La Femme au Cheval (1911–12)—we are looking that artworks that afford an impression of phenomenological epoché. This is what I take to be the key cognitive function of Cubist works: they afford a means of understanding and experiencing epoché without ever having to crack open a volume of Husserl.

Furthermore, this picture of the cognitive functions on display does not run afoul of the criticisms levelled against the propositional and experiential cognitivist accounts. Metzinger's La Femme au Cheval is neither a text that offers propositional philosophical knowledge (despite its deeply philosophical nature) nor does it offer us phenomenological experience of the horse in question. Instead, it is an artwork that affords us the opportunity to reflect upon what it is like to experience something: it affords a species of intentional, structured experience that, when employed properly, facilitates a superlative performance of epoché.

6. Conclusion

I believe that this particular case demonstrates the basic soundness of the intuition with which I began this talk: that there is obvious utility in bringing philosophy of art and philosophy of technology together in conversation. In this particular instance, I employed two concepts drawn from philosophy of technology—the performative epistemology of Barry Allen, and the idea of affordances—to help clarify some outstanding issues in aesthetic cognitivism. In doing so, I trust that I have made clear, first, that philosophy of art and philosophy of technology share a non-trivial number of questions and concerns; and second, that there are good pragmatic reasons to share analytical methods and conceptual schemes between those two disciplines.

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[99] Cf. Slettene, 1997, Majewska, 1999, Macdonald, 2005 and Pedragosa, 2014, among many others.

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